

**Colombian and Mexican Youth Migration
and Acculturation Experiences:
The Shaping of Identities
in Metropolitan Vancouver**

by

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores the acculturation processes and the shaping of identities of 17 foreign-born Colombian and Mexican young adults living in Metropolitan Vancouver, aged 19 to 30 years. The research analyzed both participants' acculturation processes in the education and employment spheres, and their related shaping of identities, mediated by their ethnicity and class locations. Using a mixture of subject-oriented oral histories and semi-structured interviews, the findings signal that participants shaped their identities based on oppositional but negotiable terms with a predominant Anglo-Canadian identity, as well as with a new developed Latino pan-ethnic identity, where class location played a significant role. Since Latin American immigrants constitute a young and rapidly growing visible minority group in Canada, and there is a sparse but growing literature focused on this population, this research makes an important and timely contribution to our knowledge and understanding of youth, identities, and immigration in Canada.

Keywords: Youth; Identities; Acculturation; Immigration; Colombians; Mexicans.

Dedication

When I was looking for young people to participate in this research, I was told that some refugee young people were already tired of being asked to participate in studies. Moreover, the main reason for which they did not want to participate was that they felt their voices were never reflected in the final products. They also felt that what they were telling to the White researchers interviewing them was never properly understood.

For these reasons, and despite the fact that my time did not allow me to be more inclusive in relation to participant's voices (e.gr. member checking), I hope that this thesis can be a small vehicle to show some of the troubles and successful stories, the fears and joys, the tears and laughs that these brave women and men have gone through in their acculturation and identities processes in Vancouver. I hope that my Latino-ness has been good enough to understand, interpret and express their lives.

I also hope that their life stories, briefly mentioned here, join the voices of those Salvadorian and Guatemalan young people who talked to W. James Smiley, as well as the voices of those Latino youth that organized and talked about their lives and problems in the 'Looking Towards the Future symposium' in 1989, and those who participated in the 'Latin American Youth Forum. Living in the lower Mainland', in 1996, both held in Vancouver. These young people spoke about their present and future expectations in Vancouver 23 and 16 years ago, a future that already arrived and which, sadly enough, has not been too different for the present of some of the young people who shared their stories with me between 2011 and 2012.

To all of them, I dedicate this work.

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List of Acronyms

CIC	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
ESL	English as a Second Language
IRB	Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
ISSofBC	Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia
SIN	Social Insurance Number
TP	Translocational Positionality
UBC	University of British Columbia
VMIRYP	Visible Minority Immigrant and Refugee Young People

1. Introduction

Young adult Latin American immigrants – defined as those aged 19 to 30 from geographical origins ranging from Chile to Mexico (with exception of those of the Caribbean), constitute a relatively small but rapidly growing visible minority group in Canada (Lindsay, 2007). Despite this rising demographic, very few studies to date have attempted to capture some of the experiences of this population as they navigate their way from youth to adulthood in a new land. As such, the research presented here examines their acculturation experiences in both education and employment spheres as well as the shaping of their identities. Particular focus is placed on Colombian and Mexican young adults living in Metropolitan Vancouver, with attention also paid to how these acculturation experiences are influenced by their ethnic background and their class location. This chapter begins by presenting a brief introduction to Latin American immigration to Canada and some of the unique characteristics of Mexican and Colombian migration. Subsequently, I present a brief historical background with respect to the development of the few studies about Latin American youth that have been conducted in Canada. The chapter concludes with an overview of the remaining chapters.

1.1. Latin American Immigration to Canada

Latin American immigration to Canada has been registered officially since 1931 (Statistics Canada, 2009a), with people born in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Central America and South America (the last two categories registered as such) landing in the country (56 out of 27,530 people). However, Berdichewsky (1990, 2007) identified a small population composed of Chileans, Peruvians and two Mexicans in the province of British Columbia in 1875, as well as five different Latin American migration waves to Canada. These waves are more comprehensive than the four waves found by Mata (1987; Recalde, 2002). The first wave spans from sometime before World War II to immediately

after it, with few people landing in the following years. The second wave evolved during the 1960s including a few people from Argentina, Uruguay, Mexico and Colombia.

The third wave developed during the 1970s, since the combination of economic, political and social crises in the Latin American region, some of them as a result of neoliberal interventions (Harvey, 2005), promoted a significant migration under the refugee figure from Chile, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, Argentina and Uruguay. The fourth wave developed during the 1980s and was marked by an important number of refugees from Central America, mainly from El Salvador and Guatemala. Finally, the fifth wave is comprised of the large numbers of Mexicans entering Canada during the 1990s under the family and economic migration classes. Veronis (2006), for her part, identified that the last wave was composed of Latin American professionals that immigrated under the Skilled Migrant Program and, to a lesser extent, of some business class immigrants.

Table 1 (see Appendix A) shows the total number of major immigrant Latin American groups entering Canada in historical periods according to their place of birth registered in the 2006 census. Moreover, it is also important to identify the less visible, discrete and steady wave of Latin American temporary migrant workers arriving to Canada under the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program to provide cheap labor force (Hennebry, 2008; Otero et al., 2008; Otero & Preibisch, 2010; UFCW Canada, 2011). As a result of these diverse migration experiences, the Latin American population in Canada consists of “an extremely heterogeneous group in terms of national, ethnic/racial, socioeconomic, cultural, political, and even religious background, as well as demographic characteristics (age, gender)” (Veronis, 2006, p. 19).

Today, Latin American people constitute one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in Canada. They are also ranked in the fifth position among all visible minority groups, with 37 percent of their population under 24 years, and 90 percent being first-generation immigrants primarily residing in the provinces of Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec (Lindsay, 2007; Statistics Canada, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2009b, 2011). Mexican and Colombian people in particular constitute some of the historical Latin American national groups that have landed in significant numbers in Canada, being the largest and third largest Latin American national groups in the country and in the city of Vancouver

respectively (See Tables 1 and 2 in Appendix A). Moreover, Mexican immigration has been the result of a migration overflow to the United States and, in few cases, of turmoil situations (Otero, 2011; Simmons, 1993; Usha & Young, 2006), while Colombian immigration has been mainly the consequence of Colombia's armed conflict in recent years. Since the latter circumstance has put the lives of Colombians in direct danger, many of them have come to Vancouver under refugee and family reunification statuses.

1.2. Mexican Immigration

There are very few studies about Mexican migration to Canada. Among these few, Whittaker (1988) found that Mexicans who came to Canada between 1956 and 1984 reflected two clear trends in relation to the selective Canadian immigration policies: a) they favored young adults between 20 and 35 years of age (75% of her analyzed population), and b) they also promoted family reunification processes, especially for young females between 20 and 24 years called 'holiday brides.' This label makes reference to women who met and married Canadian citizens who were vacationing in Mexico and decided to establish permanently in Canada later. Whittaker also found that Mexican immigrants of this period had high levels of education (23% were professionals, mainly physicians and engineers), they came from Mexico City, and never considered the United States as a possibility for migration.

In a subsequent analysis, Goldring (2011) found five distinct groups of immigrant Mexicans that can be identified in Canada, many of them coming from cities such as Mexico City, Puebla, Guadalajara, San Luis Potosí, and Acapulco: 1) The "middle- or upper-class professionals who decided to migrate to enhance their professional or economic opportunities and to improve their children's opportunities." 2) The "middle-class immigrants with professional degrees, technical training, or certification but who generally do not have much proficiency in English or French." 3) The Mexican Mennonites who, after historical disputes with the Canadian government, returned to Canada "in the mid-1980s and again in the early 1990s in response to economic difficulties in Mexico." 4) The holiday spouses, a label which also refers to males even when the majority of these cases refer to women marrying male Canadian citizens (as found by Whittaker in 1998), or to people who were temporarily residing in Canada, such

as international students, met a Canadian citizen and decided to marry. And finally, 5) some Mexicans with a less than full status who overstayed their visas.

From 1996 onwards, Mexican migration acquired another facet since Mexico ranked first among the source countries for asylum seekers. In 1996, Mexicans submitted 913 refugee applications, and by 2004, they had submitted 2,656 applications. However, only 25% of the refugee claims were accepted in 2004. In this respect, Usha (2008) hypothesizes that “this may be due to the perception that Mexico is not a ‘refugee-producing country,’ and that asylum seekers from the country are primarily economic refugees” (p. 464). In her qualitative research, Usha interviewed five Mexicans and found among them similar immigration reasons: Canada was seen as a safe and peaceful place to achieve goals through hard work, and with good living standards and opportunities for education. Two of her participants came under the family reunification class and the rest claimed for asylum, whereas only one had professional qualifications. Overall, Usha’s interviewees “often took up low-skilled, unregulated jobs or jobs that were not compatible with their education and training, reflecting the difficulty new immigrants have in finding suitable employment” (p. 468).

1.3. Colombians

In the case of Colombian immigration to Canada, Pozniak (2009) analyzed some narratives about migration in Canada and how Colombians living in London, Ontario, shaped their identities in relation to those narratives. Castro (2007), for his part, interviewed a number of Colombian families and portrayed the profiles of two of those on his thesis. One of the families came under the economy class and the other one under the Skilled Migrant Worker program. Their main reasons to migrate despite violence (kidnappings, rapes, etc.) were to offer a brighter future to their children and to obtain Canadian passports to facilitate their ability to travel abroad. However, regardless of their privileged educational status and previous standard of living, they encountered great difficulties integrating into Canadian society. It required them to shape their self-image, to agree upon a new set of rules in relation to the internal dynamics of the family and, in most cases, acquiring a whole new career orientation. On the other hand, their previous privileged position also allowed them to

draw on cultural and financial resources to pursue new opportunities, whether in Vancouver, Colombia, or elsewhere internationally.

For some of Castro's interviewees, even when some spoke perfect English due to their education in private schools back in Colombia, and the fact that two of them had architecture degrees, they could not find suitable employment according to their skills and knowledge. Moreover, they were forced to take any available job and resorted to working as painters, food servers, and sellers since their funds had already been depleted. In one case, since the male breadwinner could no longer support his family due to lack of employment, the wife found work making picture frames in order to make ends meet. Overall, and despite all the problems that the two families faced with their immigration processes, they found some gains in relation to their new lives in Canada: they felt liberated from gossip, social prejudices, and the constant pressure of being scrutinized, especially by the Colombian upper class. As well, they shed the superficiality that had ruled their lives back in Colombia and adopted a new attitude where they valued the person more over the type of job or status they had. Overall, Latin Americans constitute a relevant ethnic group to study in Canada. Nonetheless, the available literature about them is small –even though increasing-, whereas the literature focusing on Latin American youth is scarcer still.

1.4. Research about Latino Youth in Canada

The first studies I found regarding young people and their immigration processes in Canada were the analyses of the acculturation experiences of young Haitians in Quebec, which focused on their culture, their school experiences, and their encounters with the justice system (Douyon, 1982; Pierre-Jacques, 1982a, 1982b; Villefranche-Brès, 1982). Subsequent investigations during the 1980s, specifically about Latin American youth, would be done in Quebec (Pierre-Jacques, 1986), Toronto (Maglione, 1983) and Vancouver (Smiley, 1989). Indeed, Smiley's thesis seems to be the first research about immigration and youth in general in Canada's West coast, focusing on Guatemalan and Salvadoran refugee youth between 16 and 24 years of age. The same year, some Latin American young people organized the forum '*Mirando al Futuro: Looking Towards the Future*' in Vancouver "to directly address Latin American youth issues" (Torres, 1996, p.4), from which a report was written.

During the 1990s, research about Latino/a youth, especially second generation Haitians in Quebec, would keep pace (Legault, 1990; Meintel, 1992; Meintel & Le Gall, 1995; Potvin, 1997, 1999; Therrien & Labelle, 1993; Turcotte, 1991). Meanwhile, the work of Alan Simmons (1993) instigated additional work on other Latin American ethnic groups in Canada, particularly in the East coast. While other researchers contributed to this emergent area by analyzing topics such as social mobility, racism, economic integration, violence, transitions from school to occupational settings, and identity issues among second-generation youth (Boyd & Doug, 1994, 1995; Boyd & Grieco, 1998; Harper, 1997; Jansen, Plaza, & James, 1998; Schaafsma & Sweetman, 1999; Simmons, 1993, 1999; Solís, 1996; Tonks & Paranjpe, 1999a, 1999b). Of special relevance is the 'Latin American Youth Forum Explosión 1996' and its subsequent written report. Notably, this forum aimed to "address the current needs, aspirations, and problems as seen by young Latinos themselves", capitalizing "on the involvement of youth as organizers, facilitators, and participants" (Solís, 1996, p. 4). The forum was held in 1996, and brought valuable insights regarding the problems and expectations of Latin American youth in Mainland Vancouver. Subsequent to this, Simmons et al.'s research (Simmons, 2000; Simmons, Ramos, & Bielmeier, 2000), along with the work of some research assistants (Galván, 2000; Serrano, 2000; Torres, 1999a, 1999b), would generate more data about the Latin American population on the Canadian East coast.

Overall, only a handful of recent literature has focused to some extent on the shaping of Latino youth identities due to their immigration experiences, either in Toronto or Montreal, some including first and second generations (Meintel, 2000; Poteet, 2001; Simmons & Carrillos, 2009; Simmons et al., 2000). For this reason, little is known about how first generation Latin American immigrant and refugee youth shape their identities in relation to their acculturation processes in key areas such as education and employment (post-migration context), along with the interplay of class location and ethnicity. Since identities are shaped in relation to others in specific social settings through processes of "ascription (other's labeling of ethnic groups) and self-identification (decisions by those in groups to fix boundaries, labels and membership criteria)" (Simmons, 2010, p. 197), the available literature provides minimal referents on how Latin Americans relate to other ethnic groups, such as those of Canadians or Latinos, for them to shape their identities. Meintel's work (2000) constitutes an exception to this. However, the available information is concentrated

on the East Coast, and I could not find anything about these processes on the Canadian West Coast. Accordingly, this study sought to make an important and timely contribution to our knowledge and understanding of youth, identities and immigration in Canada, for which I considered the two following research questions and a sub-question:

1. How do foreign-born Colombian and Mexican young adults' experiences in education and employment in Vancouver shape their acculturation processes?
2. How do young adults shape their identities based on such acculturation processes?
 - a. More specifically, what roles do ethnicity and class location play in relation to their identity reformulations?

These questions led me to do a literature review about acculturation processes of Visible Minority Immigrant and Refugee Young People (VMIRYP) in the education and employment areas in Canada, as well as to look for those studies related to identity changes of first generation immigrants. This review, presented in chapter two, also helped me to set the stage for better understanding what had been done previously, and which other possible areas could be further developed in relation to my questions. The framing of the review was also accompanied by the development of a theoretical framework that I present in chapter three. This framework allowed me to both analyze the findings of the research and to consider the extent to which some of such theories applied or not to participants' life courses in relation to acculturation, migration, youth identities, "othering" processes and class location. This background material also helped me to construct the methodology and the questionnaire which is presented in chapter four, and which provides details on the sample, the methods, the difficulties I faced in my role as a researcher, and the limitations of the study. In chapter five, I present the findings and their corresponding discussion about education and employment, while in chapter six I present the findings about the shaping of identities and also their corresponding discussion. The conclusions and areas for future research are summarized in chapter seven.

2. Literature Review

This chapter presents a succinct review of literature on the acculturation processes of VMIRYP in Canada in relation to education and employment, with a sub-focus on discrimination and racism, and the shaping of identities. The aim is to summarize the current state of knowledge of these topics to better locate the contribution of the research.

2.1. Education

Research on education and VMIRYP can be divided into three areas: 1) studies that analyze the academic performance of youth related to ethnic identity and age at immigration as determinant factors. 2) The placing of VMIRYP in specific grades, English as a Second Language (ESL) courses, and high school completion rates, and 3) the educational aspirations of young people.

2.1.1. *Academic performance*

Literature shows that immigrant children whose parents have a non-Canadian cultural understanding of their own roles in their children's education, or those who have poor resources for supporting them, have fewer possibilities to do well in school (Simmons & Carrillos, 2009). This finding, however, is also mediated by ethnicity and by the immigrant's (or her household's) class location, as Gunderson (2004) found among some ethnic groups. For example, Mandarin- and Cantonese-speaking students with upper-class locations were found to have received higher grade averages than Canadian-born students, while the latter outperformed Spanish-, Vietnamese-, Indian-, and Tagalog-speaking students (Gunderson, 2007). The literature also shows that the younger immigrants are incorporated into the Canadian school system, the more time they spend in school settings, and the less they are exposed to ESL classes at school and to their mother tongue at home, their academic achievement increases comparable to that of Canadian-born students. Therefore, a general low academic performance is found among those

immigrants who landed in their teen years. Nonetheless, it is not just age at migration that influences VMIRYP's educational performance. Other factors include the characteristics of the school that young immigrants attend (Dhawan-Biswal & Gluszynski, 2006), and whether or not they belong to single-parent families. In addition, Toohey and Derwing (2006) found that there is certain tendency for males to underachieve academically, adding a gendered layer to the issue of academic performance.

2.1.2. Grade placing, ESL and high school completion rates

VMIRYP have consistently been placed in school grades too low according to their pre-migration grades or their age. The argument behind such measures is that they do not have the same academic and/or language level than Canadian-born students, for which they need to catch up, generating feelings of frustration or disappointment among these students (Arráiz Matute, 2010; Wilkinson et al., 2010). In relation to ESL or French as a second language, such courses are seen as positive by students in lower socioeconomic neighborhoods, and problematic among students who belong to higher socioeconomic schools. The latter consider that these courses "interfere with their preparation for university" or that these "are places for second-class students, those who had little chance to go on to university" (Gunderson, 2000, p. 699). Concerning high school completion rates and dropouts, Rummens (2006 cited in Biles & Lafrance, 2009) and Anisef et al. (2008) respectively found that ESL students are two to three times more likely to drop out of school, as well as those who did not accumulate the required credits by grade 9. Moreover, class location, ethnic belonging and immigration status have also been identified as elements that can influence whether or not a student will dropout. For example, students who attended schools located in the affluent west side of Vancouver graduated on average more ESL students than those located on the east side, while young people who live in somewhat deprived areas experienced higher dropout rates (Anisef et al., 2008).

Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and Indo-Punjabi speaking students also showed a higher tendency to drop out (Anisef et al., 2008; Brown, 2006). In addition, students who migrated as refugees tended to have interruptions in their education or had little education in general compared to non-refugees (Anisef et al., 2008). In Toronto, 39% of Spanish-speaking students dropped out of high school (Brown, 2006) due to the individual features of adolescents, the characteristics of their neighborhood, their language and cultural

challenges, and also because of the economic, political, social and cultural contexts of Canada. Moreover, a significant number of those students have to work in menial jobs in order to help their families (Schugurensky, Mantilla, & Serrano, 2009). Finally, regarding access to tertiary education among Latin American youth, Simmons (2004) found that women “are more likely to pursue university studies by ages 20-24 than are young men,” whereas men look for vocational training courses as a quick solution to obtain an income. Indeed, “[t]he pattern for the male Latin American youth suggests downward educational mobility with respect to an earlier generation” (p. 21-22)

2.1.3. Aspirations regarding education

Education is seen as an indispensable vehicle for achieving upward mobility and occupational success in the employment sector among visible minority youth. This vision had led some of these young people to pursue a postsecondary education or to go back to complete their high school education (in the case of those who had dropped out) (Krahn & Taylor, 2005). In some cases, the results of these strong aspirations are a “proactive response to overcome pre-migration experiences of forced migration and educational disruptions” (Shakya et al., 2010, p. 65). Whereas in other cases, such aspirations are undermined if VMIRYP belong to a low-income family, or if they face institutionalized discrimination and/or language barriers (Krahn and Taylor, 2005).

2.2. Employment

Findings in the literature about VMIRYP’S employment show that “being young, being a visible minority, and coming from an immigrant family” constitutes real disadvantages in the job market (Yan, Lauer, & Chan, 2009, p. 4). For example, while Canada’s constant youth unemployment rate is generally three times higher than the general rate and described as a hidden deficit (Yan, Lauer & Chan, 2009), Biles and Lafrance (2009) found that “immigrant youth have the highest unemployment rate in Canada; 20% for those aged 15-24, compared to the national rate of 8%” (p. 4). Hiebert (2009, p. 29), for his part, also showed that “whatever qualifications and pre-migration experience immigrants may bring is heavily discounted in the Canadian labour market”, especially among refugee people, for whom “their longer time in Canada and their language facility do not translate into robust

income levels” (p. 57). In addition, length of residency in Canada and age at immigration gives a premium related to the employment rate of first generation immigrant youth. Nonetheless, there is an average integration period for those who came after their teens that “could exceed ten years, in which immigrants, generally, have lower rates of employment and incomes” (Yee, Johns, Tam, & Paul-Apputhurai, 2003, p. 37).

First generation members who came in their late teens also face numerous challenges in the employment sector such as language, access to information, non-recognition of education and foreign credentials, lack of Canadian experience, and culture shock (Hiebert, 2009). These challenges are reflected in the fact that they tend to have less desirable jobs compared to the general Canadian youth population, even after having enrolled in post-secondary training or high school (Halli & Vedanand, 2007; Wilkinson et al., 2010). Such situations generate frustration in some immigrants since they feel that after having invested years on their education in their countries of origin, they have to either start from zero (Pozniak, 2009) or seek low-wage jobs in the service sector. Precisely, it is because of the development of the service sector and its creation of numerous low-wage entry-level service jobs in Vancouver that there has been an intense promotion of short training courses and certifications. These courses have allowed VMIRYP, on the one hand, to access employments that require either minimal education or training in a really short period of time (Yan et al., 2009), while on the other, such jobs have also limited their economic advancement (Anisef et al., 2008; Boyd & Grieco, 1998). In addition, Simmons and Carrillos (2009), as well as Meintel (2000), found that most Latino youth in Toronto and Montreal that participated in their research were still in school or involved in some kind of formal training program, and almost all had work experience and were working part time.

2.3. Discrimination and Racism

Literature shows that discrimination and racism against Latino youth in Canada is a prevalent topic. Between 20 and 25% of VMIRYP have experienced discrimination based on their ethnicity or culture, and the figure goes higher depending on the skin tone, the ethnic group, and whether or not they were born in another country (Rummens, 2006). Discrimination and racism manifest at two different levels, one in aggressive and

overt forms, and the other in more passive or subtle forms. Among the overt forms there is stereotyping, such as when people consider that Latinos belong to gangs, sell drugs, or are lazy, violent or dangerous people (Gaztambide-Fernández & Guerrero, 2011; Trejo, 2012). Stereotyping also happens in school settings by both Anglo-Canadian students and students belonging to diverse visible minority groups, such as African-Canadians and other Latino students (Arráiz Matute, 2010; Poteet, 2001; Simmons et al., 2000; Smiley, 1989). Gaztambide-Fernández and Guerrero (2011, p.11) also found that “class and race do not necessarily go hand in hand,” since some Latino students who exercised discrimination against other Latinos belonged to the same class location. Other overt forms of discrimination or racism consisted of name-calling, physical harassment and expressions of annoyance, such as when White people say that Latinos are quite noisy and get upset if they speak in Spanish (Ibáñez-Carrasco & Riaño Alcalá, 2002). Overt forms of racism by some teachers were also reported. For example, a teacher in Toronto “was saying loud ... ‘Man, what a lot of Latinos, I hate Latinos!’” (Gaztambide-Fernández & Guerrero, 2011, p. 67).

Among the subtle forms of racism and discrimination there is excess politeness, false smiles (Solís, 1996), racism denial, and institutional discrimination that make it difficult for youth acculturation processes to occur (Recalde, 2002). Teachers and academic advisors exercise some of these forms when they present a passive stance when addressing issues of racism, bullying and discrimination among students. These attitudes range from blatantly ignoring a problem of discrimination or racism even when they are witnessing it (looking away) to dismissing or even lessening the gravity of the matter (Creese, Ngene Kambere, & Masinda, 2011). Racism also operated in a subtle form when the Toronto District School Board put in operation its Safe Schools Act in 2001. One of its main outcomes was that a disproportionate number of visible minority students, particularly Black and Latino students, were suspended or expelled (Bhattacharjee, 2003; Daniel & Bondy, 2008). In the particular case of Latinos, race was the central identity marker that triggered such outcomes, as one community worker put it: “In my experience, it is indigenous, Black and mixed Latinos who are being suspended and expelled, not White Latinos” (Bhattacharjee, 2003, p. 37).

There is also a marked under valorization of abilities and capacities of VMIRYP among school staff. Some of these expressions are made evident when certain ethnic

groups such as Latino and Black students are identified as problematic (Bhattacharjee, 2003). Other examples include when VMIRYP are “placed on a trajectory of low expectations almost guaranteed to produce low academic achievement,” where “university education [is] considered out of reach” for them and therefore they are directed toward semi-skilled careers (Creese et al., 2011, p. 28). These predetermined expectations also go hand in hand with Latino students “perception of teacher preferences for students from other ethnolinguistic and socioeconomic groups” (Gaztambide-Fernández & Guerrero, 2011, p. 70).

Yee et al. (2003) also found that employment counselors in Toronto recognized “the prevalence and existence of [overt] racism in the Canadian workplace environment” (p. 45), especially in relation to VMIRYP. Shahsiah (2006), for her part, acknowledged that there is little research about the struggles of racialized immigrant youth in Canada, and how such invisibility creates the impression that immigrants are passive victims of the processes and structures in which they are found. However, VMIRYP sometimes exert their agency capacities; for example when standing up in school settings (Poteet, 2001), or when developing ethnic pride, such as the Salvadoran mothers and daughters who developed stronger connections among them as a way to face their individual struggles of acculturation (Carranza, 2007).

The literature also identifies four salient issues of discrimination and racism among Latin Americans: First, there is a constant presence of racism among Latinos (Poteet, 2001; Solís, 1996). Second, there is a specific form of racism and discrimination based on nationalities, skin color, and status (the latter defined by access to higher levels of education, belonging to urban and industrial centers, and an upper-class location). For example, Simmons and Carrillos (2009) found that some Chileans, Uruguayans and Argentineans discriminate people from Central America since they consider them “less sophisticated”, thereby creating a “source of ongoing resentment by the Central Americans”. Third, there is also discrimination “for speaking Spanish in a manner that is different from that of their Latin American born relatives” (Guerrero, 2009, p. 17). Finally, there is an “inferiority complex of Latin Americans when assuming that Canadians are superior and know it all” (Solís, 1996, p. 33).

2.4. Identities

Identity research among Latin American youth in Canada is very recent. Meintel (2000) found that the ethnic identities of her interviewees in Montreal, some of them Chilean and Salvadoran, were fluid and had changed over time. However, such ethnic identities were constituted more by ties with co-ethnic members and with other ethnic groups, structurally or culturally similar (transethnicity) than with Franco-Québécois. Indeed, Meintel's research participants drew their identities contrasting them to those of Franco-Québécois. As a result, the former recognized in themselves identity characteristics such as "family obligation, respect for elders and (in most of the immigrant groups) more conservative behavior on the part of women." In opposition, they found "individualism, lack of respect and sexual looseness [among] [...] the native-born Québécois population" (p. 27). An exception regarding a conservative stance in relation to sexuality was found only among Chileans due to their parents' liberal-minded stance.

Young people's ethnic identities also constituted a basis for connectedness across national boundaries, for which Chileans and Salvadorans felt part of a community connecting Guatemalans, Colombians, Mexicans, Uruguayans, etc., and where "music, language, patterns of sociability, similar political concerns, and the Catholic religion" were mentioned as points of convergence (Meintel, 2000, p. 31). Moreover, Latin American youth used such connectedness to be aware and critical of their ethnic milieu in relation to values such as that of machismo, a finding also found by Poteet (2001). Simmons and Carrillos (2009) found that significant identities' dimensions among Latin American youth in Toronto were constantly negotiated in specific contexts, for which they were "often hybrid, bringing together diverse elements into a new identity collage" (p. 2) conceptualized as a Latin American or a Latino identity. The mentioned authors also found that Latin American immigrants who arrived as adults initially identified themselves as members of their countries of origin, while Canadians tended to label them as Latin Americans or Spanish speakers. For this reason, Latin American participants adopted such identity labels when socializing in general, but tended to prefer the Latino label since this allowed them to emphasize their regional common values and cultures (such as family cohesion and respect's for elders), and not just the Spanish language, as emphasized by the Hispanic label.

The negotiation and consolidation between what youth “perceived to be the meaning of being a Latino/a as well as how others affix the Latino/a label on them and behave towards them”, constitute then, a “major component of the identity formation” of Latin American youth (Guerrero, 2009, p. 16). For her part, while analyzing hip-hop and performativity, Poteet (2001) identified that the adoption of the Latino label was an identity change *per se* among immigrant youth in Toronto, since her participants used to identify themselves as nationals of their country of origin before immigrating. Their new Latino/a-ness was developed in part by a Canadian context which accentuated some shared cultural values among Latinos, as Guerrero also posits (2009), but also by oppositional terms “of what is lacking in Canada from the perspective of Latin Americans” (Poteet, 2001, p. 61). Simmons and Carrillos (2009) also found that the Latino label has two contradictory tendencies: “On the positive side, it is a source of cultural pride and group solidarity/safety/resistance [...]. On the negative side, the term Latino is also used by those who wish to negatively stereotype the community” (p. 10).

To resolve this dilemma, youth chose between two ways of shaping their identities: developing a dual segmentation of identities between a Latino/a identity and an English/White identity, or building bridges that cut across the Latino-White divide. With relation to the first option, some Latino youth “speak English perfectly and have all the cultural knowledge necessary to ‘pass’ as non-Latin American” (an English/White identity), while at the same time they have enough knowledge of the Spanish language “and Latin American cultural knowledge to be fully accepted as a member of the Latin American community. This allows such individuals to strategically decide which identity role to play in any given context” (p. 10-11). With relation to the second option, Latino/a youth developed social solidarity and a shared identity with non-Latinos without giving up their Latino side of their identity.

Poteet (2001) found three other identity changes among Latino youth in Toronto. The first one, deemed as the most relevant, is that “several youths said that [immigration] had made them and their families more tolerant of others and they saw this as a positive change.” The second one is related to “the word ‘respect,’ [which] came up again and again” (p. 68) across different social contexts, and which was embraced as a value by youth. The third one was also identified by Smiley (1989), and is related to Latina women. Women found more freedom in Canada and demanded more independence despite the opposition

of their husbands and fathers, who saw those changes in negative terms since they lost their patriarchal privileges. Poteet (2001) also noted that even when men were not supportive of these changes, women received general support from other Latin Americans.

Simmons et al. (2000) also found among youth in Toronto that many reported “conflicts with their parents over issues of personal autonomy,” motivated by a Canadian context characterized by a dominant individuality. Youths’ evolving personal autonomy in Canada was confronted by the values of Latino’s parental authority and family solidarity, generating tension and negotiations among family members. However, such conflicts did not lead to a generational split since basically youth supported their parent’s values. Smiley (1989) found a more complicated situation among Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugee youth in Vancouver as liberal Canadian values were a reason for constant conflict between parents and youth. This condition translated into an increasing control by parents over children, more over daughters than over sons, since youth felt they had more freedom and power in Canada than in their countries of origin. Smiley also found that the refugee experience “put a great deal of stress and strain on family relations” (p. 61), leading to separations, but in other cases this also united the family members.

3. Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this chapter is to present some theoretical concepts useful for the analysis of the findings of the research. It is organized into the following sections: Firstly, I present an overview of migration as a product of political, economic, and globalization processes. I connect this material later in the second section to the processes of acculturation and the concept of assimilation. Finally, I introduce the concepts of youth, identities, Othering and Canadianness.

3.1. Migration

Migration is constituted by a complex set of social experiences and structural processes conformed as a system that involve diverse geographies, technologies, political issues, economies, cultures, as well as differentiated constructions and patterns of gender, class, ethnicities, life cycles and identities (Castles & Miller, 2009; Massey, 1999). Besides, migration is not only a product of push and pull macro-structural factors working towards an equilibrium point in the labor economy (Todaro, 1969), but also a set of processes influenced by political or historical events, and familial and communal dynamics (Castles & Miller, 2009; Massey, 1999). The expansion of capital by means of global trade and investment into less developed nations has also set off international migration when dislocating local production processes (Sassen, 2001), whereas the concentration of capital in big, global cities, has also promoted the restructuring of global and labor markets into primary and secondary markets. This separation creates the need for multiple services and cheap labor to secure both the delivery of those services and the paired reduction of costs, guaranteeing the surplus appropriation and the constant expansion of capital (Castles, 2000; Massey, Durand, & Malone, 2002; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Current migration, then, is the inherent result of the development of structural politico-economic processes of post-industrialized nations, rather than simply the lack of development of migration-sending

nations, as it is commonly suggested (Castles & Miller, 2009; Harvey, 2005; Massey, 1999; Massey et al., 2002; Portes, 1999; Sassen, 1995, 2001).

The structural factors that lead migrants to travel, nonetheless, do not impede them to exert certain level of individual or collective agency, since migrants can have differentiated “access to power and resources [to] maneuver within those structures” (Westwood & Phizacklea, 2000, p. 16). Some of the agency tools migrants utilize are social networks and social solidarity. However, Sassen (1995) shows that social networks may contain certain limitations, especially when migrants only have access to very specific employment sectors and/or limited job locations, imposing restrictions on availability of information about job prospects, and therefore limiting their future social mobility (spatial structuration). Social solidarity is also manifested through ethnic concentration (Portes, 1995) or the geographical concentration of co-ethnic people, which works as a mechanism of protection and not necessarily a sign of escapism, as many nativists would like to see it. Indeed, moving away from the own ethnic group would imply for many low-class immigrants a potential risk of losing social and moral resources, psychological wellbeing, and economic gains (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Finally, migration literature also makes a distinction between migrants, who have a more ample capacity to exert their agency to migrate, and refugees, who are forced to migrate because of fears of persecution or because their lives are at risk. Consequently, refugees not only face the processes of acculturation that immigrants also go through, but the former are also confronted by their experiences of forced separation and trauma, the so-called refugee experience (Rousseau, Mekki-Berrada, & Moreau, 2001; Yee et al., 2003).

3.2. Acculturation or Assimilation

Scholars from the United States were among the first ones to analyze the cultural, economic and educational settlement processes that immigrants go through following intercultural contact. As a result, different theoretical explanations have been elaborated as well as contested. One of the most criticized theories is that of classic assimilation (Alba & Nee, 1999), which establishes that after two or three generations, immigrant descents will fully adopt the ethnic and cultural practices of the host society, being undistinguishable from other locals. In opposition to the assimilationist perspective, one of the most widely known acculturation paradigms, besides that of the segmented assimilation paradigm (Portes &

Rumbaut, 2001; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Zhou, 1999), is that of the Canadian psychologist John W. Berry. For Berry (1987, in Tonks & Paranjpe, 1999a), acculturation is “a normative process which may involve [changes in] personal values and habits (dress, eating), beliefs (religion, political ideology), social relationships (marriage, clubs), and identity (as belonging to one’s heritage group or to the new society)” (p. 4).

The acculturation process can take different pathways according to the migrants’ pre- and post- contextual circumstances, as well as the host society member’s attitudes regarding immigrants (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006). In relation to immigrants’ acculturation possibilities, there are four possible outcomes: 1) Assimilation: individuals who do not want to keep their cultural heritage and look to take part actively in the mainstream society (the classic assimilation concept). 2) Separation: immigrants keep their original culture and avoid interaction with others. 3) Integration: immigrants keep their primary cultural elements and look to interact with other ethnic groups. This position suggests “the integration of various facets of identity. Here the person has adopted identifications with traditions and values from two or more cultures. It is expected that he/she usually engages in activities from these traditions, often synthesizing them into a novel style of living through these traditions” (Tonks & Paranjpe, 1999b, p. 5). And 4) marginalization, where immigrants do not have the interest in both keeping their own culture and in having relations with the dominant or other cultural groups.

Immigrants’ acculturation processes are also shaped by differences in their migration reasons, age of arrival, gender and their availability or lack of social networks (Berry, Poortinga, Breugelmans, Chasiotis, & Sam, 2011; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). For example, immigrants may experience less stress than those who migrate as refugees. Additionally, those who have more education or social support face fewer difficulties than those who do not. Portes and Rumbaut (2001, p. 51) also found that sometimes immigrants’ offspring become “their parents’ parents”, taking decisions for their parents since they know (or are more fluid in) the local language and the culture of the country of reception.

3.3. Identit(ies) and Othering processes

3.3.1. Youth and identities

The late nineteenth century represents an era in which “the creation of a separate culture defined by fashion, commercial recreation, sexual experimentation, and membership in an age cohort” (Chinn, 2009, p. 3) constituted a differentiated social group in the West, that of the so-called adolescence. This particular Western, instituted social phase was shaped by the interrelationship developed between the spheres of work and education, the increasing specialization of certain trades, and the corresponding certification of knowledge in order to gain a job placement. The resulting social moratorium, or emerging young adulthood, where young people could explore and experiment before acquiring pre-specified adult roles (Arnett, 2000), allowed for the formulation and development of specific youth cultures or sub-cultures.

Currently, the majority of sociological perspectives consider that there is not a single conceptualization of what a young person is, since there are a variety of factors in play that need to be carefully considered according to each specific social group (Best, 2011). It is then, the sociocultural systems of values and material conditions that generate diverse circumstances where individuals acquire and shape the status of youth rather than by a specific biological condition such as age (Côté & Allaha, 2006; Reguillo, 2000). This is possible because the process of knowing the world is both subjective and constructed by social relations (Berger & Luckmann, 1989), and because identities have both an inner adaptive capacity for change and a capacity to be altered or shaped by outside forces or influences (Fanon, 1965). For Stevenson (2006, para 4), this mutability is “the ability to be able to tell a story about the self and [its] related communities [...] that has to be constantly retold and reformulated in the light of new circumstances”. Furthermore, he points out the preference for the use of the term identities over identity, signaling the complexity of the constitutive processes around the Self.

Identities are socially and continually constructed, “relational or comparative, and contextual in nature”, for which “identity[ies] cannot be defined in isolation, but can only be known and understood when contrasted to or pitted against something that is considered different” (Shahsiah, 2006, p. 3). Identities are also shaped when youth make use of discursive repertoires “to make sense of, interpret and narrate” the worlds they occupy in

different interactional and institutional fields. That is to say, “identities are less likely to be defined as things we have and more likely to be conceptualized as processes-things we do.” Identities then, materialize as they become meaningful through activities and interactions within a set of social relations (Best, 2011, p. 909-10). Since current migration trends tend to concentrate “multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants” in cities (Vertovec, 2007, p. 1024), one of the outcomes is the re-creation, re-appropriation and re-signification of social spaces, such as schools and workplaces, where VMIRYP shape their identities by “formal and informal institutional practices [...] and the cultural dynamics therein” (Best, 2011, p. 911). In these spaces, ethnic identities also play an important role. Meintel (2000) refers to ethnic identities as the “subjective dimension of ethnicity, to individuals’ sense of belonging to a group that their real or symbolic ancestors belonged to, as well as the sense of uniqueness, unity, history and shared destiny shared [*sic*] with others in the same group” (p. 21). VMIRYP also develop their ethnic identities in function of the valorization or ascription that others make of their ethnic groups (Sardinha, 2011; Sundar, 2008).

The resultant complexity of shaping of identities has promoted the development of notions such as complexity, multiplicity, hyphenation and hybridity (Shahsiah, 2006). However, while the concept of hybridity (Bhabha, 1994) looks for a rejection of a monolithic view of identity, hybridity has also been criticized by Anthias (2008) and Mitchell (1997) for its lack of attention to material and economic modern conditions that sustain the cultural domains where hybridity develops, mediated by “persisting ethnocentric and ethnic based power structures” (p. 14). Anthias proposes instead a “focus on social processes, practices and outcomes as they impact on social categories, social structures and individuals.” This helps to move away from the fixation of groups and identities, and to consider the relevance of the context and the variability of some processes that lead to “more complex, contradictory and at times dialogical positionalities than others” (p.15). Anthias proposes the notion of Translocational Positionality (TP) as an “adjunct” to that of intersectionality to understand this complexity better:

A translocational positionality is one structured by the interplay of different locations relating to gender, ethnicity, race and class (amongst others), and their at times *contradictory* effects [emphasis in the original]. Positionality combines a reference to social position (as a set of effectivities: as outcome) and social positioning (as a set of practices,

actions and meanings: as process). That is, positionality is the space at the intersection of structure (social position/social effects) and agency (social positioning/meaning and practice). The notion of 'location' recognises the importance of context, the situated nature of claims and attributions and their production in complex and shifting locales. It also recognises variability with some processes leading to more complex, contradictory and at times dialogical positionalities than others. The term 'translocational' references the complex nature of positionality faced by those who are at the interplay of a range of locations and dislocations in relation to gender, ethnicity, national belonging, class and racialisation. Positionality takes place in the context of the lived practices in which identification is practised/performed as well as the intersubjective, organisational and representational conditions for their existence (p. 15).

Anthias exemplifies the heuristic capacity of the translocational positionality notion when mentioning how a middle class woman, once she moves across national borders, the movement transforms her social place and the ways in which she experiences herself in different social levels and ways. This happens not because of the movement itself, but because of her confrontation to a re-location and to "the multiplicity of locations involved in time and space, and in terms of connections between the past, the present and the future." Her translocational positionality in the host country relates, on the one hand, to her story about who she thinks she is, "however contextual, situational, temporal or fractured [this] may be[,]" and the associated strategies and identifications she develops (identity). On the other, to the "range of spaces, places, locales and identities" that she feels she does (or does not) and can (or cannot) belong to, in order to "gain access, participate or be included within (belonging)" specific or varied social settings.

3.3.2. *Othering processes*

Identities are constructed and posited in the social collective imaginary as (apparently) stable and fixed goals and markers of a specific societal group, be it a high school crew, an ethnic group, or a nation, such as in the case of the imagined communities mentioned by Anderson (1991). Identities markers are then, created, re-signified and shared in order to establish distinctions of identities and belonging, which also function as markers of inclusion and exclusion, and where issues of power and control underlie deep down. The mechanism that enables the functioning of these processes is the formation of the Other or

Othering. Othering can also be understood as the process for which others are “categorised as different, inferior, or Other by the dominant group based on perceived sociocultural and physical characteristics such as skin and hair colour, language and accent, clothing, religious markers, citizenship status, performance and intelligence measures, and inferred ‘personality’ traits, among others” (de Finney, 2010, p. 485). Those who are Othered have traditionally constituted a minority, an excluded group since they are not considered as sharing the values associated with the imagined, ‘mainstream’ desirable identity. Moreover, ethnicity, race and gender constitute important identity markers that set in motion the assignation of the ‘minority’ label upon others. Minority also “refers to any group (whether based on race, ethnicity, [and/]or gender) that is disadvantaged, underprivileged, excluded, discriminated against, or exploited” (Elabor-Idemudia, 1999, p. 44). In addition to this, we can find racialized individuals who have “internalized racist hegemonic images” (Shahsiah, 2006, p. 8) and adopted racist or exclusionist behaviors against other racialized persons as a way to access certain spaces or structures.

Once the social practices that re-create differentiated, Othered identities become “normalised and widely socially accepted[,] they become part of the dominant discourse that feeds into the identification process of all individuals in the society” (Arráiz, 2012, p. 25).” These social processes are what create the perception of imagined, immutable and structured identities. Such processes also constitute one of the features of Othering, since individuals who are socialized as part of the ‘majority’ group generally cannot perceive or recognize the inner mechanisms in which they have been brought up. Sometimes, even when confronted, they deny the possibility of the existence of such privileges and their historical and practical consequences at micro and macro levels.

3.3.3. *Canada and Canadianness*

Othering has also been present in Canada’s history, both in terms of the French and British colonial processes who imposed their customs and values upon native people, as well as throughout its historical constitution as a nation. In general, immigrants have been conceived of as “the Other in contrast to the Canadian (read white). In other words, racialisation accounts for the ‘othering’ of new immigrants whose embodied differences do not adhere to the construct of Canadian-ness” (Shahsiah, 2006, p. 7).

So the identity of the Canadian “we” does not reside in language, religion or other aspects of culture, but rather in the European/ North American physical origin—in the body and the color of skin. Color of skin is elevated here beyond its contingent status and becomes an essential quality called whiteness, and this becomes the ideological signifier of a unified non-diversity. The others outside of this moral and cultural whiteness are targets for either assimilation or tolerance (Bannerji, 2000, p. 551).

Canadianness, then, is the resultant development of a collective, imagined ethnic identity (Tonks & Paranjpe, 1999), fundamentally determined by the “ideological signifier” of whiteness (Bannerji, 2000), and related to socio-cultural, political and economic practices. As Bannerji contends, the dominant group does not consider racialized minorities “authentic Canadians in the ideological sense, in their physical identity, and culture” (p. 553), even when Canadians take advantage of the economic opportunities that some of these minority groups bring to their society, such as wealthy Chinese people. Racialized immigrants who come to Canada, irrespectively of their previous translocational positionalities, will find a set of pre-existing markers upon their arrival mediated by Othering that “have already put a white Canada in place.” And for some of those who come from less developed countries, especially as refugees, “[i]t becomes quickly evident that in a society that preaches the gospel of wealth, they would not and are not expected to go very far. They are judged by their presence and/or absence in social and economic spaces, that they are here to primarily reproduce the under classes” (p. 553). Canada then, is understood by some people as a space signaled and marked by an imagined ethnic ‘original’ community (British and French/White) that has ‘always’ been here.

4. Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the details on how I designed the methodology of the study in order to understand how foreign-born Colombian and Mexican young adults experienced their acculturation processes and shaped their identities mediated by class location and ethnicity in Vancouver. The chapter is organized into two sections: In the first section, I present the methods I used to generate the data, while in the second one I describe the sample of the research. This latter section is composed of six sub-sections that describe the eligibility criteria I used, as well as the recruitment and data collection processes, the methods of analysis and interpretation of data, and the difficulties I faced in my role as a researcher.

4.1. Methods

The epistemological assumption that guided the present research recognizes that the process of knowing the world is constructed by social relations through which a common reality is apprehended by individuals, and mediated by historical, socio-cultural, economic and political circumstances (Berger & Luckmann, 1989). The research approach was qualitative since I was looking to obtain an in-depth analysis of the acculturation and identity processes of foreign-born Colombian and Mexican young adults living in Metropolitan Vancouver. The methodology consisted of a comparison of young immigrants from two different countries (ethnicity) in order to analyze whether or not and to what extent the variation in the contexts of departure and arrival, along with class location, shaped or not the identities of young people. I chose Mexican and Colombian participants since these national groups constitute some of the major immigrant groups from the Latin American region to Vancouver, according to the 2006 census (see Table 2 in Appendix A), and because of their diverse main reasons to immigrate (forced migrations for Colombians and economic reasons for Mexicans). I did not include other national groups due to the time framework and resources I had. The research is not intended to be representative, nonetheless, its comparative design allows for certain transferability of findings (Bryman, 2004), especially to other cities in Canada such as Toronto, Quebec and Montreal, if immigrants' reasons to land in Canada are similar to the ones presented in here.

The research methods I used were a mixture of subject-oriented or topically based oral histories (Larson, 2006; Morrisey, 2006), and semi-structured interviews. I did oral histories with participants since these would help me pay attention to young peoples' particular experiences and processes (Janesick, 2010). Focusing on specific parts of their life trajectories (in contrast to life histories, for example), oral histories would also allow me to analyze in greater detail their specific migration contexts of departure and arrival, especially since literature shows that both contexts determine to a great extent the overall outcomes of migrants' acculturation processes. Moreover, while re-telling part of their life trajectories, young people would generate more nuanced narratives, speaking about and positioning themselves and their experiences in their social structures. The use of subject-oriented oral histories also allowed me to establish points of comparison and contrast among participants' trajectories. That is to say, since oral histories are initiated with a broader question about the life of the person and the participant is invited to speak about anything she considers relevant on her life, with minimal intervention of the researcher, subject-oriented oral histories work through questions about specific topics of interest. This limits the scope of the participant's oral history, and allows for comparability on such topics of interest among different participants.

I constructed the questionnaire considering the literature about first-generation young migrants' acculturation and identities processes and the objectives of this research. For this reason, I framed and privileged questions that sought to explore participants' acculturation and shaping of identities experiences in process. That is to say, instead of asking a closed question such as "Do you identify as Latino in the US?" to explore identity issues (Massey & Sánchez, 2010), I asked questions that sought to develop narratives, where acculturation and shaping of identities processes would be put into play by the same participant, and which would reveal how the participant located in such processes in concrete scenarios and circumstances. For example, participants identified themselves as Latinos and either Colombians or Mexicans in their narratives without the need to ask them directly if they identified themselves as such. Moreover, while identifying the Latino and Mexican or Colombian labels, they were also able to describe the meanings attached to them, the contexts where those labels were performed, and how their meanings were appropriated and shaped during their acculturation processes.

I also added some questions that put emphasis on the types of relationships that participants possibly had with figures such as parents, significant others, friends in their countries of origin and in Vancouver, as well as with other ethnic groups. I considered these relationships as part of their social interactional fields where the shaping of the Self is manifested (Best, 2011) (see the interview guide in Appendix B). The questionnaire was piloted once, and a few more questions were added while others were rephrased. Once the new questionnaire was implemented, I concluded that it worked well and no more piloting was needed. Piloting also helped me to confirm that it was better to ask questions that encourage the developing of ample narratives where ethnicity and identities were framed rather than using closed questions. The questionnaire starts with an overarching question, commonly used in the oral history protocol, and then contains a mixture of semi-structured open-ended questions. In some of the questions, I used the word Canadian in an unspecified manner on purpose, since I was interested in hearing participants' own thoughts on who they considered Canadians to be as part of their identity reformulation processes.

4.2. Sample

4.2.1. Eligibility Criteria

Participants had to meet certain criteria according to the research questions and the proposed methodology to be included. These criteria were comprised by age, gender, country of origin, minimum period of residence in Canada, migration status, and lack of international residence experience. 1) With regards to age, participants had to be between 19 to 30 years of age at the time of the interview, since this range corresponds to a now common age framework used in youth research. Participants also needed to have immigrated after they were 14 years of age, since my research focused on first-generation migrants and not on 1.5 generations (those who arrived before their teen ages) (Rumbaut, 2004). 2) In relation to sexual identities, the eligibility criteria was open to include Latin American homosexual, bisexual, heterosexual, asexual and/or transgendered individuals, males and females, but there was not a specific goal in meeting a gender quota. 3) Participants had to be born and had to have lived in either Colombia or Mexico, 4) and they should have been living in Canada for at least three

years. This point allowed for having participants who had already gone through a process of steady contact with the host society for a certain period of time, as well as to increase the possibility of interviewing people who had possibly shaped their identities. 5) Their immigration status could have been of any kind except temporary status. That is to say, young people who came as international students, for example, could not participate unless they were in the process of obtaining their permanent residence and fulfilled all of the other criteria. 6) Participants could not have extended residence experience in other countries.

4.2.2. Recruiting

I recruited participants using selection criteria, snowball, and chain referral sampling. Other ways that I recruited participants were through the use of Facebook posts in Latin American virtual communities, and through electronic networks that interconnect Metropolis BC with diverse immigrant and refugee settlement and service providers. In addition, I recruited participants with the help of gatekeepers at Britannia Community Services Centre Society, Immigrant Services Society of BC, the Association of Latin American Students at Simon Fraser University, Our Lady of Sorrows Parish, and the Tabernáculo Bíblico Bautista El Redentor church. I also found participants while attending Latin American events in the city. In the majority of the cases, except those in which I met the to-be-participants personally (four cases), I used chain referral sampling (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). Other means I made use of without results were some radio announcements on Latino radio programs, posts on Latino web pages, as well as some posters in Latino businesses in Vancouver.

I purposefully recruited at different places and social networks to avoid the issue that potential participants could know each other or that their experiences were similar. In this sense, I did not interview people who were family members, and I also tried not to interview people who were friends with other participants. The first goal was achieved despite the fact that I found ample disposition among family members of some people whom I had already interviewed. The second goal was not fully accomplished because of the difficulties in finding participants (to be discussed later), and because my time constrains prevented me from increasing my sample size. That is to say, since time was a constraining issue for me, when I found some participants that knew each other, my

strategy at the moment was to interview them, hoping that new people would agree to be interviewed later. In this way, while having more interviews with people who did not know each other, I could substitute the majority of the former interviews (people that knew among themselves) with the new ones. However, not enough interviews came on my way to increase my sample, and when new people contacted me looking to participate my scheduled time for doing interviews was over. For this reason, I included the interviews of a couple (Jacinta and Dante), and a friend of theirs (Jaime).

On the other hand, and despite the fact that I made use of diverse social networks to find Colombian people, I realized at the time of the interviews that three of them knew each other due to specific references they made and the names they mentioned. In order to preserve confidentiality and anonymity, I followed all ethical procedures to avoid any possible disclosure on my part regarding the participation of every participant. However, I would know later that some of them self-disclosed their participation amongst themselves. In addition to this, I also found that four of the Colombian participants had joined, in different years, a leadership program called MY Circle Program under the auspices of the Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia (ISSofBC). This happened despite the fact that I made contact with three of them through different networks.

Recruiting proved to be a very difficult task. My initial assumption was that while being Latin American myself, and having had previous qualitative research experience in Mexico, it would be relatively simple to find willing participants to collaborate with the study. However, the reality was different. After some unsuccessful attempts to find participants, some Mexican people contacted me via Facebook or email but they were looking for an economic compensation for their participation. Since the beginning of the project, I had rejected the idea of providing participants with a stipend because I am critical of the Western notion of commercializing people's time in research endeavors, following a capitalist logic. This, for me, hinders the realization of social solidarity. In addition, my lack of funding also made impossible for me to give any economic compensation. Nonetheless, I understood later (at an advanced stage of the research) that the expectation of a stipend among some Latino/a people is indeed the result of a specific acculturation process. Since immigrants found themselves in an economic environment that equals time with money, or where the economic survival is a priority, the previous social solidarity that could exist among Latin American people is modified

and mediated by an economic value that includes time. The adoption of, or the response to, this new value (the commodification of time, the primacy of money) is implanted into new social relations: the to-be-participant expects to be reimbursed for giving some of her time when talking to a researcher, since now her time has a commodified value. In other cases, and since many immigrant and refugee people are involved in strategies of survival, directly linked to capitalist economic dynamics, leisure time, if available, is preferred to be used for personal, relaxing endeavors rather than talking to a researcher. For the above-mentioned reasons (and possibly due to the disinterest of some people to participate in the study), and despite having used several networks, the recruiting period took four months in total to obtain 17 interviews.

4.2.3. Sample Description

The research sample consisted of 17 young people in total, nine Colombians and eight Mexicans between the ages of 19 and 30. Five women and four men were born in Colombia, and four women and four men were born in Mexico. One of the Mexican interviewees declared herself as a transgendered woman and the rest declared themselves as heterosexual people. In general, Colombian participants' migrations preceded those of Mexicans and can be clustered in three different groups considering their reasons and period of migration: 1) Those that came between 2000 and 2004 escaping from the direct consequences of the Colombian armed conflict (Noemi, Julian, Julieta and Alberto), 2) those that came between 2005 and 2006 for family reunification and social mobility purposes, but not personally linked to the armed conflict (Aurora, Abigail, Angela and Joel), and 3) Cristian who came after 2009 looking for economic advancement and not linked to the armed conflict. In relation to Mexican participants, all of them came between 2007 and 2009 and can be divided into two groups: A) those that came looking for economic advancement and social mobility, and B) those that came escaping from political or gender-related risks (Jacinta, Dante and Nina).

In relation to migration status, the majority of Colombian participants came to Canada under refugee status due to persecution because of political opinions and/or exposure to risk to their lives (six out of nine cases). Three came under the Government Assisted Refugees program (Noemi, Alberto and Julian) and three as refugee claimants (Julieta, Cristian and Joel). In some of these cases, the network connections that some of

the parents of the participants had in the Colombian government and/or the army, or in NGOs, helped them to obtain their clearance in a faster way. The rest of participants came under the family reunification program (Abigail, Angela and Aurora). Regarding Mexican participants, three of them came as refugees, two of them because of personal security matters related to political issues under humanitarian and compassionate grounds (Jacinta and Dante, a couple), and a transgender woman due to gender-related safety risks (Nina). The rest of participants presented diversified migration statuses to enter Canada: the Skilled Migrants Program (Gonzalo), the Live-In Caregiver Program (Nancy), two cases as international students (Damian and Jaime), and one case of family immigration under the Skilled Migrant Program (Gladys). Overall, whereas the majority of Colombian participants migrated at younger ages (the simple average age was of 17 years), the majority of Mexicans migrated in their mid-twenties, being the simple average of 23 years. The age differentials are due to the fact that Colombian youth migrations were part of family migrations or family reunifications, whereas the majority of Mexican migrations were individual migrations (except in the case of Gladys, who migrated with her family).

With regard to skin color, and according to my own perception as a Mexican of light Brown skin color, Julieta, Cristian, Joel (Colombians) and Nancy (Mexican) have White skin color, while Noemi (Colombian) and Dante (Mexican) have medium Brown skin color. The rest of participants have light Brown skin color. It is also pertinent to note that Gladys, Nancy, Gonzalo and Damian had previously visited Canada before their immigrations. Gladys had visited Quebec as part of a school exchange for two months, Nancy had gone to a small city in Saskatchewan to take a short English language course, Gonzalo had come to Vancouver for one term as part of an academic exchange at the University of British Columbia (UBC), and Damian had come to Vancouver for summer holidays when he was 15 years old. In this visit, Damian also had the opportunity to work for cash in a landscaping company owned by one of his family's friends.

Regarding class location, Wright (2000) considers that class does not consist simply of a distribution and categorization of people's possession of valuable things, but instead it is comprised of rights and powers over productive resources embedded in social relations. When these rights and powers are "unequally distributed", the established social relations generate and can be "described as class relations" (p. 10), locating people in different, multiple or even contradictory class locations. Class locations can be analytically determined

by the consideration of at least six elements: 1) People's relation to the means of production (owner or employee), 2) the possession or absence of skills, expertise and credentials, 3) the relation to authority (whether or not the person in question has authority or does the hiring). 4) The possibility of having investments in capital or not, 5) the possibility of not being in the paid labor force, and 6) the temporality of the person's class location (Wright, 2000, 2005). The incorporation of these elements provides a specific map of locations within class relations, which are neither necessarily fixed nor determined, and which is presented in Table 3 (Appendix C). For this research, I have substituted the concept of underclass used by Wright for that of structurally under-employed working class (or under-employed for economy of language) in number ten of the table, since there is no identifiable underclass in Canada, as Boyd (2002) had suggested.

The majority of participants were part of the worker class location at the time of the interview, since all of them were already working (15 participants). One participant belonged to the non-skilled manager class location, and another one to the under-employed class location. Among participants who were part of the worker-class location, three of them also belonged to the petit-bourgeoisie by mediated class location, meaning, they were not directly located into that class location but their parents were. One belonged to the capitalist-class location by mediation. One more participant belonged to the worker-class location by mediation, since she was not working but her stepfather was, and finally one more belonged at the same time to the under under-employed class location due to the temporality of her job (see Table 3 in Appendix C for the class locations of participants, and Tables 4 and 5 in Appendix D for the full demographic data).

4.2.4. Data Collection

I conducted the interviews between December 2011 and April 2012. I told participants that the interviews could be done anywhere they would feel comfortable. Four of the interviews took place in the houses of participants, and the rest at coffee shops or restaurants. All participants that contacted me did it in Spanish, whereas for those participants that I contacted, I used Spanish to talk to them since the places where I met them were at Spanish speaking places. Moreover, since the research was done with first-generation youths, I never considered doing the interviews in English. Indeed, speaking Spanish was a factor that helped me to connect with participants while doing

the interviews. Moreover, I did not find any issue regarding translation of data from Spanish to English for the thesis. I voice-recorded the interviews with permission from participants, and I began the interviews by explaining the purpose of the research by discussing various confidentiality and anonymity issues, including Informed Consent forms. After this, I began with an overarching question (What were the circumstances that led you to immigrate to Canada?), and then I left participants to freely express their own story. Generally, after 30 or 40 minutes, and after participants spoke about their story at their own pace and in relation to the topics they considered more important, I began to use the semi-structured questions. I also showed flexibility both in the order and in the phrasing of the questions according to the flux of the dialogues.

Throughout the experiences narrated by the young people, I also asked small questions to clarify the information, especially with relation to ethnicity, the changes in their identities, or their positionalities in their life experiences. For example, when I asked a participant what is it that she likes the most about Vancouver, she replied among some other things that she likes that people enjoy doing exercise, and then she continued saying that she also had begun to exercise herself and even to modify her diet. I asked later if she used to do that in Mexico before, and after her answer, I asked how was it that she decided to make that change in her life to the point of considering such an activity as part of her new Self in Canada. In a few cases, I also asked questions that were not in the guide: these arose from the peculiarities of the participant's life history. I did this in order to obtain deeper and richer data about specific new salient topics as they arose.

Overall, the generated data allowed having multiple analytical points of comparison among all participants. The average time of each interview was two hours. The majority of participants decided to have the interview in one sitting, while only four participants decided to split it in two sessions due to their personal schedules. Some of the participants, while narrating their life experiences, made personal connections in their life stories they had never thought about, giving them new insights about their past and their connections to their present. As well, the majority of participants asked to remain anonymous, for which pseudonyms are used in this thesis. In general, I did not find difficulties regarding the data collection stage, but in two cases, I did experience deep feelings of sadness in the moment of the interviews due to the difficult situations the individuals had gone through in their lives. In one of the cases, one person started to

cry and I just gave the person a little bit of time to get some relief, while at another moment it was I who had to control myself to avoid crying.

4.2.5. *Analysis and Interpretation of Data*

The total amount of data recorded was 43 hours, and after each interview was done, I immediately transferred the audio file to my password protected computer and transcribed it verbatim in Spanish. I transcribed all interviews immediately after, which allowed me to make some notes regarding the context of the interview or identify physical or verbal emphases. I analyzed all data using a qualitative thematic analysis technique (Boyatzis, 1998) and the assistance of NVivo 9. For this, I read every single transcript a few times and generated a significant number of codes inductively (or nodes, as NVivo calls them). After reading and coding all the transcripts, I reviewed them to detect possible omissions in the coding of transcripts, to assign new nodes, or to eliminate or reformulate nodes. While I was elaborating the nodes, I was also re-organizing them into what NVivo calls parent nodes or umbrella topics and smaller codes or child codes. This work was done along many of the interviews in the first round, since data from the interviews was modifying the hierarchy of the nodes. With the final list of nodes, and once all transcripts were coded and re-coded, I used the parent nodes to help me to identify and to articulate the findings in a general sense, whereas the child nodes helped me to get meaningful detail of those findings. The more salient nodes were the topics of identities, employment/economy and education, for which I used those to orientate the general analysis, and I substantiated the analysis using the child nodes. I also made use of NVivo capabilities to generate analytical reports based on the parent nodes, and then proceeded to get meaningful sense of participants' data using also the theoretical lenses of this research and the comparative elements underlying the design of the research such as class location, etc.

4.2.6. *Role as a Researcher*

My personal circumstances shaped my role as the principal researcher in three different avenues. Firstly, being Latino allowed me to establish connections with participants immediately. The sharing of the language (despite some differences in words) and the feeling that we came from the same region, with very similar customs, helped to identify

each other easily. This also allowed me to understand better some of their experiences and transitions, since as a temporary migrant I also went through some of them. Secondly, the fact that I am also a young migrant facilitated empathy and the establishment of rapport with participants. Thirdly, my class location, reflected to some extent in the fact that I am a graduate student in a society where education has a costly and spiraling up price tag attached, could also have shaped how some participants perceived me. Since some of them have faced difficulties in their own lives being unable to continue with their studies, talking to someone who is currently studying and doing a research could generate diverse reactions and/or emotions. On the other hand, some participants who were involved in or had gone through post-secondary education, and because they are immersed in educational and academic research environments, they showed a keen interest in knowing about the goals of the research and the possible results.

4.2.7. *Limitations of the study*

The present study contains various limitations. One of these is the fact that the study is not representative, since the sample is considered small. However, it presents a deep insight into the identities and acculturation processes of Mexican and Colombian youth in Vancouver that can be, to some extent, may be comparable to those of Latino youth in other important immigrant destination cities in Canada such as Toronto, Montreal and Quebec. Two other limitations are that I did not include gender as an element of analysis nor did I establish a process of respondent validation (e. gr. member-checking), even when the last one would have enriched the presentation and interpretation of the findings. These two elements were a result of my limited allocated time in the Master's program, determined by my funding, as well as to the difficulties I found in recruiting participants, which considerably reduced my available time for the analysis.

5. Acculturation Processes

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of how first-generation Colombian and Mexican young adults experienced their acculturation processes in education and employment in Vancouver. I present the findings of the research by topic with its corresponding discussion, for which I present firstly education and then employment.

5.1. Education

In the first section, I present the findings about education with a focus on patterns of continuity and discontinuity (e.gr. the drop-outs). In the second section, I present the processes that participants went through with regard to their English language acquisition. In the third section, I present the ascription and Othering processes faced by participants at school spaces, while in the fourth section I present the exertion of participants' agency in relation to education spaces and the acquisition of education credentials. The sub-section closes with a discussion of these findings.

5.1.1. Education continuity and discontinuity

The diversity of the participants' backgrounds, which was detailed in the sample description, was also reflected in the variety of experiences that participants had in relation to education. Since little more than half of the Colombian sample was 16-years-old or under upon their arriving in Canada, the majority enrolled in secondary education in Vancouver, while the rest enrolled in post-secondary education. Four Colombian participants talked about the circumstances for which they decided or were forced to drop out of high school (little less than half of the sample), while all Mexican participants landed when they were 18 years or older and all but two studied their entire education in Mexico.

Regarding education continuity, Julieta had attended private schools in Colombia and after she landed, she was allocated to grade 8 in Vancouver because of her age: "I

never took grade 7, and obviously I had all my classes in English [back in Colombia] [...] So, I did well in all my subjects but Math, so I had to go to summer school to retake the course and I passed it. After that, I did really well, I did well in school.” In the case of Damian, he studied at a prestigious bicultural private high school in Mexico where all his classes were taught in English and his performance was “average” for that school. Once in Vancouver, he enrolled at Capilano College (when Capilano had college status) with the intention to transfer to university. In Capilano, Damian took some English and Mathematics remedial courses which helped him boost his academic level and “to acquire self-confidence when speaking [in English] and socializing, even when I didn’t socialize too much.” In the case of Gladys, she registered at the university almost immediately after arriving. “I never investigated whether it was better to start at a college and then ask for a transfer or not, I just came here with the very Mexican idea of [the direct transition of] high school-college, period.”

In the case of Alberto, after a year and a half of working and taking adult ESL courses after his landing, and having disrupted his university career in Colombia, his father pressured him to keep studying: “My dad always wanted me to return to college. But I was 21 years old back then, and I had friends in Colombia who were finishing their careers, [while] others [were] in the middle [of their processes]. [Moreover,] I felt bad because the level of English I had was good to socialize without problems; but I didn’t feel confident in having a [good] level of English for college. That stopped me and I chose a technical career instead.” The technical course that Alberto studied lasted four months.

Some participants also mentioned that they received the support of government loans for their tertiary education (Joel, Alberto and Gladys), while three out of five participants who enrolled in university mentioned the University Transfer program as a mechanism to level their academic backgrounds, as a strategy to save some money since colleges are cheaper than universities, and to acquire a status advantage. The Transfer program operates “when one institution recognizes education completed at another” (BC Transfer Guide, 2012). Julieta, for example, enrolled into college once she finished high school, and then transferred to a university following her older sister’s pathway. She did not stay at the college because “it’s cheaper but they have less prestige, that’s the problem. If you say that you graduated from a college rather than from [name of a university], well, no, [there is no comparison].” However, not all young people knew about this Transfer Program.

For example, Noemi knew about this process because she had some friends from India, Guatemala and Honduras who were already attending university and had already gone through all of the process, and told her about it.

The majority of participants who study(ied) in Canada also work(ed) at the same time, with the exception of Aurora who was supported by welfare assistance and Joel who was supported by some loans and his family. There were two broad reasons for young people to work: on the one hand, there were those who needed to work to obtain some income and to sustain themselves and/or their families. On the other, there were those who worked to get some pocket money. For those whose employment was related to their economic survival, their academic performance went down, especially for those who had to work full time. Julian's case was the most difficult one among participants. Immediately after he enrolled in high school, he had to work in order to support his family by working three different jobs on a daily basis, two of them at coffee shops and another one delivering newspapers. He lasted in this situation for around six months, sleeping literally every single minute he could, be it at the bus on his way to work, etc. Evidently, his academic performance was not good and he soon dropped out. In the case of Cristian, he decided to work while studying to support his mother, since the only job she could find was as a cleaner. Cristian worked a few hours per week at a McDonalds and also some hours as a care giver for a Latino student with special needs, but he had to move to the construction sector soon after in order to make more money. Cristian was working between four and five hours per day, and was attending high school at the same time. Since his academic performance went down, he decided to stop working.

In the second group of young people, those who work(ed) to get some pocket money, there is Julieta's case, who decided to work because

the people surrounding me [other students in high school] were already working and they had their own money, and I wanted to have that as well. And it's not that I was in need [of money,] but my parents were giving me money, and I wanted to have something that I could obtain by myself. In Colombia you always receive everything [...] [If I had stayed at Colombia,] I would've been much more spoiled. Totally.

In the case of Damian, and despite the fact that his studies were being supported by his father from Mexico, he decided to work while studying "because, cool, my dad can

pay for my school but I live like a king here, right?" The pocket money he got was useful to pay for his own amusement. In the case of Gladys, after her second term in the university, she worked for one year at a call center at her university, and then moved to work as a hostess in a restaurant to earn some money and have access to outings, a mobile, etc.

Participants who dropped out of high school talked about their contexts and circumstances that led them to take such pathways. Aurora mentioned that "after 15 days that I landed, I delivered, and three months later my dad kicked me out of the house [...] My dad wanted to impose some rules on me... I was 16 years old; I'm not going to obey someone when I am 16!" Aurora was sent to a foster home, and despite the fact that she attended high school some time later, "I never attended classes because I was not interested." In the case of Alberto, his parents decided to go back to Colombia taking with them Alberto's smaller siblings (a brother and a sister). His sister, a 14-year-old at that time, had entered into secondary school and since both parents were working, "there was not too much control over her. She was leaving [school] late, or she lied a lot. [...] We observed that life in high school here [in Vancouver] is not as much controlled as it was for us back in Colombia. If we skipped a class, my mom or my dad would receive a call [by school staff] asking 'where is Alberto'? Because we went to a private high school in Colombia and everything was so strict, everything was very controlled. So, that was the major reason why they went back to Colombia."

In the case of Julian, his forced immigration process as a refugee prevented him from obtaining a valid high school diploma. When he immigrated to Canada, he had to retake one level of high school to revalidate his studies, but he dropped out soon: "Because we were a humble family, right? Relatively humble [family] in Colombia, well... we had a mortgaged house that we were paying, and since I was the only one in my family who spoke better English, I dropped out of high school and started to work full-time in order to see if we could [pay for it]. At the end of the day we lost the house [...] We used to go to food banks and all of that, and even still we couldn't make ends meet." Julian kept working for approximately ten years after that experience, and he re-enrolled in some post-secondary courses in a college in 2011. "I think that if my parents have had money, they would've paid for my school, for everything! And that's the idea in my country, that [my parents] are going to pay for my studies. However, that will never happen, didn't happen, and will never happen."

Angela decided to drop out of high school for various reasons. One of these was the fact that “I wasn’t doing very well in school anyway, because I had to retake a grade I had already taken [in Colombia], so I felt depressed. And ... I was not doing very well because I didn’t get the basics at my school back in Colombia. The teaching was very poor. [...] However, the education you get here at high schools is not the education that you live outside, right? [useful for the ‘outside’ world].” Angela also acknowledged that teachers at her high school were not willing to teach her the basic notions because they had to attend to other students. She also felt frustrated because many times she wanted to ask questions about class contents or to express her own opinions, but “no, there’s no time to say ‘I don’t understand!’ If you want [some time for the] ‘I don’t understand’ issue, look for some time after classes. So it’s more work [for the teachers], and there’s no time for such kind of things.”

5.1.2. English language acquisition

Participants who came as teenagers and remained in school learned the English language in elementary and/or secondary. In the cases of Aurora, Abigail and Julian, they began learning the language in high school, but since they dropped out, they learned it by speaking with other people and in their workplaces. In the cases of Alberto, Jaime and Nina, they went to a language school (Nina studied French), while Julieta, Cristian, Gladys and Damian learned English in their private schools in Colombia and Mexico, and improved their skills in Vancouver. Nancy had taken a short English course in Canada before she immigrated. Once in Vancouver, she learned English while working, studying and volunteering. In the case of Dante, Jacinta, Jaime (public schools), Joel and Gonzalo (private schools), they had taken English language courses as part of their universities’ curricula, but once they came to Vancouver, many of them felt that their English skills were not good and mentioned that they learned the language while working.

In the case of those who attended high school in Vancouver, some of them were also enrolled in ESL courses and their experiences were varied. Angela, for example, said that “we were the ESL class, those who were learning English, right? It’s a very good support, really, really good! Some teachers are very cool. However, you feel isolated from the entire community, from the school.” In the case of Julieta, she finished grade 6 in Colombia, but when she enrolled in school in Vancouver, she was assigned to grade 8

because of her age. Moreover, since Julieta had taken private English classes back in Colombia, she only had to take four ESL courses and then moved to normal courses. In the case of Cristian, and even when he acknowledged that newcomers are immediately put into ESL courses, his case was different. Since his former private school in Colombia provided him with a bilingual education, he already had a good level of English when he came to Vancouver: “I could ask, and speak to people, and move throughout the city. Then, when I began going to school, I went to normal classes [...] like a normal student.”

5.1.3. *Ascription and Othering in the school space*

Participants who attended schools in Vancouver narrated some of their experiences regarding ascription and Othering processes. Based on her ample volunteering experience with VMIRYP in Vancouver and on her own experience, Noemi mentioned how some high school counselors have a poor pre-conception about immigrant and refugee youth in relation to their capacities and abilities, which leads them to promote technical careers at colleges instead of university degrees. In her case, she was told to go to colleges “like BCIT or Langara, but I was never told that I could go to a university. Meanwhile, I heard [counselors] telling other classmates who were born and grown up here ‘oh, yes! Do the exam to get into UBC, or follow another process to get into Simon Fraser,’ but that wasn’t what I heard for me.” In the case of Angela, she mentioned how high school was “another world... it’s another zoo.” One of her experiences related to her counselors, “people who, if you go to speak to them because you need something or you need to speak with someone, they look at you with certain... like oh, poor girl, right?” Angela also mentioned that Latina girls who were her classmates, “they were little racists, right? ‘Oh! There are Chinese people everywhere!’ and they made ugly comments.” Angela also narrated the case of an African, Muslim friend of hers:

She used to wear a long skirt always, right? And she stopped using it and started to wear a pair of jeans. We got really well along together [...] and I asked to her ‘what happened?’ ‘Why did you change?’ And she didn’t feel comfortable [among others] [...] She told me that she wanted to be accepted, that she didn’t want to be looked at differently by others anymore. And this sounded to me like if she was... like she didn’t want to walk through the halls having people looking at her like if something weird had just walked over [...] I never had an experience like that before [in Colombia], no! I mean, you experience problems between social

classes in Colombia. You are rich, poor, middle class, right? But... a problem because of your skin color, how you dress, how you speak... that, that was quite new for me and I didn't know how to react to that. And I felt like inundated by pride and I said no, I won't be part of this, no! [Angela decided to drop out of school later].

Noemi, for her part, recounted how she was bullied immediately after she arrived at her high school:

My first week of school... I have an Indian appearance, or at least many people think I am Indian, so these two guys thought that I was Indian. And I didn't speak either English or Spanish, or anything. I was quiet the first week, and we were in cooking class, and these guys came and started talking to me, speaking in "Hindi". They were Latino but they were scoffing at the [Hindi] language, and I didn't answer. I think that if I have said that I was Latina they wouldn't do anything to me, but it's not okay to do that to me or to anyone. And they began to push me and took me out of the room, and they beat me. And it was like that all the time. I understood what they were saying because they were speaking in Spanish. And that gave me great sadness.

The Latino students that bullied Noemi had White skins, and other Latino/a students who enrolled later in the same school helped Noemi to face those bullies. However, these new friends left quite soon, leaving Noemi alone, and the bullies would come back to bother her once again. When I asked Noemi if other ethnic groups were involved in bullying, like White people, she replied "no, they were not White. White people... they didn't see me, I didn't exist [for them]. They were Latinos." Unfortunately, she "couldn't speak with anyone" about this situation, which lasted for around a year until Noemi moved to another school. This experience, nonetheless, would not be the only one Noemi had to face in a school environment. She mentioned that some of her former White classmates and professors at her university had a particular vision about people from diverse parts of the world, including Latin America:

Some of the students and some of the professors were very racist towards Latin American people. There is in the [name of the Department] a perception of 'let's save the third world, let's save Africa, let's save Latin America'. [They made] [c]omments like... there are no universities in Colombia and we need to go to Colombia to build universities because they don't have too much education, despite the fact that they knew that I was Colombian and that I was present there.

Things like that. Once, I was almost hit [by someone]. A guy raised his hand against me. The day when he made the comment that in Colombia there were not... I just got upset and told him that he was an ignorant, and that he didn't know what he was talking about. [I told him] that it was a shame that he was taking the [name of the program] since he would probably end up taking decisions about the life of so many people when he didn't have any idea about where he was standing up. And suddenly, he did this [raising her fist]."

In the case of Damian, when he enrolled at Capilano College, he experienced difficulties while trying to socialize with people there. He went to a soccer trial and "I won a position with [the soccer team] in my first season, and the guys treated me really bad, because the coaches go [previously] to recruit people from different schools, and [suddenly] a foreigner arrives, at the middle of the season, and he is accepted into the team. They looked down at me, right?" All of the soccer team members were White young students, and the environment Damian was experiencing was really "heavy... and even racist, because they used to call me '*taquito*,' it was kind of a joke but... no one helped me on anything. They were quite closed people, right? [...] Minimal communication at the dressing rooms, minimal relations outside the games, I didn't make any friend". Damian felt that these experiences were marked by specific local people's ideas about immigrants: "There is, indeed, a difference. You're the immigrant and... you're the different one, right? I mean, not only legally, but I have experienced that this society has marked me in a certain way which devalues me."

5.1.4. Education as a social space for agency

Participants who talked about the problems they faced at school also talked about their exertion of agency. Angela, for example, after facing difficulties in relation to her academic achievement and Othering experiences consulted with a Spanish-speaking counselor and confidant, as well as with a "cool, hippy" teacher, and decided to drop out of school: "I didn't agree following a curriculum where they just skipped the rights that one as a person has, wherever you come from." Angela wrote a letter to the school principals and teachers explaining to them her decision to leave the school "because I didn't want [them to think:] 'ah, okay, another drop out of high school.' No! No! It was not like that! It was something else... I was quiet for a long time and this time that I was leaving I had to say something, even if they didn't care."

In relation to participants who joined the MY Circle program, all of them agreed that the program helped them to understand their own processes as refugees or immigrants, “to articulate where you come from,” and in the particular case of refugees, to understand that their forced displacements were not only a result of an armed conflict but also part of broader international economic-political processes. “I feel this program was like the foundation to deal with our personal issues, with our migration history, and to start thinking a little bit more about our communities, about what is happening there, and what (and how) we can do for them” (Noemi). Participants also mentioned that without the support of this program they would not have acquired the same knowledge and tools they obtained in order to face the challenges they had to confront on a daily basis as immigrants or refugees in Vancouver. Aurora, for her part, considered that the MY Circle Program “is like a door that opens up for you another scenario, because you can make things that you couldn’t do before the training.” Aurora refers to the capacity of the program to generate volunteer facilitators who are trained to “go back out into their communities and deliver peer support groups to other immigrant and refugee youth experiencing difficulties adjusting to life in Canada” (ISSofBC, 2012). The training young people receive allow them to create and facilitate paid courses or to generate different resources with organizations.

5.1.5. Discussion

The life courses of participants who studied in Vancouver showed varied experiences in school settings according to the time and the type of schools they attended (either secondary and/or tertiary schools). Overall, nonetheless, class location, ascription and Othering issues constituted salient elements that shaped their acculturation experiences in such settings, while ethnicity played a major role as a pre-migration element when defining the reasons for their immigration, but it did not have an influence after their landing. Regarding continuity in education, there were those who after studying high school in Vancouver also studied tertiary education (Noemi and Julieta), while Diego and Gladys (Mexicans) and Abigail and Joel (Colombians) studied high school in Mexico and Colombia respectively, and then tertiary education in Vancouver. For Abigail, her immigration was indeed part of an ample pre-migration life strategy that allowed her to continue her university studies, while for Diego and Gladys their access to university in Canada was part of their pre-migration social mobility strategies (individual in the case of Damian and familiar in the case of Gladys), and post-migration in the case of Joel. In the

cases of Alberto and Aurora, they would take short courses instead of a university degree, and in the specific case of Aurora, her circumstances positioned her in difficult scenarios where access to specialized and demanding study options were not an option for her, especially with two children and being a single mother. A short training and a certification were Aurora's more viable options regarding education.

Other participants had to drop out of high school forced by either their individual or family economic circumstances (Julian) and/or due to conflicts among their families, especially the women in this sample: Aurora and Angela (and also Alberto's sister). The latter was forced to drop out of secondary school and sent back to Colombia by her parents as a mechanism to have more control over her, and as a strategy to separate her from the Canadian mainstream teen culture. Since Mexican participants did not attend high school in Vancouver, it was not possible to determine the extent to which ethnicity played a role in relation to possible drop outs among them. However, for those Colombians who dropped out, the findings do correspond with those of Anisef et al. (2008) in the sense that class and migration status influence negatively the dropout rates among immigrant youth, especially for refugees.

Overall, nonetheless, class location was a strong element among all participants that determined whether or not they would continue their education, and also the circumstances in which they would do so, overriding even migration status as Anisef and et al. found. Julieta (refugee) and Damian (international student), for example, were the only participants whose fathers paid for their education. In the case of Damian, even when his father lost his job and therefore was unable to pay for Damian's studies, Damian made use of the financial support of his university to keep ahead, avoiding complicated scenarios like those that Julian (refugee) experienced and that pushed him to drop out. In the case of Noemi (refugee), she made use of some scholarships, her income while working, and her mother's support to study not only high school but also a university degree without the need to ask for a government loan. This was not the case for Joel, Alberto and Gladys who depended on government loans, while Abigail is currently working while studying to pay for her university studies.

In relation to aspirations for tertiary studies, Angela (family reunification), Aurora (family reunification), Julian (refugee) and Cristian (refugee) showed strong aspirations,

but their circumstances at different moments of their life courses constituted barriers for such purposes. While Aurora arrived at a point where it has become almost impossible to access tertiary education for reasons mentioned before, Angela is trying to firstly overcome her structural situations in order to achieve a stable point from which to take off the future, which includes some certifications in order to obtain even some menial jobs. Julian is currently obtaining some college credits after 10 years of dropping out of high school, while Cristian is working and saving money to pay for a short 10-month course he wants to study. As well, the language barrier was a determinant in the case of Alberto, who chose a four-month course instead of a university degree, even when he was studying university courses in Colombia.

Class location also seems to have played a significant yet indirect role in ascription processes in school settings. For example, Julieta and Cristian enjoyed the benefits of attending high quality private schools in Colombia. This helped them avoid ESL courses and earn good marks in school, despite the fact that both worked. They also experienced positive ascription processes that facilitated their incorporation and transition into school. From a speculative point of view, Cristian and Julieta's White skin color could also have constituted another factor that helped them to skip ESL courses; or as Cristian put it, to be treated "like a normal student". Cristian's assertion of being a "normal" student (by implication, a non-immigrant or refugee student), constitutes an acknowledgment that young immigrants are commonly assigned to ESL courses where Othering processes revolve around migration status, class location, and perhaps race. Moreover, the positive ascription they experienced allowed them to skip a situation that Gunderson's (2000) upper class participants faced, for whom being in ESL courses was considered as an impediment for their academic transition to university.

Class location also helped Cristian and Julieta to avoid certain ascriptions that Angela experienced due to the poor education she received in Colombia. Moreover, it is interesting to note that despite the fact that Julieta and Cristian came under refugee status and Angela under family reunification status, their class locations (underlying their pre-migration quality education) overrode their migration statuses and shaped their post-migration experiences at school. For example, Angela's mediated class location, characterized at that moment with economic difficulties, played negatively in the perception of her counselors who felt pity for her, while Cristian and Julieta's class locations did not lead

to experiences with ascription issues. That is to say, Angela was more visible than Cristian and Julieta due to her poor academic background. Moreover, in the case of Julieta, her initial mismatch between her pre-migration education of grade 6 and that of grade 8 upon arriving in Vancouver (which forced her to skip grade 7), was resolved with a summer course. These findings are consistent with Gunderson's (2000) findings, where upper class refugee and immigrant youth have better school achievements, while Angela's case is consistent with Arráiz (2010) and Wilkinson's (2010) findings in relation to the placement of VMIRYP in lower school grades due to their poor academic backgrounds.

Ascription and Othering processes also showed to be fundamental in the lives of young people attending school in Vancouver. Angela re-counted how her African friend decided to modify her identity in order to be accepted, while Angela herself decided to drop out of high school in part as a political way of manifesting against and rejecting those Othering processes she was witnessing and experiencing. Angela's ascription and Othering processes were related to her color of skin and styles of clothes, where the latter worked as a marker of consumerism among her schoolmates, and linked to class location. In addition, the performance and display of youth mainstream identities in high school opposed to Angela's identity, as well as racism, also played significant roles. Moreover, while dropping out, Angela would exercise her agency, but it would be costly as we will see in the next section.

In the case of Noemi, Othering was mediated through issues of race, since her constant experiences of bullying, which included recurrent physical aggressions, were mediated by a couple of White Latinos' belief that she was an Indian person. Her case also shows how Othering is not always performed by an ethnic dominant, majority group versus a dominated, minority ethnic group, as conceptualized by de Finney (2010). Othering processes are also present among minority people. This type of Othering was based on a marker of inclusion/exclusion mediated by race, and to some extent different from de Finney's Othering conceptualization, since it was minority Latinos who Othered Noemi. This type of Othering finds a closer explanation in Shahsiah's (2006) idea of internalization of racist hegemonic images by minority people. Nonetheless, the issue of a Latino minority member Othering another minority member in Vancouver is much more complex than simply affirming that some Latinos have internalized racist hegemonic images, even when this can be part of the explanation. Previous research about Latinos in Canada signals

experiences of discrimination and racism among this ethnic group (Arráiz, 2010; Gaztambide-Fernández & Guerrero, 2011; Poteet, 2001; Simmons et al. 2000; Smiley, 1989, Solis, 1996), confirming the complexity of this process. Racism and discrimination, on the one hand, could be a constitutive part of the Latino culture (fostered either by race and/or social class and/or status), while on the other, class location is not always the central marker for discrimination among Latinos (Gaztambide-Fernández & Guerrero, 2011).

The Othering processes that Noemi experienced in relation to White people in her high school were more subtle: “they didn’t see me, I didn’t exist [for them].” Meanwhile, at university, she was seen as belonging to an underdeveloped country that was in need of help and urgent social and economic intervention by the White, ‘advanced’ world. This latter position, which bears a resemblance to the White ethnocentric arguments presented as justifications for the historical interventions of British and French people throughout the colonial history of Canada (Hanson, 2009; Harper, 1997), has certain resemblance to what Teju Cole (2012) identified as the White Savior Industrial Complex. In this Complex, the underlying reason for the concern of some White people about others is “not about justice. It is about having a big emotional experience that validates privilege,” a White privilege. Noemi then, seemed to be only a mere indirect referent that validated such notions for those White people who tended to Other her at the university settings. Othering was also present when Noemi recounted how in her experience, and in the experiences of other immigrant and refugee young people she has met and worked with, she was specifically directed toward a semi-skilled career instead of a university pathway. The decision of some counselors of classifying and separating students who were born and grew up in Vancouver from those who did not is a phenomenon also found by Creese et al. (2011).

Education was also an element that empowered young participants at two levels. One level refers to those who study(ied) tertiary education in Vancouver, boosting their social mobility possibilities (Noemi, Damian, Abigail, and Julieta). The other level refers to those Colombian people who, through the contact with MY Circle in different years, found a new way of understanding their processes as immigrant or refugee people, and discovered and developed specific ways to have certain access to power and resources in order to maneuver within those structures (Westwood & Phizacklea, 2000). Certainly, in the specific cases of Aurora and Abigail, such resources have been quite limited, since the structures they have had to face in their daily lives have put heavy constraints on their personal

development. Nonetheless, without having accessed the possibilities that MY Circle offered to them (a new vision, access to certain networks, formal accreditation to design courses), such possibilities would have been minimal.

Furthermore, in some cases, participants' agency could be exerted fairly quickly while in others it took some time to develop. Indeed, the fact that there were processes of empowerment and the need for external support among some of the participants implies that Otherness processes played a crucial role in their lives. For example, neither Cristian nor Julieta experienced something even relatively close to what Julian or Noemi went through, despite the fact that all of them are Colombian people and came under refugee status. In such cases, class location, Otherness and possibly race determined the type of circumstances participants had to face, and therefore the type of agency they used, signaling also how class location and possibly race were determinant elements that overrode their migration status. Indeed, the exertion of agency in school settings by some participants constitutes a new strategy in relation to the set of empowerment mechanisms that Poteet (2001) and Carranza (2009) found among Latino/a youth in Canada.

Finally, for Colombian and Mexican people, the experience of working while studying was unknown to many of them. This responds to a cultural characteristic where parents or family members fully support the education of children as much as possible in those countries, whereas in the Vancouverite context working while studying was found as a common experience among many of the participants' peer students. Indeed, all participants who studied in Vancouver also worked while studying. However, while Schugurensky et al. (2009) found that many of the students who worked in menial jobs in Toronto did it to support their families, the reasons to work among participants of this research varied according to their class locations, as we will see in the next section.

5.2. Employment

This sub-section presents the findings regarding the access and type of employment of participants, and its corresponding discussion. All participants have had work experience in Vancouver, which has varied according to their particular post-migration circumstances.

5.2.1. Access and types of employment

In the case of Julieta, she began working at a restaurant when she was 16 years old as a way to get independence from her parents and to obtain some pocket money. She also worked in a small business at a local mall while studying, and after four years of working there, she found a better paying job at a store in the same mall. However, tired of the mall environment, she looked for and found a job at her university in an afterschool trial program, where she worked as a leader of elementary school tutors. Her area of study as well as being a student at the same university helped her to get that job. Julieta also volunteered as an educator in a crisis center for a year and a half doing preventative work with children in schools. This experience helped her to get her current job position in a group home for young people. Her current studies, paired with her volunteering experience, have helped her to better respond to the challenging environment she has encountered at the group home and to greatly improve her professional skills. Since Julieta's father is paying for her education, she employs her earnings to pay for her car and her own things: "if you are in Colombia, where your father literally pays everything for you, this obviously doesn't help you to mature. However, when you are here and you pay for your own stuff, you say okay, this is the value of money and I'm going to spend it on this because I worked hard."

In the case of Damian, and despite the fact that his father was paying for his studies, he decided to work at the same time to pay for his own expenses. Damian worked for three years at a construction store and that "helped me a lot with the transition regarding employment here in Vancouver, right? That [transition] consists of studying and working, in comparison to Mexico where it's studying and drinking, right?" However, his father lost his job and he was unable to pay for Damian's studies, forcing Damian to get a job at his university assisting a Professor. Damian's work pleased the Professor, and the latter has been evaluating the possibilities of offering Damian a full time job now that he has completed his Bachelor's degree (end of 2011). Damian has decided to stay in Canada to avoid the increasing violence that Mexico is experiencing, but mainly because he considers that Canada offers better development opportunities for his future. He is using one of the Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) streams to obtain a work permit as a step to get his permanent residence.

In the case of Gonzalo, when he came for the second time to Vancouver (after having come as an exchange student to UBC), he applied to any job he could in order to get an income to survive. His first job was as an on-call dishwasher at a coffee shop in UBC, where he was also asked to clean the toilette. Then, he would find a job at a software development company, where his background in computers and networks administration was a plus for his hiring process. He was initially hired to provide English-Spanish technical support to customers, but “it was a very stressful situation. They [customers] scream at you, they abuse you.” At the beginning of 2009, with the onset of the global recession, the company was looking to hire an inexpensive labor force to develop its software, and they hired Gonzalo as software engineer for a low wage of \$18 per hour. Initially, Gonzalo’s plan was to work for a year (he had a one-year work permit) and then go back to Mexico. However, since he applied to and got a promotion, increasing his income to around \$30 per hour, and because “the way you work here is different from Mexico... Let’s say that you are respected here; [bosses and co-workers] they listen to you,” he decided to stay.

Gonzalo asked his employer to sponsor him to stay in Canada, but the company rejected his proposition due to economic problems as a result of the recession. They also feared that they could not lay Gonzalo off if necessary. Gonzalo began looking for any other suitable job according to CIC requirements, but he could not find anything according to his academic background or job experience. Twenty days before his work permit expired, a full-time vacancy opened at the company. He applied for the position, and he was hired. The company wrote a letter to CIC making it clear that if the economic conditions were maintained, Gonzalo would still be employed at the company. At the moment of the interview, Gonzalo was in the process of renewing his work permit for the following year, and was also expecting to receive his permanent residence soon.

In the cases of Jacinta, Dante and Jaime, even though they began studying English immediately after landing in Vancouver, they began looking for jobs soon thereafter to pay for their living expenses. Despite the fact that all of them had studied Bachelor’s degrees in Mexico, they focused on getting low-skilled employment because of the lack of language proficiency. Jacinta, for example, found two jobs, one at a restaurant in the mornings and another one in a housecleaning company in the afternoons. However, she experienced sexual harassment at the restaurant and quit the job. In the case of

Jaime, once he came to Vancouver, some Mexican friends of his girlfriend told him about a job available at a carwash. He took the job and studied in the mornings and worked at nights and on weekends. In the case of Dante, he found a job in the construction sector immediately after landing, but after the 2008 economic crisis his working hours were significantly reduced, and in 2009 he lost his job because the company he was working for closed. Dante struggled to find a new job, besides

there were many people and too little work, so, obviously, what happened is that all companies, all the people who make contracts started to lower wages. For example, a job that paid 22 dollars an hour before, they were paying it now at eight or 10 dollars an hour. Unfortunately, there were also people who were taking those jobs, right? [...] and for those who had the possibility to ask for a little more money, [the contractors] ignored us. [...] And this moment comes when you get desperate because you feel like... am I useless? Or what's going on? I mean. Why don't I have work? Why is this happening?

It was after the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, around March 2010, when the job market started to expand a little bit and Dante could find a job in a renovation company. Paired with this partial construction market recovery, Dante also saw how “there were many, many raids made by immigration officials, mainly in construction places, right? [...] And they filled vans with people that were working without permits, [...] and obviously the labor demand increased.”

The lack of English language (or French in the case of Nina) also represented an obstacle to get a qualified job for Aurora and Nina after their arrivals. In the case of Nina, she moved away from Montreal because she could not find a job due to her lack of French knowledge, which was a requirement in many of the jobs advertised. Employment was also difficult to obtain for Angela and Aurora since neither of them had valid certificates or the high school diploma required for many jobs. Angela mentioned in this respect that “I worked at a Denny's last year, and I have been looking [for a job] in restaurants and coffee shops as well, but they require experience with coffee machines and to have a certificate, as well as experience of at least two to three years. [...] And the jobs I've found they always look for experience, for one to have certificates, the high school diploma. I do not have one or the other.” Angela shifted her schedule at her high school for adults, so she could work in the mornings and study at nights, “but I've been

looking for a job for months now, right?” Angela’s mother is supporting her (with the help of her partner, a Canadian ESL teacher), despite the fact that she does not work either: “she is offering me to have stability in my studies. She is willing to support me in my education, so right now I’m currently looking for First Aid or Foods Safety certificates.”

In the case of Aurora, when she came to Vancouver at the age of 16, she spent two years in a foster home and had little contact with the exterior world because the person in charge used to lock the basement where Aurora lived after 5 pm. Once Aurora turned 18-years-old, she moved away from the foster home with her son and went to live with her boyfriend, with whom she procreated a child. However, “he was a macho man... he didn’t let me out! For him, a woman has to be at the house, she has nothing to do on the street. [...] So, I had no friends, and all I did was cleaning the house all day long and looking after the kids.” After four years, Aurora was fed up with the situation and abandoned her partner. She found a job at a Latino restaurant and also took the MY Circle program and an Addictions Counselor Certificate, which helped her to prepare her own workshops and being temporarily hired to facilitate specific sessions. However, her available employment options have not been enough to provide her with a sustained income, and she has to resort to welfare in order to make ends meet.

In relation to the type of networks young people have, some of the participants constructed social networks useful in finding jobs. These are the cases of Jaime, Dante and Jacinta. Jaime, for example, considers that “here in Canada, if you want to work you must have contacts, right? Latino [contacts], or their phone numbers [...] Because sending resumes and all of that is not really reliable, at least in my case.” The job offers that Jaime has found through his contacts always refer to the construction sector or to manufacturing. In the cases of Damian and Joel, social networks have been quite useful to expand their employment possibilities. In the case of Damian, an opportunity to work in a specialized job position opened up for him because after making a good impression on his work supervisor, he was offered the possibility of a full-time job position in a specialized field where access is not easy. On the contrary, in the case of Julian, his social networks allowed him to find a very good job opportunity related to his work experience. However, after he went to the interview, he was told that despite his vast experience he could not be offered the job due to his lack of academic credentials (i.e. a university degree). The post was offered to another person with less experience. Once hired, this person would look for

someone else to do the same job through a sub-contract. Julian's networks connected him to that person, and Julian would end up taking that job for less money (outsourcing) and without the same recognition than if he had been hired directly from the beginning.

In relation to gender discrimination, Nina has not been able to find a stable job since she had her sex change surgery in 2009 because of her gender identity, even when she acknowledges that her situation is more acceptable in British Columbia than in other provinces. For example, when she was transitioning to her pre-operation process, she tried to find a job and got three different interviews that went well. Nevertheless, when she told them that she was a transgendered person, and because she had a masculine identity officially, Human Resources personnel stopped the process arguing that: "I've never dealt with an issue like this. I have to speak to my boss to see how we will proceed" [...], and they justified themselves saying "if you had not told me [that you were a transgendered woman], I would not have realized it!" Because of the interviewers' expressions and voice modulations, Nina became convinced that she did not get those jobs due to her transgendered identity.

Nina also commented that even when she could have taken legal action based on discrimination claims, employers could have easily dismiss the claim arguing that she was not hired because she did not meet the requirements for the job, a situation she was escaping from while living in Mexico and which she is now facing again in Canada. Nina worked in a temporary job in a factory because one of her friends directly recommended her, and she also worked at the front of a pizzeria because, at the moment of the interview, the manager liked her. The majority of the times, nevertheless, she has not been employed at all, and she has had to resort to welfare support: "I live here [in a small studio] thanks to the BC Housing program, because I am under welfare assistance at the moment. I have really tried to leave it, but..." At the moment of the interview, Nina was participating in an in-site soft skills training program sponsored by the federal government (Service Canada) and the private sector, expecting to be hired by the company where she was doing her practicum.

In the case of Joel and his family, when they presented their refugee claim before the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) to be evaluated, they entered into a "legal limbo" for almost two years. Normally, after being deemed as eligible to present their

case, refugee claimants wait for an IRB hearing to defend their cases. Meanwhile, claimants are usually granted employment authorization by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). However, in some cases, the overall process takes longer than average, sometimes several years. This creates difficult situations for refugee claimants, especially since they do not receive full health coverage or child tax benefits, and the social assistance they receive on a monthly basis is “the minimum amount needed to cover only the most basic food and shelter needs” (CIC, 2012). Since they cannot work legally until they acquire their work permits, some refugee claimants find themselves in difficult situations and have to work ‘under the table.’ In Joel’s case, “the first thing was to apply for refugee status, which is a really hard experience! Pride really hurts,” and secondly, Joel’s family had to wait between a year and a half and two years to get all of their work permits. At the same time, they were trying to survive economically since they did not have enough time to sell the fixed assets they left in Colombia and did not have too much money. In addition, they did not receive welfare assistance because according to Joel’s father’s education principles, they should not claim welfare benefits: “and I always said that if we were sick, we would ask for welfare benefits, otherwise we wouldn’t. Those in need can ask for it, but not the lazy ones.”

Joel and his brother went to a job agency to look for a job and they found a Latina who registered them at the agency’s database. Once she had to enter the Social Insurance Number (SIN) in the system, she just overrode it with a default code because she knew they were Latino/a people in the middle of a refugee claim process.

I and my brother were the only ones working. Moreover, my parents became ill because the shock [of immigrating] was really strong for them, and the winter... although the winter is not so strong here in Vancouver it hits hard. Emotionally, it was a really hard experience. My parents were also in shock. Then, my dad began working with us doing woodworking. He worked there for 3 months; he will never forget that experience. Going from being a businessperson with 20 employees to an immigrant employee who is not even respected...

After they received their work permits, they had access to much better jobs. In time, Joel would open three small businesses of his own: one in association with a partner, which at the moment of the interview was under expansion, another one which is constantly operating but on a more individual basis, and another one which functions only in the summers. Among the three businesses, Joel constantly hires employees.

5.2.2. Discussion

Age upon arrival and upper-class locations were central factors which helped some of the participants to increase their possibilities in obtaining a good job. Those who came to Vancouver at younger ages and had access to education due to their pre- and/or post-migration class locations were more involved in local activities such as volunteering, acquiring Canadian work experience while studying in high school and/or university, and developing diverse social networks. Indeed, age at arrival *per se* did not guarantee successful employment insertion, as the cases of participants who came in their teen ages and dropped out of high school showed. It was an upper-class location which showed to be a more determinant issue, fostered by a young age upon arrival. In the cases of participants whose pre-migration class locations allowed them to have access to high-quality private education and previous knowledge of English, they found a much easier process of insertion into the Canadian education system and therefore to have better access to employment opportunities or to experiences that can guarantee them better future employment possibilities. These are the cases of Julieta, Abigail and Joel (Colombians), and Damian and Gonzalo (Mexicans). In contrast to the above mentioned cases, access to employment among the rest of interviewees was deterred or modified by whether or not they had English language skills, lack of education credentials, the type of networks they had, their migration status, their age at migration, and in two particular cases, gender discrimination and the initial processes of refugee claims respectively.

Structural circumstances also shaped the employability of young people. For example, despite the fact that Canada actively promotes the immigration of young and educated people, the 2008 economic crisis changed the fate of those who were new in the country, notwithstanding their profiles. For instance, Gonzalo's specialized academic background from a recognized university in Mexico, even when his profile as a computer engineer responded to one of the high-demand employment areas in Canada, was not enough to keep him in the country initially. It seems that in economic crises, and depending on the type of crisis, the Canadian employment structure immediately constrains certain markets, affecting mostly those who do not have permanent residence. Therefore, immigrants are converted either into an economic burden or into cheap, flexible labor in economic crises, or transformed into productive elements when the economy is buoyant

regardless of their qualifications. Dante's experiences in this economic crisis also showed how the employment market was not only shaped by the supply and demand of the markets, but it was also actively shaped by CIC through at least two strategies. On the one hand, it required an entry visa from Mexicans as of July of 2009 to lower the number of Mexicans traveling to Canada. Indeed, some Mexicans had responded to the scarcity of available labor force in the pre-crisis construction boom in Vancouver migrating to Canada. On the other hand, CIC implemented a number of raids on construction sites to reduce the supply of labor and to increase the employability of locals.

In the cases of Gonzalo and Damian, their access to better employment prospects, besides having a qualified education, were also marked by structural circumstances and the concurrence of specific circumstances. If they had not found specific opportunities of getting a job (Gonzalo) or meeting specific people who could offer them a work placement (Damian), their life courses would have been different. Nonetheless, it is also important to note that even when these specific circumstances coincided in a short period of time, especially in the case of Gonzalo who obtained a job offer a few days before his work permit ended, they were already inserted in specific structures of opportunities. That is to say, in order to be able to find and to take advantage of such opportunities, they needed to possess a specific type of education and migration status, elements which were undoubtedly facilitated by their pre-migration class locations. This was more evident in the case of Julian, who regardless of having an ample social network that connected him to a very good job prospect, when he applied for the post he did not get it due to his lack of tertiary education credentials. His social networks, nonetheless, would be useful because he would be sub-contracted later to do the same job. Nonetheless, the income, responsibility and professional recognition he would receive doing the same job would not be the same, which hindered from him other possible development opportunities.

While the 2008 crisis directly affected the construction market, affecting Dante, Jaime and Gonzalo's employability, the crisis did not hit the service-oriented market as hard. Cleaning jobs were still required, for which Jacinta never faced unemployment. This allowed Jacinta and Dante, for example, to secure certain income based on the diversification of their household's portfolio, especially when Dante faced unemployment. Such a strategy was also paired with other smaller strategies like saving part of their incomes constantly, and the establishment of a controlled budget where even when they

have leisure activities, they put a limit on how much money they will spend on leisure. These strategies, which they identified as part of their Mexican identities and opposed to the consumerism that participants identified as part of the Canadian culture (chapter 6), can also allow them to move from their current worker-class location to that of a petit bourgeoisie. This transition would be possible if Jacinta and Dante's plan of using their savings to open their own business is made a reality. Jacinta and Dante are confident that the success of their potential business relies on the Mexican imprint they are planning to stamp on the business, taking advantage of Vancouver's appreciation for Mexican culture and what Canadians consider to be the 'Mexican identity.'

In comparison with Jacinta, Dante and Jaime (Mexicans), who have tertiary education but do not have Canadian work experience other than in menial jobs, and whose social networks locate them in a spatial structuration, Julian and Aurora's circumstances (Colombians) have located them in difficult scenarios where education has not been a priority at certain points of their lives. Nonetheless, their relative advantage over the mentioned Mexican participants is their time of migration, their access to the MY Circle Program which empowered them to a certain extent, and their access and construction of ample social networks through their activities regarding social justice. These elements have opened employment opportunities for them, even though they have been temporary and contract-based. In these cases, their economic improvement has been quite slow and the lack of education has been a decisive factor in this matter. Indeed, when Julian was denied a good job offer because of his lack of education credentials, such decision was connected, on the one hand, to his pre-migration circumstances (mainly characterized by forced migration) and to his post-migration status (refugee) and class location. All of this resulted in Julian being forced to drop out of high school since he was the only member of his family who barely spoke English, and whose economic help was urgently needed for the entire family's survival. This could also be a reflection of the ways that education has become commodified, where knowledge is measured through the acquisition of a credential, irrespective of the experience the person may have. The inability to access the mentioned job, then, was not fortuitous but structured in its origins, regardless of his time spent in Vancouver.

Julian also mentioned that he considers that his family is finally achieving middle class status after 12 years of toil and tears, the constant work of all of his family

members, and “love and communication.” The two first elements are consistent with Yee et al.’s (2003) findings, which signal that length of residency translates into an economic premium after a 10-year period. However, without Julian’s family joint effort, the result would not have been the same. That is to say, the effort of the entire household was needed (and not only that of individual members) in order to achieve a better economic stance. In the case of Aurora, the MY Circle Program opened for her the capacities and opportunities to design and facilitate workshops and courses, as well as help her gain access to social networks which allowed her to join a more diverse employment sector rather than only working in a Latino restaurant. However, her current situation is unstable since the types of contracts she can obtain are all temporary, for which she also relies on welfare support in order to maintain herself and her two children.

Noemi’s life course has been different if we compare it to that of Julian, despite the fact that both landed in the same year and came under refugee status. While Julian had to drop out of high school in order to help his family, Noemi stayed in high school and joined the MY Circle Program. Her experiences there impelled her to work in many volunteering activities which helped her obtain some awards at her high school. Moreover, even when Julian also took the MY Circle Program, his economic constraints imposed by class location banned him from opting for an educational pathway. Noemi’s case, on the other hand, was different for two reasons. Firstly, when her father decided to go back to Colombia due to the fact that he could not bear that “his two women” got empowered, her mother’s jobs in the cleaning sector and at a casino allowed Noemi to live in a more relaxed economic environment. Julian did not have this opportunity: “it’s me, indeed, who is going to pay for some of their stuff right now.”

Secondly, as a result of Noemi’s economic possibility, and even when she was also working at a coffee shop, sending remittances to her family back in Colombia, and constantly volunteering (as Julian also did), she finished high school. Noemi’s work was not deemed for survival, as was the case for Julian, but it was a compensating mechanism to support her mother and family members in Colombia: “I was always a very independent person, and since I saw that my mum barely could pay the bills and all of that, I was not going to ask her for a mobile, for outings or for money to go to the movies. I never asked her for anything, nor money, so [my work] was deemed to get some income for my own expenses and to help my mother a little bit.” Such diverse

processes made big differences in Noemi and Julian's experiences, since these determined the acquisition or not of the high school diploma, the correspondent possibility of further education, and therefore better employment opportunities.

Noemi's empowerment experiences due to her participation in the MY Circle Program and her continuous volunteering activities allowed her to meet other immigrant and refugee youth who had also gone through structural difficulties in their acculturation processes in Canada. These interactions and experiences motivated her to enroll into college and later transfer to a university. Moreover, when a window of opportunity opened up in the form of a full-time job, Noemi had all the necessary baggage to apply for that job which resulted in her being hired. This transition also allowed her to move from class location. It is important to note, nonetheless, that such a window of opportunity was not opened automatically. Indeed, it was opened only because of the offices of a White woman who, based on her own TP and her sensibility to social justice issues around immigrant and refugee people, arranged for the acquisition of enough funding for that position to be opened. Noemi acknowledged that without the intervention of a White person at that particular time and circumstances, such window of opportunity would have not been created. Therefore, the structures of opportunities Noemi encountered at that time and place were structured by race and Othering processes, and could only be accessed due to the active intervention of an insider, which does not mean that White people always have to open opportunities for minorities, as Noemi mentioned.

Angela faced a similar structural situation to that of Nina despite being in a different class location (worker by mediation). Even when Angela landed in Vancouver at a younger age and had the opportunity to follow a high school–university pathway, various circumstances around Othering and race processes, as well as her academic differentials and issues with her family, led her to drop out of high school. The result of such a decision, along with a subsequent decision of moving out of her house and to live with her boyfriend, would result in a profound disadvantage for Angela. This difficulty consisted of, and would be maintained by, both the lack of basic academic credentials, such as a high school diploma, which hindered her possibilities of finding a job (at the moment of the interview she had been looking for a menial job for various months without success), and by her increased dependence on her boyfriend, since he constituted her only way of economic survival. In addition, Angela's boyfriend has a

macho personality, is “immature”, possessive and has a controlling attitude, making Angela’s situation more complicated.

Angela recognized that her current situation has been an outcome of her own decisions, and she is trying to overcome this situation by studying to get her high school diploma and, with the economic support of her mother, obtaining some work certificates that can help her to get a job. These circumstances have made Angela stronger, but her conditions are still adverse. Moreover, if we compare Angela’s case with that of Aurora, we can see that both dropped out of high school and both took the MY Circle Program. However, Aurora took a certificate in Addictions Counseling and has made use of her networks to find employment, while in Angela’s case it has been in part the lack of social networks (motivated by her jealous and controlling boyfriend) which has prevented her from finding different employment options. Once again, among those who had the possibility to study in Vancouver, education was a salient factor that determined the extent of their employment possibilities.

Education in Vancouver was also the key element that allowed Joel’s family to improve their post-migration class location, along with other elements, even when Joel’s brother and sister had already obtained tertiary education in Colombia. Indeed, despite the fact that Joel and his family’s case is very particular among participants of this research, many of the issues they have gone through match many of Castro’s (2007) Colombian participants’ life courses, who belonged to a capitalist-class location and immigrated to Vancouver (see section 1.3). Moreover, their case also matches Pozniak’s (2009) finding among Colombians in London, Ontario, in relation to their need to start from zero regarding the acquisition of education credentials. Even when Joel and his family’s capitalist-class location allowed them to travel to Canada in order to select the best possible city for them to live in when looking to escape from violent threats in Colombia, their class location became irrelevant once they landed in Vancouver. Joel’s family’s absence of economic resources, their decision to not resort to welfare support, the opposition of Joel’s father to sell any property they had in Colombia, and the long time it took for them to obtain all their work permits from CIC (around two years), drastically diminished all of Joel’s family’s capacities and possibilities. As Joel mentioned, they had to start from zero and to look for any available job in order to survive. Once all of Joel’s family members received their work permits, they were able to access new resources and to re-construct their lives. Nonetheless, what Joel

did not have to start from zero was his entrepreneurial spirit. Having worked with his father in the family company back in Colombia where the former made important decisions, Joel acquired a sense of entrepreneurship that would resurge later in Vancouver with the opening of three businesses, transforming his circumstances once again.

In the cases of Alberto and Nancy, their employment situation has been marked by stability. Nancy is dependent on her Care Aid permission to have a job, but her excellent relations with the family she works with has guaranteed her a continuous job and other opportunities, like studying part-time and travelling abroad (Brazil and Italy). This has also allowed her to volunteer and to gain Canadian job experience related to her Mexican university education. In short, Nancy is currently in a springboard that can allow her to have access to good employment opportunities in the future. Interestingly, her class location has not been a salient issue for her, since her type of job (live-in nanny placement) has allowed her to reduce costs and earn money. In the case of Alberto, after studying a four month technical career course and other related courses to boost his education, paired with a market in need of those skills, he has achieved economic and employment stability. In his case, as well as in that of Nancy and Jacinta, it has been the restructuration and push of secondary markets, especially the service-oriented market as found by Yan, Lauer and Chan (2009), rather than other personal characteristics such as age at migration and/or migration status which have guaranteed them constant employment. Finally, the case of Cristian seems to be initially similar to that of Alberto. He is looking to study a short course in an area he likes, and for which he has been preparing himself, practicing and buying some necessary equipment, and which promises him good rewards. Moreover, his class location (capitalist by mediation) guarantees him that, in case he cannot succeed in Vancouver for his own means, he can go back to Colombia anytime, benefitting from the economic assistance of his mother.

6. Shaping of identities

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings regarding participants' shaping of identities as a result of their migration experiences. Since identities are relational, comparative, and contextual (Shahsiah, 2010), constituted by processes and/or things people do which become meaningful and therefore materialize as identities (Best, 2011), the present chapter presents not only participants' self-descriptions but also the ascription they made of others. This chapter, therefore, is organized into the following sections: In the first, second, and third sections I present how participants described Latinos/as, Colombians and Mexicans respectively. In the fourth section, I present a particular attitude among Latinos/as that participants spoke about known as 'crab mentality.' In the fifth section, I present the participants' perceptions of what they think Canadians think about who Latinos/as are, while in the sixth section I present the participants' perceptions of who Canadians are. In the seventh section I present the identity changes that participants went through due to their acculturation processes in Vancouver. To conclude, I will present the correspondent overall discussion of the findings.

6.1. Latino/a identities

Participants made reference to the Latino/a label as a pan-ethnic category to name those who were born in Latin America and resided in Vancouver or Canada. The majority of participants mentioned they had never met any person from Latin America aside from those from their own country (or even from other parts of the world) before their immigration, and recognized the possibility to meet new people as an added value of their migration experiences. Some even mentioned that they would not have met any other Latina/o people if it were not for their immigration. Participants also spoke about them as being Latinos/as, since people they met in Vancouver assigned such ascription to them and they adopted it. For example, Angela mentioned that after she landed and enrolled in secondary school, an external social worker went to the school and asked permission to

the authorities to “meet the Latino/a students” and to talk to them. At that meeting, the social worker introduced all students to each other and proposed them to “get together in the breaks, at lunch time. It was because of [name of social worker] that young Latino/a women and men shared the lunch time.” In the case of Julieta, she told some of the kids that she takes care of at her current job that she was a Latina person. They have identified her as such since then:

When they get upset, or when they are... let's say I don't give them something they want, they get upset and start telling me 'Oh, those Latinos!' And they start telling me 'spec' [...] So, [one day] the children were saying that word to me loudly and I was laughing, because it was something not relevant for me, I was not offended. [In fact,] I didn't know the meaning of that word at the beginning, and once I knew the meaning, I was like... really? Or when they don't know my name, because many kids that attend the institution stay little time in there, [they say:] 'Oh, the Latina girl, the Latina girl. She is the Latina.' So, yes, they know me as the Latina girl.

Participants also assigned the Latino/a ethnic label to people who were born in Latin America: “We began hanging out with young people. We were told that there was a Latino youth group getting together. So, we hanged out with that group of Latino friends, we met other Colombians there, and they introduced us to their parents, and we introduce those parents to our parents.”

In relation to the Latino/a label, participants described Latinas/os in very similar ways. One of the characteristics they described as belonging to Latinas/os in general was that they are very sociable and for whom the value of family is quite important. They also identified and considered Latinas/os as happy, affectionate people who tend to demonstrate such affection, but who find resistance from non-Latina/o people to show that kind of affection. Indeed, Latinos/as have much more physical contact between family members and friends than Anglo-Canadians, and the former are not afraid of having that physical contact. Julieta mentioned how Anglo-Canadian people sometimes get surprised by this “corporal contact, and of one being coquette when we dance.”

In relation to this Joel mentioned that after he broke up with his last girlfriend, "I got a little depressed because I'm Latino, and as Latinos, our hearts break quickly [...] [In contrast,] Canadians are very pragmatic (Canadians from Vancouver, because it

changes [depending on where the Canadian person is from]), whereas we Latinos are very passionate [people], for whom the value of the person is much, much higher than anything.” While Nina considered that “we, Latinos, come from a more fraternal, supportive culture,” and that such culture is similar to that of Quebec: “Quebecois culture is very similar to the Latino culture. That’s the reason for which the Latino community in Quebec is bigger.” This closeness among Latinos/as also made Julieta to feel safe when she attended school for the first time in Vancouver and she knew anyone: “When you are in a situation like that and you find a Colombian or a Latino person, it’s like ‘Ahh! [with a tone of relief], I mean, it’s like home.”

Participants also mentioned that Latino/a people have a conservative approach to gender and sexuality due to the embedded and long history of Catholicism in Latin America. Such characteristic manifests itself, for example, in trans/homophobic attitudes. In this respect, Alberto, Julieta and Abigail mentioned how Colombian people constantly tend to discriminate and make jokes about gay people, something they do not agree with, while Noemi mentioned how her mum has been modifying her position in relation to discrimination and sexuality over time: “My mum now makes less homophobic and racist comments. I told her once that that wasn’t right and that she shouldn’t be saying that.” Abigail also mentioned that homosexuality is still a problem for her parents: “If you have a son, who is gay, ‘Oh no, oh my God, poor little thing!’” Alberto mentioned that “I have gay friends, but when I just landed here they were not... they were more reserved, right? But because one opens himself to all that kind of things, it becomes normal, the person feels more confident to say: ‘look, I’m gay.’ In our countries it’s still a gigantic taboo, he-he. If the person is gay he has to hide it.”

In Nina’s experience with Latino/a people, she said that once they know she is a transgendered woman, sometimes they change their attitudes: “They think I’m a woman they’re chatting with: ‘So cool!’ Right? ‘She’s my friend, she’s from [city of origin], she is tall, look at her, and how beautiful she is.’ However, when I tell them [about my identity], the situation changes, or when they find about me because of other people, they just get surprised. They start moving away from me.” Nina recalled how she went on two dates with a Mexican guy, and when she told him about her transgendered identity, he replied saying: “‘Oh! Don’t touch me! It’s better for you that we’re in Canada.’ And I was like ‘what’s the difference?’ And he told me: ‘honestly, I would’ve taken revenge because you lied to me.’”

Despite this generalized perception of Latinos/as as conservative people Abigail also made a distinction, since in her own experience with some family members in Colombia regarding sex before marriage, some of them just say: “C’mon, kids are already doing it.”

Another characteristic Julieta mentioned about Latinos/as is that parents tend to protect women more than men; and in the case of courtship they want to know the person who is dating their daughter, as it also happened in her sister’s case. Gladys and Nancy mentioned that for some Latino/a parents the social value of virginity is still cherished, and therefore it is not right for young people to have sexual relationships outside marriage or for women to use contraceptive methods, something they disagree with, since they value more the decision of the individual in relation to their sexuality. Another salient characteristic participants mentioned about Latinos/as is that of machismo among some men. Noemi remembered that as a teenager, her male friends were always playing football in Britannia Community Center and didn’t include her or her friend because they were women, and “the more they told us we couldn’t play, the more we tried.” She also has some male Latino friends that are dating White women and are tired of the relationship because “they are accustomed that women do everything for them, and suddenly [women tell them] ‘No! You wash the dishes, or you cook today.’” Noemi finds these situations as positive, since she considers that Latino men should learn how to be fair in their relationships with women.

Jacinta, Julieta and Gladys also mentioned that they have found some Latinos/as in Vancouver who tend to be submissive and sycophant with Anglo-Canadians: “I feel that, well, at least in Mexico and the majority of Latin American countries, we come from cultures that have been conquered, right? So you’re accustomed to follow rules, or to [feel] less than others [...] So, some people tend to behave like ‘Oh, you’re Canadian! [I owe you] more respect’, and I’ve seen this [attitude] on many Latinos. [...] Like you devalue yourself, and you position them [Anglo-Canadian people] at an upper level” (Gladys). Jacinta has found this attitude as well but in a different social setting: “we know a lady who said: ‘Oh, my daughter has a Canadian boyfriend!’ and the boyfriend is a lazy, junkie, good for nothing guy, but ‘oh! He’s Canadian!’” Jacinta has also noted that some Latino/a people in menial or blue-collar work environments “tend to be like... how are they called? Ass kissers? Honestly! They are like ‘yes boss, yes boss, yes, kick my ass and I still be here.’”

6.2. Colombians

Besides describing who Latinos/as were for them and some of the characteristics they identify with as Latinas/os themselves, Colombian participants also talked specifically about Colombians as being people with “so many prejudices” (Abigail), but who are also very open, sociable and ready to start a conversation even with unknown people (Abigail, Aurora). Colombians were also described as lined by status, elitism and discrimination. Julieta mentioned that: “if you talk to Colombians [in Vancouver] you can note the difference of class. I’ve heard Colombians saying ‘Oh! Why do you socialize with her if she’s from a town? [...] Oh! Look! She dresses like a small-town girl. Those comments are pure elitism!’” In relation to employment, Abigail mentioned that the probabilities to be hired in Colombia because you are “a pretty and young girl” are higher than only considering your own abilities, and Alberto mentioned that in Colombia blue-collar jobs are not as valued as they are in Canada because in Colombia “we rank everything”, something he dislikes because it hinders personal possibilities of development. Alberto also mentioned that he has found among his friends in Colombia that they tend to criticize in a negative manner: “it’s really destructive, and they do it in group, so nobody can tell anything to them [to those who were criticizing].” Jorge mentioned that being Colombian means “to be connected with our culture, with our language, with our history, with our families, with our food, with a way of relate to each other, touching each other. However, we Colombians are also motherfuckers, right? [...] That’s what a Colombian is, but I am a Colombian that believes in a different world!” Finally, many Colombian participants also expressed frustrations upon landing in Canada. They mentioned that once people knew they were from Colombia, they were asked if they were selling cocaine or if they wanted to buy some. Angela, fed up with these kinds of questions which portrayed Colombia as a “drug country”, began to say “Oh, yes! And [I only sell] the best!”

6.3. Mexicans

Mexican and Colombian participants also talked about who they thought Mexicans were besides being Latina/o people. Aurora (Colombian) said that some Mexicans in Vancouver have money and are presumptuous people: “When I arrived here, they told me ‘I don’t speak to you because you’re not from Mexico, because you don’t belong to my [social]

class, or because you're not from here [Canada].’ And I was like: Get a life! Don’t mention your money because all are equal here. You live where I live, we go to the same places, we’re eating in the same restaurants, we go to the same parties, what are you talking about?” Joel (Colombian) also mentioned that many Mexican youth that come to Vancouver, specifically to downtown, have money and come to, “as we say in Colombia, *mamar gallo* or hang out.” Aurora (Colombian) also mentioned that some Mexican women she knows only pursue their own interests when looking to date only Anglo-Canadian, rich guys. In this respect, Jaime also met some Mexican women who date Anglo-Canadian guys and take economic advantage of them, as well as guys who date Anglo-Canadian women who earn more money and end up paying for the outings; or guys who move to their girlfriends’ apartments and it is the women who pay for all the bills, etc.

Gladys also mentioned how she has met some Mexicans who “see you as a competitor or I don’t know, but you can notice that strange, ugly feeling [...] [And they] say ‘Oh, and for how long have you been living here?’, ‘and who do you live with?’ [with a tone of disdain]. Like if it was a competition to see who has more [wealth] or something.” Dante also said that some Mexicans could be quite friendly in appearance, as in the case of neighbors, but once you turn your back, that person “is talking bad about you”. Damian, for his part, mentioned that Mexicans who belong to upper-class locations are classist people, since those who make use of maids’ help have the idea that they own the person (“they are *your* maids”), and therefore “they are different from you”. Moreover, Damian mentioned that it was until he came to Canada and found openness and tolerance for diversity that he changed his previous stance and adopted such vision. In the past, he had had contact with some masons in his teen age years when his house was being built up, and he even played soccer with them, but he used to make a differentiation regarding this type of relationship. He always saw people from lower-class locations as different from him. After his landing, when he had direct contact with other Mexican people who belong to worker-class locations, he understood for the first time that he was not different from them: “that was the first time that I sat next to a mason to talk as equals, without thinking that he was *my* mason.”

6.4. Crab mentality

Some participants also mentioned that there is a tendency among some Latinos/as in Vancouver to not help each other simply for being Latinos/as. In the United States, this is known as the 'crab mentality.' Crab mentality, mentioned by Octavio Paz (1973) in his essays about Mexican people, is a metaphor describing crabs in a bucket. While trying to escape, some crabs will pull down those crabs that are at the top and ready to escape, preventing all the crabs from advancing further. Alberto mentioned that Latinos/as "are quite [...] we are selfish," and that when he and his family met another Colombian family characterized by a very marked selfishness, "we realized that we had brought with us that [selfishness] without noticing it. [The selfishness] was there, [inside us,] and ready to explode. But we saw it 'exploding' with someone else and we decided... why should we keep that [selfishness] that isn't useful, right?" Gladys also identified in her university environment that some Latinos/as "instead of helping you, they try to set a trap for you to fall." Jacinta and Jaime also mentioned how some Latinos/as, once they get their permanent residence, do not share the know-how of the processes or they omit some information. They felt that this is done so the other person cannot obtain the permanent residence. Dante contrasted this attitude with other ethnic groups' attitudes, especially with that of Filipinos, where if someone needs something they immediately look for help among their ethnic members. Jacinta also mentioned in this respect that among the Indian community, if someone needs a job they immediately contact their networks and find a job for that person.

Dante also mentioned how some Central American people "treat us [Mexicans] like... they have certain rancor, and we have noticed that, and they say it, they have animosity against Mexicans." In the cases where Salvadorans, Guatemalans, or even Puerto Ricans are in foremen positions, "they think that they can treat you badly. Like if it was vengeance." Jacinta mentioned that Latinos in higher employment positions take advantage of such positions, especially since many Central Americans came to Canada before Mexicans and got into the employment structures earlier. Nancy mentioned that among Latinos/as "there is a little bit of competition and jealousy. If someone is doing something good, the others talk bad about them [...] damaging other people's image." Finally, Nina mentioned a partial exception regarding the above mentioned cases. Referring to the LGBTQ community in Montreal, she said that Latino/a people support

each other, while in Vancouver “the Latino community is a demanding one but also one that doesn’t cooperate. [...] Everybody is defending their own interests. We tend to isolate from each other in order to defend our own interests.”

6.5. How participants believe Canadians see Latinos

Participants also identified a number of characteristics that they consider some Canadians ascribe to Latinos/as. Some of these views were used by participants to reaffirm their ethnic identities as Latino/a people in an oppositional way, that is to say, participants did not recognize themselves on such characteristics, and mentioned other characteristics they assigned to the Latino/a identity that suit them better. For example, participants mentioned that Canadians consider Latinos/as as being lazy people: “they see us as a sluggish culture. They think we lose our time, but not that we enjoy our time. Here, a lost hour is lost money, right?” (Alberto). Jacinta mentioned in this respect that in her job as a cleaning lady she has also found such belief among some of her White co-workers. However, she considers it is they who are sometimes lazy, since they do the minimum effort in relation to their duties or expect that others do part of their job. Joel added that people in Vancouver “identify being refugee with welfare, being lazy, sluggish; as people that come [to Canada] to be maintained by the government,” and for those reasons he doesn’t like to be identified as a refugee. Julian also commented that there is an apparent Latino/a culture being developed in Vancouver, manifested in the boom of salsa music and dancing. However, “I like to go clubbing with a group of friends because here [in Vancouver] the *rumbaderos* [clubs] Latinos are full of *gringos* (White people), so I have to take with me Latino/a people to feel good. Because here... what does it say about this society? Latino places are full of *gringos* and we Latino/a people don’t feel comfortable in those Latino places. Go on Friday to [name of club] to see who you can find. [You will find] only torture at that place.” For Julian, having Latin fun means to talk to each other, *rumbear* and be happy and loud, whereas he considers that Canadians only chat and drink alcohol at those clubs, which is not fun for him.

Some of the participants who came under refugee status also spoke about certain pitiful attitudes Anglo-Canadian people show towards their refugee experiences. Noemi and

Julieta recounted how their experiences with Anglo-Canadian boyfriends were quite complicated because they had to explain to them many things about them being Latinas. In Noemi's case, she had to clarify the relationship she had with her mum, or why she was still living at her mum's house. Especially difficult was trying to explain the reasons for which she was volunteering with refugee and immigrant youth, since her ex-boyfriend's typical answer was: "Oh! Poor little things! Have you gone through all of that?" Finally, Cristian mentioned that in his experience he has seen that Anglo-Canadian people like the Latino culture, the way they live and their food, and that some Anglo-Canadians have married Latino/a people.

6.6. Canadians

Only two participants (Noemi and Julian) put into question the label of 'Canadian' when I mentioned questions regarding this ethnic group. They considered that being Canadian usually referred only to people of French or British descent and excluded other Canadian people, such as First Nations people and those who were born in Canada but have diverse ethnic backgrounds. On the other hand, the rest of participants understood the Canadian label as that belonging to White, Anglo-Saxon people, and few mentioned that they were referring specifically to people from Vancouver, since they have met Anglo-Canadians from Quebec and are somewhat similar to Latinos and less like Canadians from Vancouver. For this reason, the label of "Canadian" in this section will refer specifically to the Anglo-Canadian population from Vancouver. Based on their own experiences with them, participants considered that the most salient characteristic that constitutes Canadians or the Canadian identity is that they have respect for others. This respect is reflected in different scenarios such as the workplace, where some participants expressed their satisfaction for being treated fairly and equal by Canadians: "I can constantly learn and they [Canadians] take me into consideration, and there's always a constant motivation to improve" (Gonzalo). Damian mentioned how in his last job, while working with professionals with a long-standing career, they treated him like a peer. However, there were also other cases where after a cordial relationship, and once the employer saw that the person worked in a dedicated manner, they took advantage of them. For example, Jaime mentioned how a foreman used to push him to work quicker in a rude manner, "but you can't say anything because he's the boss, right?" And Gladys

mentioned how, while working as a hostess, her manager begun to ask her to do what other Canadian girls were not doing, until she told him to stop that attitude.

Another characteristic that participants identified in Canadian people is respect for diversity. In this regard, some identified respect for non-heteronormative identities. Aurora mentioned that “women are respected much more [than in Colombia], as well as homosexual people. Even when there is still too much racism in that [area] as well, and discrimination, there is more freedom.” Nina commented that “a homosexual or a transgendered person is more accepted [in Vancouver] than in Mexico, even when this varies”. Other participants identified respect for the presence of diverse ethnic groups. Gladys mentioned that “it’s normal not to be Canadian. I like that because even when [Canadians] are reserved people, they aren’t surprised of ‘Oh, you aren’t Canadian!’” Damian also mentioned that Canadians have respect for diversity but made a caveat on this: “there are many values [in Canadian society with] respect to diversity in the Canadian culture, whatever that means, but the value that most represents them is diversity and respect to diversity, right? However, respect is very different than acceptance [of diversity] or coexistence with that, or to make it yours, right? I mean, not because a Canadian respects a culture it means that the person is going to incorporate it to his life or that he’s going to be involved with it, right?” Noemi said that in comparison with some of her mestizo Colombian family members, who are overtly racists, she has found more tolerance in Vancouver. However, she also added that “here, there is a much more hidden racism... like an underlying racism.”

Dante, Jaime and Nina also spoke about Canadians being honest: “when you just landed, it’s something that surprises you, honesty on people, right? Obviously, you have a lot of purchasing power, whatever the type of job you have here, right?” (Dante). In addition, these participants considered that Canadians do not interfere with the lives of others: “they respect your way of being, your style of life. Not everybody but the majority does [...] They’re cocky, they have their own lives and they don’t care about others. That’s what I like! That they don’t screw up with my life” (Aurora). Canadians were also seen as “cold” people by participants. Noemi said that “what I dislike about them is the wall they put between people. We are very open and not just because we’re Latinos, because in Action Team there are different cultures and there are like... hugs, and it’s a very similar relation. I feel that the few relations I have with White people are very superficial; you know very little

about them, and they know very little about you.” Joel mentioned that they do not express themselves, that they are “more careful about what they communicate, they’re more measured,” and Nancy mentioned that she does not “feel that warmth I feel in Mexico, where everybody can talk to you.” Damian, while talking about his experiences living with a Canadian host couple for a year and a half, mentioned how he does not yet know how to express his affection to the 60-year-old lady that he considers to be almost like his mother due to that Canadian coldness.

Participants also found that Canadians are closed people, in the sense that they tend not to engage in deep social relations with them or with other non-White people, like Latinos/as do. They also experienced that Canadians tend to mark invisible divisions in their relationships to avoid close contact with others. Indeed, few participants have friendships with Canadians even when some of them have tried to establish such relationships. Latinos/as are continually and diplomatically rejected by Canadians in the sense that they do not open themselves or do not accept to hang out with them. Moreover, participant’s relationships and friendships are established mainly with the same co-ethnic members or with Latino/a people, with the exception of Aurora, whose best friend is from Africa. Jacinta, Gonzalo, Dante and Jaime agreed that Canadian people tend to keep a very small circle of friends and do not accept new people. Usually, the people in that circle are people they grew up with and have known them since they were teenagers. Gladys and Nancy mentioned specific difficulties in trying to befriend Canadians: “It’s a strange issue since they do not open [to others] easily. So, you have to, like [socialize with them] little by little” (Gladys). And Nancy mentioned that after two years of living in the same place, neighbors only say ‘good morning-how are you-bye’ to her: “They just mind their own business, and that’s it.”

Participants also talked about how some Canadians they have met ignore outside realities: “Caucasians born here haven’t had like... they don’t see how much fortunate they are. Since they were born here, they are accustomed to this type of life, so they don’t have any idea of how the world is in other places, and sometimes they even undervalue other parts of the world” (Gonzalo). Julieta mentioned that she gets upset when she meets new Canadian people and they think Colombia “is a jungle where everybody is running, carrying weapons,” or people that do not even know where Colombia is. It was also salient among some Colombians that Canadian people tend to identify Latin Americans with Mexicans and Mexico. Participants have also witnessed a number of attitudes in Canadians that have led

the former to identify the latter as being individualistic, consumer- and money-driven people. Joel mentioned that his father named these values as the “values of the Simpsons,” where the “value of money is really strong. The value of work is really strong and sometimes it’s even regarded above family. People give more relevance to money, to work, to personal reputation and to the individual. Individualism is really strong.” Nina mentioned that “here, if you have a car, an apartment, you’re worth more than if you’re a doctor or if you have a graduate degree.” Noemi also talked about how the consumer-driven culture among youth refugee and immigrant people put a lot of pressure on parents, especially since children studying high school ask not only for name brand shoes and clothes, but also for technologies such as iPhones, Blackberries, Xbox and Wii because their peers have them.

Joel, for his part, also identified “various Canadas, but let’s say the real Canada is that of all immigrants, it’s a complete multicultural place, that’s the real Canada. There are people from everywhere. However, there’s another Canada, the White Canada where they see people arriving from every single part of the world, and some get scared because they say ‘oh, we’re losing our jobs!’ Other people are thankful because they take advantage of that [situation] since [migrants constitute a] grateful, very cheap labor force.” Julian also talked about how “Canada has created a very cultured system of being, what we call the educated racism, where everything [related to racism] is quite subtle, everything is so fine. [Let’s say] you are a Black person, you applied for a job, ‘Oh, yeah! We’ll call you! They smile at you and they never get back to you, right? So, that’s quite embedded in the Canadian culture, being *gonorrea* [evil] without us noticing it. That’s how Canadians are.” Gladys also mentioned that there is discrimination and racism in Vancouver: “White people think about this [being racist] but they don’t say it too much. They’re kind with everybody. If you hear that [racist comments], it’s coming from non-White people. But [White people] think about that, or if they say it, they do it with people they trust.”

Canadians were also identified by participants as having little interest in family relationships in comparison with Latinos/as. “That’s really weird for me; the kind of disunity that there is in here. No one goes to visit their grandparents” (Noemi). Canadian youths were identified as being sexually active and gaining independence at a very early age. Some interpreted this latter independence as an imposition of parents, where they force young people to leave the house. Noemi said that “it was really weird to see how White families try to get rid of their children so quickly when they are 17, 18 years old, like [telling

them] go to study, go to other place; while Latino families do the opposite: never leave, don't leave the house, stay here. That is really weird for me; like that disunity there is in here." Julieta said that "Canadian parents see it as a norm," and Damian disagreed with some of his friends' parents who charge their children for their rooms, especially if the latter have also to pay for their university fees. Cristian, on the contrary, interpreted this independence as a way of "young people [...] to get rid of parents quickly," while Julian considered that "parents establish these intentional dynamics [of independence], so children can take responsibility." However, participants also mentioned that there were some advantages to Canadians gaining independence at an early age. For example, participants considered this would better help young Canadians look for jobs and make money by themselves, allowing them to not be dependent on adults, as is the case in Latin America where "we are overprotected a little bit more" (Abigail).

Many participants also commented about the widespread use and easiness to get drugs among Canadian youth. Alberto mentioned that "the use of drugs is something quite open, very normal among youth," while Gladys has seen "15-year olds with dilated pupils and a joint in the hand." Julian and Dante commented that for some young Canadian people a party means getting together in a house, chat, drink alcohol and smoke marihuana, whereas for Latino people it is about drinking, socializing and dancing. Jaime and Dante also mentioned that for many Canadian youth spending their paycheck in getting drunk at clubs and getting high is quite common as well. In addition, some participants mentioned that due to this easiness to get drugs and the openness they found in Vancouver for its consumption, many young Latino people are now involved in the consumption of drugs too. Before, some of these youths were traditional consumers, while others rarely or never used drugs before due to family or social pressures since drug consumption in their societies of origin was understood as something prohibited and negatively sanctioned. Aurora also commented that some Canadian young women at clubs tend to be quite uninhibited, to get drunk and show intimate body parts, something she disagrees with because she considers that this denigrate women ("women, they don't have respect for themselves"). While Alberto disagreed with the fact that teenage women wear too few clothes while walking on the streets. He was surprised that mothers take their teenage daughters to the mall with so few clothes, understanding this as a signal that some mothers agree that their daughters

dress in this way: “in our culture, a 13, 14 year old girl wears more clothes, and their parents are more jealous of their daughters.”

6.7. Identity changes

When I asked participants what were the identity changes they experienced due to their immigration, all had three meaningful changes in common in their lives: 1) An amplification of their vision about the world, other cultures, and ethnic groups. 2) An achieved maturity and responsibility due to their diverse acculturation experiences. 3) The acquisition of new perspectives about other people’s lives, accompanied by tolerance and respect for diversity. All of these changes, participants confirmed, would not have been achieved if they had not immigrated. With relation to the amplification of their vision, Abigail mentioned that she acquired this new vision as part of her identity “when talking to other immigrants and other people. It’s not the same [vision] if I would’ve read books about other parts of the world.” Alberto mentioned that knowing “all those cultures opened up my mind a little bit, and allowed me changing myself into what I consider is good to me. One thing we don’t have in Colombia is... well, we have limitations to dream. Because the reality is that if you’re a professional, you need to work a lot, a lot, a lot to, at least, get out of the country and know something else.” Gladys mentioned that she has “known so many stories about other people that didn’t have the same luck that I had, like having a visa and having the support from the government. Others have gone through toil and tears, have been hiding who knows for how long, others came and they’re living alone [...] All of those things have changed me and I would’ve never known about them [in Mexico]. [...] I’m much more open, I mean, I’m no [longer shaped by an] all Mexican [identity]. I don’t know, like there are much more ways to see life, to do things.” Nancy mentioned that due to her experience “I have learned a lot, I have changed my life and the way I see things, and even what I want to do with my life. I don’t know, like the perspective I had before has changed completely.”

Participants also mentioned other changes, such as achieving a sense of maturity and responsibility due to their diverse acculturation experiences in Vancouver. Many of these experiences were related to the school and employment settings as sites where social relations were performed or linked to their strategies of survival and/or advancement. Moreover, participants contrasted this change with their friends’ life courses back in their countries of origin in order to see their accomplishments and identities changes. Cristian, for

example, mentioned that “if I had stayed [in Colombia], I would’ve had a normal life like all my friends had [...] Now, I’m working and buying my own food, my rent. So, yes, I have matured a little bit in that sense. I’m not waiting for my food to be served at the table or that someone wakes me up in the mornings,” as it happened when he directly enjoyed a pre-migration mediated capitalist-class location. Joel mentioned a similar experience but making a caveat: “After two years, while I was taking care of my parents along my brethren, my friends were still thinking on leaving the parental home, and for me that was like wow! That’s a big difference.” “If I had stayed in Colombia, probably I wouldn’t have done anything of what I have done now, and I would’ve been a daddy’s son [...] waiting to be maintained, to be paid for everything.” In the case of Damian, he considered himself to be “a more complete person professionally speaking, and a stronger individual, more prepared for life I guess. I couldn’t have gotten what I have achieved here living in Mexico. I see my friends, and I say this humbly, I don’t see, at least at this age that they can have a level of responsibility such as the one I was forced to develop while being here alone?” Julian, for his part, considered that his acculturation experiences “have made me to be the man I’m right now, because I’ve managed to transform that [refugee] experience into something positive, and it has made me strong.”

Participants also mentioned that these changes were not immediate, but gradual. Aurora, for example, recounted how the hard experiences she went through after being kicked out of her father’s house, living in a foster home, and having lived with a man who inflicted physical and psychological violence upon her and her now two sons, made her more mature. However, the process was not instantaneous since the sequels of those experiences would be reflected on her way of dealing with and educating her children. Social workers at her children’s school intervened, and the help of a Latino social worker who “knew how to listen to me and talk to me” made Aurora attend a parenting course and learn new ways to educate her children. She learned how to be a mother, to be responsible and to administer the money, whereas “if I had stayed at my home [in Colombia] I would’ve been the immature child who got upset because she didn’t get what she wanted. Even if I would have my children there, I would’ve been so different. I would’ve disobeyed my mum and gave my kid to my grandmother for her to take care of him. I wouldn’t have taken so much responsibility, and I wouldn’t be as close to my children as I am now.”

Another of the changes participants experienced is the one related to their new perspectives about other people's lives and the tolerance and respect generated from such new standpoints. They mentioned how after having encountered many ethnic groups, cultures, sexual identities and lifestyles, and having gone through diverse and constant social interactions, which served as mirrors for their identities, they became cognizant of themselves and developed a new positionality. For this reason, they self-described previously as having narrow-minded perceptions and how they gradually changed in order to be more open-minded. For example, Abigail said: "I thought I wasn't a discriminator person, and when I came here I realized that one has, indeed, prejudices and negative images around certain cultures. I didn't realize that until I was face to face with people from those cultures, like Middle East, Muslim or American people. [...] And then you realize that those are unsubstantiated ideas, or that you shouldn't generalize an idea to all the population."

Abigail also mentioned that her experience helped her to be conscious of her belonging to a minority, and therefore to be more empathetic to other minorities such as the LGBTQ community: "Why do we have to see homosexuality as an illness? I think it was also the university [that helped me to change], along with all what I've lived and all that you begin to know. Living this experience has made me be more empathetic with people." Aurora mentioned that "what I liked after [my hard experiences in Vancouver] was that I learned how to live here, to respect people, and to have an open mind towards other people." Noemi considered that the changes regarding respect and openness "wouldn't have happened in Colombia because there is not access to other cultures, to other genders. They may exist in Colombia but they are quite hidden because of the pressures that still exist in society." Tolerance and respect for others, nonetheless, has not been an immediate process as well. For example, Julian, who considers himself a macho man due to his upbringing in a *barrio* in Colombia, is still fighting to change that part of his identity using the help of female friends, "people of color, Latinas, indigenous and Black people," who alert him when he is behaving in a macho way, "so I try to listen to that."

In addition to these identities changes, Damian, Julieta and Joel also mentioned that another change they experienced in relation to their identities is that they now consider themselves to be "more Canadian" in specific, but meaningful aspects of their ways of doing things. Damian mentioned that if he were going back to Mexico, "I don't know how to be an adult there, because I don't know how to perform in a work environment. The truth is that I'm

Canadian regarding labor relations, maybe not on the social aspect, but I'm [Canadian] in the professional aspect." He also mentioned that he has become "a more individualistic person; and I don't mean it in relation to my actions, but in relation to how I manage my own life, day by day. Since I don't have my family close to me, my decisions have to be around me and the few people I've made close connections with in here." Julieta, for her part, considered that she has "adapted a little bit more to the Canadian culture and [her parents] not too much. Sometimes my mother tells me that I am too... it's just that I like to be independent, I like to do my own stuff, but that doesn't mean that I.... I mean, my family is still the most important thing for me, but I guess I have a mentality a little bit individualistic. My parents, on the other hand, they are like 'no, the family, everybody has to be together,' you see what I mean? So, we have some discrepancies there." Julieta also mentioned how her older sister left the house to live with her boyfriend, and how her parents opposed it alleging that "that shouldn't be, it's because you have other mentality, it's because you are more Canadian." In the case of Joel, he mentioned how after eight years of living in Vancouver, he realized he does not think about Colombia as he used to; that he is becoming more individualistic in a "Canadian way", where "people only take care of themselves." For this reason he now feels "more Canadian. One doesn't have that feeling that one used to have [for Colombia]."

Two out of three Colombian participants, who landed as refugees and directly experienced dangers to their lives, mentioned some specific changes they went through due to their acculturation experiences in Vancouver. Noemi said that, despite her hard experiences with bullying and racism, "if I weren't here, I wouldn't have been involved so much with social movements [...] I feel like I'm politically more involved with what's happening in Colombia staying here than having stayed there because of [the possibilities of] access to information, because life in Colombia is hard and you don't have time to sit and to think about what's going on outside." Julian, for his part, mentioned how his acculturation experiences have been quite different from those of many young Colombian refugees in Vancouver: "Many of my Colombian friends are happy here because they come and you can make money, you can study, there are a lot of possibilities, right? [...] they meet *gringas*, they go to the prom in limos, and they experience all of these things like 'the dream come true!' For me that was never the dream. I always wanted to stay with my people; I wanted to stay in Colombia with my people. So, coming here was like... cutting that possibility. Here, in

order to be here, I have to be a *gringo*. And one of the biggest struggles I have had here is to maintain my connection with the Colombian social processes!" Other more particular changes participants mentioned, but not generalized among the entire sample, were the acquisition of self-respect, punctuality, independence, and getting rid of status and class location as central axes of their social relations. The three latter elements were identified as Canadian characteristics. Jaime also mentioned that he has become more open with his family members in Mexico regarding his feelings and that he has limited his corporal contact with other people, characteristic of Latinas/os, due to the rejection he has experienced in Vancouver. Finally, Joel mentioned that he has become more individualistic, just as Canadians are.

6.8. Discussion

All participants, while experiencing and responding to their acculturation experiences, mentioned that such experiences shaped their identities producing a new Self. This new Self was different from the one they had shaped before in their countries of origin, and they also recognized that such a change was a product of their immigration processes. In relation to their ethnic identities, they also mentioned that they now recognize specific identity markers belonging to Colombian, Mexican and Latino/a people. Indeed, they considered themselves as Colombians or Mexicans and now as Latinos/as as well. That is to say, their identity reformulations were not characterized by an 'erasure' of their previous national identities, but such reformulations were the result of continuous and complex processes of identity negotiations shaped mainly by their relationships with Anglo-Canadian and Latino/a ethnic identities. Indeed, participants' identity reformulations were done by both oppositional but also negotiated identity approaches. It was oppositional in part because participants experienced and described the Anglo-Canadian identity in opposition to what they considered was a pan-ethnic Latino (and also Colombian or Mexican) identity. Anglo-Canadians then, were framed in opposite terms: Canadians were cold in their social relations while others were warm; Canadians were individualists whereas others were collectivists, and so on. It was negotiated also because participants declared to have adopted some of the values of Canadian society, despite the oppositional identity stance they had previously mentioned. In some cases, they also used as a referent people coming from different parts

of the world who have similar customs to those of Latinos/as, such as their ways of socializing or their sense of family values, a similar finding found by Meintel (2000).

Participants also made use of their friends and family members in their countries of origin as points of contrast regarding their shaping of identities in a trans-national mirroring process. Besides their own perceptions regarding their shaping of identities in Vancouver, they also became cognizant of these changes while looking at, and comparing themselves to, their friends and family members in their countries of origin. However, class location also played a differentiating role in the perception of these identity changes. For example, among Colombians, Joel's friends, who enjoy a capitalist-class location by mediation, were more preoccupied about whether or not they should gain independence from their parental homes. Noemi's family members, on the other hand, were concerned about their possibilities of getting an education or whether or not to get involved in drug issues in Colombia. These different perspectives, that constituted referents for Joel and Noemi in their own identity processes, were also manifested to a certain extent in how they shaped such identities. For example, while Noemi has worked since high school to send remittances to some of her cousins so they could get an education and pay for activities that would distance them from drug-dealing and consumption environments in Colombia (as she still does), Joel was focused on his own identity process, bearing with the loss of his previous capitalist-class location and confronting the, at times, painful elaboration of a new identity closer to an Anglo-Canadian identity. Overall, as Nina said, "you have to adapt to it [immigration process], it's not going to be you anymore, you're going to be... you're going to explore a new area of yourself, you're going to live a completely different reality." The identity changes that participants have gone through, therefore, have been neither a simple nor an immediate nor a finished process, and they have been also the result of a series of identities negotiations and not only a simple rejection and adoption of others' identity markers, as Nina said ("you're going to explore a new area of yourself").

All participants also narrated how they went through multiple interactional experiences while occupying school and work spaces, some of them quite difficult. These experiences allowed them to see themselves from the 'outside' as Mexicans or Colombians, and later as Latinos/as. As a result of these visualization processes, they identified Latinos as being homophobic, conservative, family-oriented, happy, and very sociable people, while some Latino men were also considered macho. Crab mentality also

appeared as a characteristic where Latinos try to hinder the social advancement of other co-ethnic members. Besides, Colombians (besides holding Latino/a characteristics) were also described as being deeply engaged with people, lovers of rumba, status and class location-oriented, and tending to value more social connections than personal abilities in employment hiring processes. Mexicans, in addition, were considered as people who take advantage of others, a nuisance, and also status and class location-oriented people. Moreover, some participants have been in situations where some Canadians have expressed that Latinos/as are sluggish, lazy people. Similar findings have been noted, indeed, by other authors (Simmons et al., 2000; Arráiz, 2010; Smiley, 1989; Poteet, 2001). In addition, participants have also been in situations where Canadians in Vancouver see Latinos/as as exotic people or as people who deserve pity due to Canadians' imagined Latinos/as' pre-migration troubled circumstances. Canadians were also identified by some participants as engaging in 'Latino' spaces and activities such as Latino clubs or salsa and zumba classes, but where the absence of Latinos/as and of Latino/a-ness was a constant. That is to say, there is a process of Latino/a-ness fetishization, especially among Anglo-Canadians, but based on Latino/a images that do not correspond to what participants consider Latino/a-ness is.

Participants have also had experiences with Anglo-Canadian people where the latter are respectful of other people and of gender and ethnic diversity, as well as involved in local political matters. Participants have also found themselves in situations where Canadians behave in a cold manner and do not allow Latino/a people to befriend them. Anglo-Canadians were also described as superficial people and not interested in family values, and youth were particularly identified as sexually active and independent at young ages, as well as easily involved in drugs and alcohol as part of their common activities. On the whole, the findings of this research regarding the ascription and self-identification of Latino/a and Anglo-Canadian identities show a more nuanced description of its constitutive identity elements (who is a Latino/a person, who is a Canadian person) in comparison to those self-identifications that Meintel (2000) found among young Chileans, Salvadorans and Franco-Québécois in Montreal (see section 2.4), especially since Meintel also analyzed Greek, Portuguese, and Vietnamese youth.

One of the most salient identities changes that the majority of participants mentioned was their amplification of vision regarding the world and their openness to other

cultures. This change was possible due to their immigration and correspondent location in a super-diverse environment (Vertovec, 2007), something they confirmed would not have happened if they had stayed in their previous social spaces and dynamics, characterized by minimal or lack of contact with other non-Colombian or non-Mexican people. Interestingly, and despite the fact that they recognized openness to other cultures as one of their main changes, most of their identities changes were referred to certain values, beliefs and attitudes they described as belonging to Anglo-Canadian people. On the contrary, little was said about other ethnic groups in comparison to what was said about Anglo-Canadians. This could be due to the fact that participants acknowledged that they tend to establish their personal relations with co-ethnic or Latino/a people due to having a greater affinity with them rather than with members of other ethnic groups. Actually, participants who spoke about inter-ethnic social relations or friendships were only those who were actively involved in community building and social justice processes, or those who showed more interest in how other ethnic groups are socially constituted. The majority of these participants were Colombian people and only two Mexicans, Jaime and Damian. This could also signal that despite the recognition of living in a super-diverse environment, the mere fact of living in such a space does not directly translate into a 'super-acculturation' or 'super-shaping' of identities processes. Indeed, participants responded more to a mainstream Anglo-Canadian society that revealed itself as a majority, and where other ethnic identities played the role of minorities.

Other significant changes that participants spoke about were the ones related to their acquisition of new perspectives about other identities, accompanied by tolerance and respect. These changes relate to some extent to the ones found by Poteet (2001) in Toronto, since she found that the adoption of tolerance, respect and freedom for women constituted a central identity change among her interviewees. For Colombian and Mexican participants of this research, these changes were directly the result of identity negotiations based on their contact with one of the facets they ascribed to Anglo-Canadians in Vancouver. Their description and experience of the Latino culture as deeply conservative and sometimes violently patriarchal and heteronormative (either through the use of discriminatory language and jokes, the subjection and confinement of two female participants into their houses, the imposition of domestic chores on some women, or the imposition of a specific macho, 'virile' figure over other gender identities)

was rejected by many of the participants who declared they have either adopted or are working on embracing a more open, inclusive understanding of others. For example, in the case of Andrea and Aurora (and the mother of Noemi), they empowered themselves and rejected those patriarchal values performed by their ex-partners to the point of splitting from them (one participant is still working on this issue).

Participants also identified that the Latino culture, while being conservative and regulated by patriarchal and heteronormative values both in their countries of origin and in Vancouver, rejects other people's rights and their inherent values as persons, a finding also found by Meintel (2000) and Simons and Carrillos (2009). However, while participants recognized that they embraced or were working on embracing a different stance as one of their identity changes, the outcome becomes significant since, as they mentioned, those values constitute a major identity marker in the Latino culture. In fact, among participants, only Alberto's parents made use of parental control over her daughter when they decided to return to Colombia as a way to separate her from what they considered a liberal youth culture in Vancouver. This represents a different mechanism of control to what Smiley (1989) found based on his study of Guatemalan and Salvadoran youth in Vancouver. Overall, participants were also cognizant that, even when they found tolerance and openness as part of the Canadian values, too much work has to be done for more Canadians to be open and inclusive in gender and sexual identity terms.

The Latino/a shaping of identities regarding openness and tolerance towards other identities, nonetheless, has not been either an immediate or a finished process. It has implied a constant negotiation between the primary identity and the new element the individual wants to shape. For example, Alberto mentioned how after having changed his negative attitude towards gay people because he made close gay friends in Vancouver, he is now offended when he goes to Colombia and listens to his friends saying offensive jokes about gay people, a common activity in Colombia. However, Alberto also accepts that he sometimes says that kind of jokes because it is something he cannot get rid of easily. In other cases, the negotiations were more complex and referred only to certain areas of the person's identity but not to others. For example, even when Aurora defended the right of people to live and to express their sexual orientation and identities in relation to close-minded people either in Colombia or in Vancouver (and despite her declared acquisition of openness and tolerance), she disagreed with the fact that young Canadian women become

uninhibited at clubs and show certain parts of their bodies, understanding this as a disrespect for themselves. Her conception of a woman then, seems to be closely linked to patriarchal attitudes where the woman's body has to be self-controlled in terms of sexuality, a position closely linked to conservative and Catholic notions widespread in Latin America.

In the case of Julian, and having come from a *barrio* environment where patriarchal, heteronormative values are constituted as profound regulators of social relations, his struggle to fight against his macho attitude is still a constant endeavor. He finds himself continually in the need of others' help, specifically non-White women, to realize that he is behaving in a patriarchal manner. Julian mentioned that the White women he has met do not understand either the processes of refugee people nor the complex situations that non-White people live in Vancouver, for which he cannot rely on their help to address his machismo issue. Another of the significant identity changes participants mentioned was the achievement of maturity and responsibility due to their diverse acculturation experiences in Vancouver. This change refers not only to the somewhat normal process of maturity that people follow in their life courses, but to a more complex and challenging maturation process that participants achieved, or in some cases were forced to achieve, due to their acculturation processes and experiences in Vancouver. These experiences include the particularities they had to face under the particular Canadian immigration system, especially among refugee participants, or their particular encounters and experiences with Anglo-Canadian and Latino/a people. Whereas some of the experiences that made participants mature and be more responsible could have occurred if they had migrated to another place instead of Canada, such as to the United States, other experiences have been peculiar to the Canadian context. This is especially the case in relation to the ethnic diversity participants have found and the experiences derived from the legal processes regarding refugees. Moreover, in some of the cases, the development of maturity and responsibility, specifically among Colombian refugees whose class location and Othering processes hinder them from many opportunities, implied strong emotional and challenging process that were only possible to overcome with the help of key support figures.

While Smiley (1989) found that the refugee experience among Guatemalan and Salvadoran participants led their families either to unite their members or to separate them, the findings of this research signals a more nuanced process among refugee people. Certainly, refugee participants narrated how other refugee families they knew split

once they came to Vancouver. However, the relations among family members become unfixed if we take a look at the family processes over time. Among refugee participants in this sample, the existing family separations occurred prior to their immigration (Aurora, Abigail, Cristian), and only in Noemi's case there was a post-migration separation. The rest of the participants did not experience a definitive family separation. However, in the case of Alberto's family, they had to separate and live in two different houses in order to overcome the constant problems they were facing as a result of their new circumstances in Vancouver, and even he had to split from his brother after their parents and younger siblings returned to Colombia because the conflicts among them were increasing. Their decision to separate allowed them to improve their relationship later.

Upper-class location worked as an important mediating element in participants' shaping of ethnic identities when paired with time spent in Vancouver. For example, even when Joel and Noemi (Colombians) immigrated under refugee status some years ago (eight and 12 years respectively), their life courses and their changing class locations (pre- and post-migration) shaped their identities in different manners over time. Noemi (who belonged to a petit-bourgeoisie class location before immigrating, and after her landing to a worker-class location, and then to a non-skilled class location) considers herself to be Colombian and Latina, and she is also deeply involved in social-justice issues among immigrants and refugee people with different nationalities. Joel (who belonged to a capitalist-class location before immigrating, and after landing to a worker-class location, and then to a capitalist-class location again) is struggling because he is observing that some of his salient identity features are leading more towards Canadian characteristics, specifically those related to individualism and money-driven features, and is forgetting the "more real for me, problems about death or life" happening in Latin America. This does not mean that Joel does not think about himself as Colombian anymore, but it signals that the reshaping of his identity is strongly marked by his class location where his experiences in Vancouver have positioned him closer to a business-Canadian environment and therefore have influenced him to closely identify with Anglo-Canadian values. Meanwhile, Julieta, (who belonged to a capitalist-class location by mediation before immigrating, and after landing to a petit-bourgeoisie class location), identifies as Latina and Canadian since she still considers to have Latino values, but she has also adopted certain Anglo-Canadian values such as independence from family (Julieta has been in Vancouver for 10 years).

Only Damian (who immigrated 5 years ago), Julieta and Joel considered themselves as being somewhat Canadian. All of them are located in a petit-bourgeoisie or capitalist-class location, either directly or by mediation, and their life courses have been marked by some endowments granted by their class location. For example, they have had access to tertiary education, work and volunteering spaces to develop their skills and abilities, they have obtained valuable Canadian work experience, and they have accessed small but significant social networks. Therefore, it seems that such endowments granted by their class locations have also allowed them to get closer to, and to negotiate the acquisition of, certain so-identified Canadian attitudes, beliefs and values. This set of elements has also given them access to larger social structures of opportunities and social mobility, and to shape their identities in a similar way to those of the dominant Anglo-Canadian values, especially in relation to employment and personal independence. Joel synthesized such experience, based on his changing class locations, in the following way: “One lives in a different city [in the same Metro Vancouver] depending on the amount of money you have, depending on the type of job you have, depending on where you live. It changes every single time.”

Gladys and Cristian, despite also sharing a petit-bourgeoisie or a capitalist-class location by mediation, respectively, did not consider themselves as being Canadians. A possible explanation for this differentiation could be time spent in Vancouver and their incipient experiences in volunteering and employment, since Gladys and Cristian have spent less time than others in Canada (four and three years respectively), and therefore have had less acculturation experiences, either in education or employment. However, time spent in Vancouver alone does not have a strong causal effect in the acculturation and the shaping of identities. Other participants located in different class locations and who have been in Vancouver for different periods of time never mentioned that their identities were being shaped to include an ethnic Canadian label as such, even when they mentioned that they have adopted some Anglo-Canadian values as part of their current Selves. Furthermore, Julian (who has been in Vancouver for 12 years) mentioned that in order to follow and enjoy a traditional life course in Vancouver, he would need to be a *gringo* and not a Colombian anymore, since the basis for the enjoyment of a Canadian lifestyle was based, precisely, on the exploitation of others in regions such as Latin America. Overall, ethnicity, as in other cases, did not appear to be a strong marker in the shaping of identities by itself, but class location was.

7. Conclusions

This research examined the experiences of Colombian and Mexican young adults living in Metropolitan Vancouver in relation to the education and employment spheres, as well as their shaping of identities related to their acculturation processes. Attention was also paid to how these processes were influenced by their ethnic background and class location. Chapter one set the context of the research delineating the immigration of Latin Americans in general, as well as those of Colombian and Mexican people in particular, to Canada. Chapter two positions this study among the small but growing literature about immigration and Latin American youth in the country, specifically in relation to education, employment, discrimination and racism, and youth identities. Chapter three discussed the theoretical tools that facilitated the analysis of data, while chapter four presented the methodological strategy and the limitations of the study. Chapters five and six provided and discussed the main findings, and finally, this chapter offers general conclusions and some recommendations for future research.

As previously discussed, Berry et al.'s (2006) model of acculturation suggests that young people can follow four possible acculturation pathways once they have landed and spent some time in the country of reception: assimilation, separation, integration and marginalization. Analyzing the individual processes of all Colombian and Mexican participants, I found that all of them followed the pathway of integration. In this pathway, immigrants keep their primary cultural elements and seek to interact with other ethnic groups, as well as integrate traditions and values from two or more cultures, synthesizing them into a new style. Nonetheless, some adjustments are needed to apply to the framework according to the findings of this research. Despite the fact that the authors recognize the relevance of immigrants' structural conditions, the model only takes into account some cultural elements. While analyzing class location and ethnicity as some of the structural elements that can shape the acculturation experiences of immigrants, participants' oral histories provided different and nuanced pictures of such acculturation processes, even when all of them followed the integration pathway. For this reason, I identified four different integration possibilities in participants' life trajectories:

1. Integration with short-term upward mobility.
2. Integration with long-term upward mobility.
3. Integration with immediate downward mobility.
4. Integration with horizontal mobility.

1) Integration with short-term upward mobility refers to those participants who followed a relatively short upward mobility pathway mainly due to age at migration and their class location, either the petit bourgeoisie or the capitalist-class location. Class location and a young age at migration allowed Julieta and Noemi (Colombians) and Gladys and Damian (Mexicans) to have access to Canadian secondary and/or tertiary education, as well as to volunteer and to acquire ample work experience, securing for them a premium in relation to broader employment and economic possibilities in Vancouver. Migration status and ethnicity were not significant elements in their acculturation processes, while sexual identities played in their favor as a *carte blanche*, that is to say, their heterosexual identities did not create any problems as it did for Nina, a transgendered participant. Evidently, this does not mean that their circumstances cannot be altered by unpredictable scenarios and/or by a diversity of factors, both at structural and individual levels, as happened in Gonzalo or Dante's cases. Based on the literature review and on their life courses, it is possible to predict that Julieta, Noemi, Gladys and Damian, besides already having had successful acculturation experiences, they could also have social mobility in a relatively short period of time if their current circumstances are maintained without changes.

2) Integration with long-term upward mobility refers to two types of scenarios. The first scenario includes those participants whose translocational positionalities, especially shaped by their post-migration structural factors (for example, a long refugee claim process for Joel, or precarious employment circumstances in a constrained labor market for Gonzalo), positioned them initially in difficult scenarios. However, after some changes in their life trajectories created by either their agency exertion and/or structural changes, their circumstances changed again and they could follow an upward mobility pathway. This option, nonetheless, was only possible because of their pre-migration circumstances. That is to say, the improvement of their English language skills, their possession or acquisition of education credentials and skills valued in specific employment markets that were valued and recognized in Vancouver, among other elements, allowed them to take advantage of those windows of opportunities that opened up, but in a long-term fashion.

This was also the case for Joel, Alberto and Abigail (Colombians) and Gonzalo (Mexicans). The second type of scenario refers to Julian (Colombian), who experienced a series of difficulties in his acculturation processes derived mainly from his class location, and which manifested in his diminished possibilities to stay in school and his subsequent precarious insertion into employment structures. Nonetheless, due to his perseverance, exertion of agency and construction of social networks, Julian could obtain access to a slow, long-term upward mobility.

3) Integration with immediate downward mobility refers to a scenario where migration status, ethnicity and class location is discounted after the immigrants' arrival (Hiebert, 2009), and where the immigrant is immediately located in a downward mobility pathway, such as in the case of Nina (Mexican). Moreover, Nina's gender identity (transgendered person) positioned her in a structural quandary, since her identity made it difficult for her to access employment opportunities and to be constantly dependent of welfare assistance. 4) Integration with horizontal mobility refers to a scenario where previous or lack of education is discounted by immigrants' pre- and post-migration backgrounds, directing them to menial or blue-collar jobs, and hindering their possibilities of social mobility, such as in the cases of Jacinta, Jaime and Dante (Mexicans), and those of Angela and Aurora (Colombians). Indeed, social networks have been central to obtain employment in the cases of Mexicans Jacinta, Dante and Jaime, who work in low-skilled sectors (cleaning and construction sectors). They created and maintain an important social network among Latino people, but especially Mexicans. Nonetheless, their social networks tend to be located into a spatial structuration (Sassen, 1995) or specific employment sectors, which are also shaped by their class location.

Spatial structuration, on the one hand, maintains Jacinta, Dante and Jaime's economic conditions, while on the other, the employment opportunities they find respond to the specific needs of the service-oriented employment market in Vancouver. For this reason, and even when the mentioned participants have tertiary education, and in the case of Jacinta and Dante even permanent resident status, their probabilities for economic mobility are not really high for them. Considering that their education was done outside Canada, that they lack specific knowledge about employment processes in other sectors, as well as having lack of Canadian experience in their areas of study, it would be quite difficult for them to find a job in another area or

to change their current class location, not to mention the recognition of their degrees. Their qualifications and any pre-migration experiences they could have are therefore heavily discounted in Canada, as Hiebert (2009) found. However, this is not a definitive scenario, since the same labor market structuration has provided Jacinta with constant employment since she came to Vancouver. Moreover, age at migration was not relevant among participants who belong to this group (especially because of their class locations), since those who came at younger ages (Angela and Aurora) were located in personal and structural circumstances that put them in similar conditions to those of Jacinta, Jaime and Dante (who came in their twenties). Nonetheless, among all participants who are in this pathway, Angela is the one who faces the most precarious conditions, since she is still economically dependent on her partner, does not have basic educational credentials to obtain even menial jobs, her relation with her family is unstable, and her social networks are not large enough.

Finally, the case of Cristian is interesting. Being the youngest one of the interviewed participants, his possibilities to follow one of the different incorporation pathways are latent, except for that of immediate downward mobility. His age at arrival, his high school diploma, his class location both independently and by mediation (worker/capitalist), his plans for achieving a technical career and his knowledge of the English language positions him in a location where different possibilities can be followed. If he decides to join his specialized course soon, gets work experience related to his area of studies, and opens his desired small business later, he could follow the integration with short-term upward mobility pathway. On the contrary, if he takes more time to study his career and keeps working in menial jobs as he has done until now, he could follow the integration with long-term upward mobility pathway. But if he remains in his current employment as an appliances distributor, where he lacks volunteering experience, does not keep studying and does not construct a significant social network around his desired area of study, he could follow the integration with a horizontal mobility pathway.

Overall, among all factors studied, post-migration class location shaped participants' acculturation processes and their identities above ethnicity and migration status. For example, despite the fact that some Colombian participants had a previous class location such as petit bourgeoisie or capitalist, their pre-migration situations marked either by violence and/or economic insecurity forced them to confront new

scenarios that transformed their circumstances and those of their families, putting them initially into a new, post-migration worker-class location (Joel, Noemi, Cristian; all refugees). In the first two cases, the premium for length of residency in Canada and age at immigration were not immediately translated into economic improvements until they moved to upper-class locations. Moreover, the process to overcome such structural circumstances took young people several years, which is consistent with literature findings. On the contrary, for those who were located in a better class location immediately after their arrivals, their circumstances allowed them to stay and to perform better in either high school or to access tertiary education, as well as in the majority of the cases to have access to quality Canadian work experience (Gladys, Julieta and Damian; family reunification, refugee, and international student respectively).

Generally speaking, the differentials between these two groups show that compared to class location, migration status was to a great extent irrelevant. Moreover, the literature has found that early age at arrival increases the premium on employment and income rates, with exception for refugees (Yee et al., 2003). However, for participants in this research neither age at arrival nor migration status was relevant in order to take advantage of that premium if participants did not belong to either a petit bourgeoisie or a capitalist-class location. It was class location, indeed, which became the central element that determined the type of acculturation participants had, regardless of whether or not they were refugees or their time spent in Vancouver. In relation to Mexicans, and despite the fact that the majority had a working-class location, their migration statuses varied. These statuses corresponded to their specific pre-migration circumstances, which would be connected later to the types of acculturation pathways they would follow once in Vancouver.

The relevance of class location was also determinant of aspirations to access tertiary education among participants. Krahn and Taylor (2005) found that VMIRYP have bigger aspirations than locals, but that such aspirations are undermined if they belong to a low-income family or if they face language barriers. The findings here are that, besides those who are obtaining or already obtained a tertiary education degree, participants' aspirations were strongly determined by post-migration class location irrespective of migration status. Moreover, for those Colombians who dropped out of high school, the findings do correspond with those of Anisef et al. (2008) in the sense that class and migration status negatively influence the dropout rates among immigrant youth, especially

for refugees. For those participants who landed belonging to a working-class location and once in Vancouver followed a pathway of integration with horizontal mobility, previous education was overridden and accompanied by both a lack of Canadian work experience and little English language knowledge (Dante, Jacinta). Indeed, previous education was never a salient factor in their immigration experiences. Migration status and ethnicity were only salient features in the case of a couple of refugee participants who, after going through difficult pre-migration experiences (and one case of post-migration experience, that of Joel), found elements in their immigration processes to better understand their previous and current migration circumstances, contextualized by more ample global processes (Noemi, Julian). For its part, gender was a salient issue only in the case of Nina (a transgendered woman), since it was constituted as a deterrent for her social mobility, determining to a greater extent her class location (that of under-employed working class).

In relation to participants' shaping of ethnic identities, they were exposed to other identities mainly at social spaces such as schools and/or workplaces. These environments constituted social spaces that defined not only participants' processes of inclusion into and exclusion from Canadian society (Boyd, 2009), but also key spaces where their identities were shaped and negotiated. Indeed, the brief social encounters participants had with other ethnic individuals on streets, stores, buses or parties only reinforced what they had been experiencing in these common socialization spaces, and helped them to elaborate discursive repertoires to identify, make sense of, and narrate the worlds they were occupying (Best, 2011). While observing how others engaged in diverse processes and the things they did at schools and/or workplaces, as well as while being aware of the ascriptions that were assigned to them as Latinos/as (by other ethnic groups), they became cognizant of their own identities (Mexican or Colombian) and of a pan-ethnic Latino/a identity. Other ethnic identities such as those of Anglo-Canadians were also elaborated. These ethnic identities were structured in similar ways in many of its central components by all participants, and constituted one of the central axes for their own shaping of identities. Moreover, it would be after their landing that participants would self-identify as Latinos/as, besides Colombians or Mexicans, due to the similarities they found among people coming from the Latin American region and based on how others perceived them, as found by other authors (Poteet; 2001, Meintel; 2000; Simmons & Carrillos 2009; Guerrero, 2009).

Class location also appeared as a strong factor that determined the level of adoption or not of some elements of an ethnic Anglo-Canadian identity. This finding allowed me to identify two general divisions or sub-groups among participants. The first group is constituted by those who followed an integration pathway with short-term upward mobility, either paired with a post-migration petit-bourgeoisie or a capitalist-class location. These class locations allowed them not only to be integrated into better educational and economic streams in the Vancouverite mainstream society, but also to identify themselves in a closer fashion with some dominant Anglo-Canadian values. As a result, these participants synthesized their primary ethnic identities with elements of an Anglo-Canadian identity, expressing their new Selves in a depending-on-the-environment ethnic salient fashion. That is to say, they still considered themselves to be Latinos and Colombians or Mexicans, but also Canadians in other aspects, such as those related to the work environment or when looking for, or achieving, independence from the family (Julieta, Joel and Damian). The exception to these cases is Noemi, who is critical of a simplified notion of Canadianness since this excludes other ethnic groups and ignores the colonial history of Canada's formation, as well as Gladys, who considers herself to no longer be the Mexican person she used to be, but did not describe herself as Canadian, as others did. The other group, which comprised the majority of participants, was constituted by those who experienced integration with upward, horizontal, or downward mobility. They considered their ethnic identities to be Latino and Colombian or Mexican, but they never mentioned considering themselves to be somewhat Canadian, even when they confirmed that in the shaping of their identities they negotiated and acquired elements they attributed to an Anglo-Canadian mainstream identity.

In general, Mexican and Colombian participants mentioned that the elements that they negotiated and changed were those regarding the amplification of their vision about the world and other cultures and their openness and tolerance to other identities. They also mentioned a profound personal change or an active engagement in changing the conservative and sometimes violent patriarchal and heteronormative values of the Latino culture, the adoption of a more inclusive understanding of others, and the achievement of maturity and responsibility. Moreover, their shaping of identities has been neither an immediate nor a finished process, but an ongoing negotiation between diverse ethnic markers in Vancouver (mainly regarding Anglo-Canadian, Latino/a, and Mexican or Colombian identities), as well as among people close to participants (such as family

members and friends, either in Vancouver or in their places of origin), serving them as constant points of reference or mirrors. In the case of Nina, her immigration experience allowed her to complete her transgender transition. Even though the road for her has not been easy at all, she also acknowledged that her identity experience would have been more difficult if she had stayed in Mexico than immigrating to Canada.

Some participants have also faced complicated issues in relation to Othering processes. As a result, all of the Colombian participants with exception of Julieta and some Mexicans manifested the need to have a key person to support them in the problems they encountered in their acculturation experiences. As well, all participants also maintained very few close friendships mainly with Latino/a people. The exceptions to this small circle of friends were Mexican participants Jaime and Damian and some Colombian participants who took the MY Circle Program. Indeed, for some of the interviewed refugee people, their acculturation and identity shaping processes in Vancouver also allowed them to understand in more ample terms the armed conflict they experienced in Colombia. While for many of their friends and family members the armed conflict was precisely an internal, national armed conflict, some of the refugee participants understood it as a result of profound and underlying international dynamics being at play.

The possibility to identify and to have access to multiple sources of information and resources such as the MY Circle Program, as well as to have contact with other people from different parts of the world, allowed these refugee participants to expand both their visions of their particular lives in a specific context (that of a forced migration, living under a refugee experience) and to enhance their agency. On the contrary, few of the participants' friends in Colombia have had these possibilities or have developed such analytical and critical capacities. A contradiction of global dynamics resides in these cases, nonetheless, since participants were forced to immigrate in order to save their lives as a consequence of the interplay of those global forces. At the same time, it is in Canada where they have found elements to empower themselves, to increase their agency capacities, and to act in favor of Colombian communities in a transnational fashion. The experiences of relating to other ethnic groups have also constituted opportunities for young people to empower themselves and to boost their agency.

Finally, and despite the fact that some of the participants have gone through really hard experiences in their countries of origin or here in Vancouver, all of them found elements and experiences that made them appreciate their experiences in Canada. When I asked them if they would return to either Colombia or Mexico, only Julian mentioned that he would return for short periods of time to reconnect with his country of origin. The rest mentioned they preferred living in Vancouver due to the values and identity markers they found in the Vancouverite society, some of which have been adopted by them, as well because of the social organization of the city. Others mentioned that they wanted to stay because they found ample possibilities to work for solidarity action for their countries of origin while working from Canada. And others also mentioned that they do not find themselves anymore in their own countries since their new circumstances have positioned them in a different stance that makes it difficult for them to connect with their previous societies and identities.

7.1. Areas for future research

With regards to possibilities for future research, in some of the participants' cases, I found that in order to understand better their acculturation and shaping of identities processes, it would be necessary an analysis of differentiated, and sometimes contrasting, acculturation processes of their siblings as well. Therefore, a broader and richer analysis can be done if the study of the acculturation and identities processes is done with a household focus and not only with individuals. This would also help to understand how the processes of acculturation and shaping of identities of family members shape the experiences of other members.

Another possible avenue, and despite the difficulties in recruiting Latino/a people in Vancouver, could be that of working with a number of samples where age at migration, country of origin and class location are controlled (considering the different waves of Latin American people that came to Canada). In this way, we could compare the life stories of diverse cohorts, ethnicities and class locations of young people. This would also allow us to understand certain youth developmental factors and processes at specific periods of times, and offer the possibility of a longitudinal, comparative analysis. In other words, we could compare possible structural and personal changes based on the life trajectories of different generational cohorts of immigrants and refugees in Vancouver.

In relation to gender and sexual orientation, it would be interesting to have a sample that includes more experiences of LGBTQ people to understand, in a nuanced way, how they shape their identities and how their acculturation processes are done considering not only gender but also diverse class locations, since the latter appeared in the present research as a strong identity marker. This would allow us to understand, for example, how LGBTQ Latinos/as, located in petit bourgeoisie or capitalist locations, if any, shape their identities and the acculturation processes in contrast to those who belong to other class locations. It would be also interesting to consider race as an element of analysis, since all Colombian people I interviewed had either White or light brown skin color, whereas Colombian people with black skin color (not interviewed for this research, since I did not find any person with such characteristic) could have had different acculturation and identity shaping experiences.

Finally, the analysis of the shaping of identities and acculturation processes of young Latinos could be enriched if Anglo-Canadian people were included in the sample. This would allow us to understand if their identities are shaped or not by the presence of Latinos/as in Vancouver, giving us an interesting insight around the inter-ethnic relations in the city and how the shaping of others' identities work in a complex fashion. Moreover, since participants referred to their experiences with Anglo-Canadian people living in Vancouver to describe how participants perceived the latter (who the Anglo-Canadians are), it would be interesting to analyze the perception of Latino/a people considering more elaborated notions of who Canadians are depending on their geographical belonging and locations.

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Appendices

Appendix A.

Tables 1 and 2

Table 1. Latin American immigration and period of immigration to Canada^{a b}

Place of birth	Before 1991	1991 to 2000	2001 to 2006	Total Immigrants ^b
Mexico	18,950	14,450	16,520	49,920
El Salvador	25,185	14,725	2,870	42,780
Colombia	6,990	6,845	25,305	39,140
Chile	19,375	4,805	2,325	26,505
Peru	8,460	8,245	5,385	22,090
Argentina	7,935	3,980	6,200	18,115
Guatemala	8,045	6,405	1,255	15,705
Brazil	5,295	4,750	5,075	15,120

Table 2. Latin American immigration and period of immigration to Vancouver^a

Place of birth	Before 1991	1991 to 2000	2001 to 2006	Total Immigrants ^b
Mexico	1,275	1,620	1,755	6,270
El Salvador	2,440	1,375	230	5,420
Colombia	425	615	995	2,650
Peru	1,005	530	450	2,515
Chile	1,505	300	170	2,275
Guatemala	670	620	100	2,010
Brazil	490	395	425	1,705
Argentina	470	180	405	1,055

^aSource: Statistics Canada - 2006 Census. Ethnic Origin, Single and Multiple Ethnic Origin Responses and Sex for the Population of Canada, 2006 Census - 20% Sample. Catalogue Number 97-562-XCB2006006

^bData from this table is identified as 20% sample data, which refers to information that was collected using the long census questionnaire.

^cDoes not consider Non-permanent residents.

Appendix B.

Guide for Oral History/Semi-Structured Interview

- ~ What were the circumstances that made you to immigrate to Canada?
- ~ What is your current situation in Canada?
 - o Did you make use of social networks to immigrate to Canada?
- ~ How has your experience been at the school/workplace in Canada in comparison to your place of origin?
 - o Which difficulties have you faced at the school/workplace in comparison to your place of origin?
- ~ What role has the English language played in your migration experience?
- ~ How were your relations with your parents due to your migration experience?
 - o How have your relations with your siblings/extended family changed by your migration experience?
- ~ As a Colombian/Mexican person, how has your experience in Canada been in relation to people from other cultures?
 - o In specific with White people?
 - o With other ethnic groups?
 - o With people from Latin America and/or your own ethnic group?
- ~ Which different values have you found in Canada in relation to your own values? Which are your values?
- ~ Which different customs have you found in Canada in relation to your own customs? Which are your customs?
- ~ How easy/difficult has it been for you to make friends in Vancouver?
- ~ What do you do to have fun? With whom? / How often?
- ~ How are the relationships that your friends in Canada have with their parents?/ Consider ethnic group
- ~ Do you have a best friend in Vancouver/Canada? How was the process?
- ~ Have you ever had a significant other in Canada? How was that process? (Ethnic group?)
 - o Have you ever had more than one significant other?
- ~ What do you like/dislike the most of Vancouver?
- ~ What do you like/dislike the most of Canadians?
- ~ How would you describe Canadians?
- ~ What do you like/dislike the most of your migration experience?

- ~ What has changed for you (who you are) because of your migration experience?
- ~ What attitudes do you consider people living in Vancouver have in relation to migrant people? / Latin American migrants?
 - o What attitudes do you consider White people living in Vancouver have in relation to migrant people? / Latin American migrants?
 - o What attitudes do you consider Latin American people living in Vancouver have in relation to other migrant people? / to Canadians?
- ~ Do you consider that men and women are considered differently in Vancouver than in your place of origin? How come?
- ~ Do you consider that issues related to gender/sexuality are regarded differently than in your place of origin? How come?
- ~ Have you ever had a job in Canada? How was that process? / Was it easy or difficult to get the job? Conditions of the job.
- ~ How have your parents/extended family lived their migration experience?
 - o How easy/difficult has the migration experience been for your parents? /Acquisition of English language?
 - o Have you ever helped your family members in relation to their migration experience? /How?
 - o Do you think that your family has acculturated to Canada/Vancouver? To what extent?
- ~ What barriers/problems have you/your family faced in your migration process?
- ~ Have you ever gone back to your place of origin? How often? What kind of activities do you do when you are there?
 - o Do you use/what role do social media play in relation to your friends who stayed in your place of origin?
 - o How frequent do you have contact with your friends in your place of origin?
 - o How have those relationships with your friends changed over time?
- ~ What expectations and/or plans do you have for your future?
- ~ Would you go back to your country of origin?

Appendix C.

Table 3

Table 3. *Class locations of participants at the moment of the interview, according to Wright's conceptualizations^a*

		Temporality of class location				
		Access to significant investments			Access to minimum or not investments at all	
		Owner	Not in paid labor force	Employees		Not in paid labor force
Hires labor force	1) <i>Capitalist</i>	2) <i>Capitalist by mediation</i>	5) <i>Expert managers</i>	7) <i>Non-skilled managers</i>	–	–
	Joel	Cristian ^b	–	Noemi	–	–
Does not hire labor force	3) <i>Petit bourgeoisie</i>	4) <i>Petit bourgeoisie by mediation</i>	6) <i>Experts</i>	8) <i>Workers</i>	9) <i>Worker by mediated class location</i>	10) <i>Structurally under-employed working class</i>
	–	Julieta ^c Gladys ^c Damian ^c	–	Julieta ^c Gladys ^c Damian ^c Abigail Aurora ^d Julian Alberto Jacinta Nancy Gonzalo Jaime Dante Cristian ^b	Angela	Nina Aurora ^d

^a Source: Wright, 2000, 2005.

^b This person has his own worker class location, and also a capitalist by mediation class location due to his mother's class location.

^c These persons have their own worker class location, and also a petit bourgeoisie by mediated class location due to their parents' class locations.

^d This person has her own worker class location, and also belongs to the under-employed working class location since she occupies both positions due to her temporality of employment.

Appendix D.

Table 4

Table 4. Basic demographics of Colombian participants

	Social Location	Arrival	Age at Arrival	Educational achievement	Migration Status
Colombians					
Noemi	Non-Skilled manager	2000	14	Bachelor of Arts and in transition to a Master's Degree	Refugee (Government Assisted Refugees)
Abigail	Worker	2006	22	Studying for a Bachelor of Science, and looking to study a Master's degree	Family Reunification
Angela	Worker by Mediated class location / Not in paid labor force	2006	15	Studying high school at nights	Family Reunification
Aurora	Worker/Welfare	2004	16	High School plus various courses	Family Reunification
Julieta	Worker/ Petit Bourgeoisie by Mediated Class Location	2002	13	Studying for a Bachelors of Arts, and planning on studying a Master's degree	Refugee (Asylum Claimant)
Julian	Worker	2000	18	High school dropout and some college courses in transition	Refugee (Government Assisted Refugees)
Cristian	Worker/Capitalist by Mediated Class Location	2009	15	High school and saving money for a specialized technical course of 9 months	Refugee (Asylum Claimant)
Joel	Capitalist	2004	22	Incomplete Bachelor of Arts in Colombia, Diploma in Canada	Refugee (Asylum Claimant)
Alberto	Worker	2003	19	High School and Technical Course (4 months)	Refugee (Government Assisted Refugees)

Appendix E.

Table 5

Table 5. Basic demographics of Mexican participants

	Social Location	Arrival	Age at Arrival	Educational achievement	Migration Status
Mexicans					
Gladys	Worker/ Petit Bourgeoisie by Mediated Class Location	2008	18	Bachelor of Science, looking to get an specialization after her BA	Skilled Migrant Program (Family Migration)
Nina	Welfare	2007	25	Bachelor of Science	Refugee (Asylum Claimant)
Jacinta	Worker	2008	23	Bachelors of Arts	Refugee (Asylum claimant under humanitarian and compassionate grounds)
Nancy	Worker	2009	25	Bachelors of Arts	Giving Care Program
Damian	Worker/ Petit Bourgeoisie by Mediated Class Location	2007	18	Bachelors of Arts	International Student
Gonzalo	Worker	2008	23	Bachelor of Science, looking to study a Master's degree after receiving PR	Skilled Migrant Program
Jaime	Worker	2007	24	Bachelor of Science	International Student
Dante	Worker	2008	26	Bachelor of Science	Refugee (Asylum Claimant under Humanitarian and Compassionate Grounds)