

Supermarkets and the Illusion of Food Access: Navigating the Foodscape with Social Assistance
Recipients in HoMa, Montreal

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Abstract

Supermarkets and the Illusion of Food Access: Navigating the Foodscape with Social Assistance Recipients in HoMa, Montreal

Jean-Sebastien Roussy

Food access researchers define “food deserts” as impoverished neighbourhoods that lack close physical proximity to a food retailer. Residents of these neighbourhoods are forced to travel greater distances for food or be faced with purchasing lower-quality food at higher prices. However, most research takes a wholly quantitative approach to identifying these so-called “food deserts”, and leaves out the experiences of marginalized individuals. Through a qualitative analysis of social assistance recipients’ experiences with food procurement we can identify potential barriers to food access. Two major barriers emerged from the constant comparison: (1) lower-quality specials on Check Week and (2) higher food prices on Check Week. To verify the validity of participant claims empirical evidence was collected. Metro and Super C circulars were collected over 31 weeks. Through statistical analysis it was found that the items marketed on the front pages of these circulars were of lower-quality and higher cost at Metro, while Super C showed more parity. The second method involved collecting weekly prices over 13 weeks at both stores. The analysis of the weekly prices showed higher prices at both stores during Check Week. The empirical evidence legitimizes the experiences of social assistance recipients in Hochelaga-Maisonneuve. The contradiction of social assistance recipients paying more for the same foods that middle-class individuals can wait to buy on special has a consequence on the spatial patterning of food access. Social assistance recipients’ navigate through a “foodscape” that cycle between “food oasis” and “food mirage” within a single month.

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Chapter 1: Finding the Specials

Bob's Story

Four interviews with four participants turned into a single story about the clustered themes Experiential Knowledge and Consumer Savvy. The story represents the daily activity of grocery shopping through the character, Bob. The narrative is composed almost entirely of quotes with minor edits and bridges to make the text flow. And, I tried to represent the significant statements as best as I could while organizing the quotes from different/or similar significant statements together/or apart.

It is May 1st, 2013, somewhere in Hochelaga-Maisonneuve a social aid recipient named Bob receives his assistance check. At the beginning of the month Bob always starts by reading the specials and seeing what he needs. Bob writes everything because he wants to know in terms of one grocery store to another the variety of specials. Then he starts to remove items based on his budget. But, Bob doesn't buy everything he writes down because it would cost him a fortune.

This time around Bob put some money away, so when the special comes out he can go grab it. While Bob compares what he wrote down between the specials at Super C and Metro, he notices that the minced meat is \$1.99 at Super C and \$2.99 at Metro. Bob says to himself, "heh, Super C has it cheaper than Metro, [and] it isn't much further to go there". Normally, he finds family packs really big, but when they are on special it is worth it. When it isn't on special at 12-13 dollars the pack he won't buy it, it is too expensive; at that point he will buy another quality but a little pack. Though, he notices that it is the quality that is often missing in meat on sales. Regardless, Bob knows that buying a little pack of minced meat is good anyways for two or three meals; maybe make two hamburgers and a hamburger steak, and even some spaghetti sauce. Lucky for Bob, this week, at Super C, it is on special.

Bob grabs his coat and puts on his shoes and heads down the flight of stairs that leads from his second floor one and half apartment to the sidewalk. Since he just received his assistance check Bob knows that he will be making a larger than usual grocery, so he brings along his trusty carriage. Walking along Ontario Street he makes a stop at the Maisonneuve Market. It is Bob's first time at the Maisonneuve Market, and as he walks about perusing the

aisles he can't help but think that it is a little like the Jean-Talon Market, but smaller. And, to his amazement they have stuff on special that he noticed is even cheaper than Super C, Bob hit some stuff that wasn't expensive.

Bob walked out of the store delighted with his purchases. He bought some cheese they had on special, some camembert and it was four dollars because it was on special that week, a round not just a piece. And he bought some grain cheese for 5 dollars and it was a larger bag than they sell at the grocery store and 1 dollar cheaper. He knows the prices and he found it was a good price, and it worked out well because Bob didn't have enough cheese at home. The cashier said to Bob, before he paid, "every week we do specials on cheese". Bob could not be happier with that news, because now he has alternatives; no longer if cheese is at full price at the grocery store will he have to wait for the week when it is on sale. He also bought some vegetables that are a little over ripe, but not too much, so they were discounted; this allows him to diversify his vegetable intake. Today, Bob won't get stuck paying 2-3 dollars more for the same item. Bob is starting to know where to go, it is complicated because he has to go everywhere, but he knows he doesn't have much of a choice.

Continuing on his way to Super C he remembers that there are some specials at Metro that he wants to check out. He doesn't often go to Metro, he only goes when they have something on special that they don't have at Super C that week, but that is rare. It is a quarter after noon and Bob knows full well that there will be a huge crowd of people, who like himself have also received their social assistance checks. So, Bob picks up his pace, though he can only go so fast with his carriage. Inside, Bob cannot believe how many people there are at Metro, as normal as that is on check day, he still just cannot believe it. He takes out his pen and list and walks down the first aisle. He sees the pasta glaring at him, the cheap signage announcing: four for three dollars; even if he has some left he will buy it when it comes on special anyways, because he has the money to buy it. Now he has a lot of surplus because he already had some in his pantry, but he will be good for a while, and will not have to worry. At the end of the first aisle Bob takes his pen and bars the items that he has enough of and those that it isn't an emergency. After that he makes his list a little more reasonable given the money he has left at his disposal.

Bob knows he has no more cereals at home, and he did not see any in the circulars that morning, but he takes a chance anyways and goes down the cereal aisle. While walking down the cereal aisle Bob stops and stares at his favourite box of cereals and then the price tag right below it: 6 dollars. Bob knows it is too expensive to buy; thinking out loud he says, “If it isn’t on special, it will be another week; they always come back, so I can wait”. When he has none he waits, at times he is patient, and he buys other things. Anyways, he knows that he doesn’t need everything in his fridge, so he will settle and buy another type or he can wait a week or two and it will be on special. Like his mother used to tell him, “We don’t need to have everything in the fridge. We do not always need everything in reach”. Bob supposes his mother had a point, so he will eat peanut butter for a couple breakfasts, good thing he loves peanut butter.

As the cashier tallies Bob’s order he can’t help but quip, “it goes up fast a grocery bill; it is getting more and more expensive, every year”. Next stop, Super C. Bob cannot wait to get his hands on that minced meat, because the last time he got there too late, and you have to be the first there because otherwise there is nothing left in the counter. Upon arrival Bob instinctively heads straight for the minced meat... 4 packs left, so Bob grabs 2. He places the packs of minced meat into his carriage and crosses them off his list. He sees that he has eggs on his list as well, so he walks to the dairy section. Oops, out of stock, Bob will have to wait; he consoles himself by saying, “from one week to another it will maybe come on sale”. He is patient; he will eat other things in the meantime. In the condiment aisle Bob sees that the brand name peanut butter is on special, yet the house brand peanut butter still costs 2 dollars less. For some this may be a dilemma, but for Bob, of course not, he will save the 2 dollars and buy the cheaper of the two. He doesn’t always go for brands, but he buys a lot of specials.

Bob left Super C with a cool 40 dollars to his name and two weeks’ worth of groceries. He saves that money for any specials that may come out because he knows that the next week he will have the check there won’t be any specials. After a grueling day of grocery shopping Bob walks home strolling his carriage and thankful that he succeeded, because after a while all these little things start taking up time, a lot of time.

Introduction

Food access is a taken for granted aspect of our everyday lives. Middle-class individuals tasked with the responsibility of food shopping can access supermarkets, markets, and specialty stores – normal “spaces of consumption” – without a hindrance. They can walk into the grocery store and purchase whatever they need to make a meal, stock their pantries, and fill their fridges and freezers. But, most importantly they can go wherever, whenever they need to buy food. However, this is the opposite of the situation faced by low-income individuals, especially those receiving social assistance. The narrative above describes how difficult decisions are made when trying to balance finances and health. Social assistance recipients have difficulty accessing food, both spatially and temporally, which will be discussed at length throughout this thesis.

The debate about food access has focused on food deserts, “typically defined as a low-income area that lacks grocery stores or other retail food, often the result of income or racial inequalities” (Miewald & McCann, 2014, p. 539). However, as I will argue, the food desert theory in its current theoretical framing does leave room for more varied spatial and temporal issues that make up food access. Moreover, a major problem with food desert theory as it is currently presented is that it is still too focussed on spatial access to food, which leaves out more contextualized experiences with the problem of food access. Miewald and McCann (2014) suggest that by analyzing food access as a “foodscape” we can “[think] through food--place relations in terms of geographies and politics of urban poverty and survival” (p. 540).

Locating this research project within the borough of Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, referred to by locals as HoMa, means rethinking how social assistance recipients experience food access. More specifically, how they experience grocery shopping at the three supermarkets in the area i.e. Metro on St-Catherine Street, Metro on Ontario Street, and Super C on Pie-IX Boulevard. According to Apparicio, Cloutier, and Shearmur (2007), in their aptly titled “The case of Montreal’s missing food deserts: Evaluation of accessibility to supermarkets”, residents of HoMa have relatively fair access to supermarkets:

On average, the population located in these CTs [census tracts] is 816 metres away from the nearest supermarket, that is, about a 10-minute walk, and the average distance to the three closest different chain-name supermarkets is 1340 metres. (ibid, p. (8)).

Therefore, we must account for social assistance recipients' inadequate food access by analyzing the contextual factors that make up their everyday lives. This is in keeping with the concept of "foodscape" which "requires and rewards being situated in a particular place and focused on the relationships that a particular community has with food" (Miewald and McCann, 2014, p.540).

During a 2012 pilot study that I conducted at a non-profit food organization Centre d'Alimentation et de Partage (CAP) St-Barnabe, in HoMa, it was made clear by some participants that their greatest challenge was navigating the weekly supermarket specials (Roussy, 2012). This was my entry point to understanding what barriers social assistance recipients face to food access. The struggle to access food at supermarkets is compounded by the Quebec provincial government's distribution of social assistance allowance checks once a month, either at the beginning or the end of the month. The connections between the single monthly check, supermarkets, and the consequences on social assistance recipients will be made clear in the analysis and discussion sections.

Building upon the results of my pilot study I will demonstrate how food (in)access is manifested by a multitude of factors that create within this specific context what I term herein a "temporal food desert". Where, social assistance recipients find themselves in the contradictory position of spending more money on food that they can otherwise buy for less the following week or by traveling outside of the neighbourhood. We shall see how social assistance recipients' "spaces of consumption" are negatively affected by this contradictory predicament over time. To do so it is necessary to ground the theory within the results of multiple methods. The methods used to gain in-depth empirical evidence are: participant interviews, Metro and Super C's specials as shown in their circulars, and weekly price audits on food products within the respective stores.

Before turning to my literature, it is worth commenting on the organization of the thesis. As indicated on the Contents Page, this thesis is organized into seven chapters.

Chapter 1 begins with a narrative describing the daily routine of food shopping for a social assistance recipient. The story represents four participants' experiential knowledge through years of food shopping and consumer savvy. The "Introduction" follows the narrative. I argue that social assistance recipient's spatial food access diminishes as time goes on throughout the month. A brief history of the research is discussed.

Chapter 2, "Literature Review", highlights the importance of studying food access and the current debates that are ongoing within the field. Two fields of study are discussed. The first, food access research takes on the largest role, whereby I discuss the lacunae within the field i.e. not enough qualitative research informing the field. The second, political-economy highlights the current economic model of urban development and the consequences of gentrification on the spatial patterning of food access.

Chapter 3, "Methodology", only contains the methods used for acquiring and analyzing participant interview data. Other methods used in my analysis are discussed in their relevant chapters. The method discussed herein is "constant comparison". I develop upon the steps required to undertake said method with the interview data I acquired, and the robustness of using the "constant comparison" method.

Chapter 4, "Analysis of Grocery Store Circulars", presents the methods, results, analysis and discussion of the data collection on the front pages of the circulars of both Metro and Super C. I take up the argument held by many participants that the specials offered when the social assistance check is issued are of lesser quality and variety than on other weeks within a month. To validate that argument the front pages of 31 weeks' worth of grocery store circulars were collected and analyzed.

Chapter 5, "Analysis of Weekly Price Audit", is structured in the same way as Chapter 4. Both Chapters 4 and 5 are treated and presented as distinct subunits of the thesis, because they developed from different arguments, as is discussed in their respective chapters. The premise of the chapter is situated on the argument that prices will be higher when the social assistance check is issued versus all other weeks within a month. To substantiate that argument I gathered 13

weeks' worth of food item price data and analyzed to obtain the results and conclusions held within Chapter 5.

Chapter 6, "Social Assistance Recipients' Foodscape", aims to connect the two analytical chapters (4 and 5) with the participant interviews I have conducted as part of this research, and addresses the spatiality of food purchasing in a meaningful way. I argue herein that a social assistance recipient's food access diminishes within the passage of time within a given month. And, that a social assistance recipient's spatial patterning of food access is contingent on the passage of time. I present the spatial patterning of food access with the metaphors of the "food mirage" and "food oasis" which provide a conceptualization of both the temporal and spatial aspects of food access.

Chapter 7, "Conclusion", brings everything together, and discusses the limits of my interpretation as well as the data. The chapter ends with a discussion on the future of "food desert" research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

There are two sets of literature presented below, food access literature and political-economy literature, the former taking on a more prominent and substantial role within the scope of this research. The literature review is separated into three sections to make the broader societal forces that impact food access, as well as the policy implications of food access research more apparent. The food access literature positions the importance of my research questions, goals, and methods used to acquire data. That section is titled “Foodscapes”; therein the goal is to reconcile the need to study the spatial aspects of food access with the personal and relational experience of food access. In the second section, “A Brief Political-Economy of Policy Actions”, the effect of the changing economic paradigms on urban renewal and the implications for food access are discussed. The third section, “A Class-Based Critic of Policy Actions”, discusses the problem with non-local, top-down projects to combat “food deserts”.

FoodScapes

Research on what became known as “food deserts” began in the UK as a response to a government study that found deprived neighbourhoods facing poor food retail access (Wrigley, 2002). The initial goal of this line of research was to identify the areas that are marginalized socio-economically and have poor food retail access (Wrigley, 2002). Since that date, there have been many studies done to quantitatively identify food desert locations, both in the US and Canada. Some more recent studies found that food deserts exist in New York City (Gordon et al., 2011), London, Ontario (Larsen & Gilliland, 2008), and more generally across the U.S. (Walker, Keane, & Burke, 2010). However, the existence of food deserts is less conclusive in Montreal. According to Apparicio, Cloutier, and Shearmur (2007) “the paucity of alternative grocery stores apparently reinforces the existence of potential food deserts [...] in [...] areas, such as Hochelaga-Maisonneuve and Saint-Henri”. Furthermore, Paez, Gertes Mercado, Farber, Morency, and Roorda (2010) state that “low-income households tend to enjoy parity or better [food retail] accessibility near the centre of the city” (p. 1436). In their study of healthy and unhealthy food locations and demographic relationships Daniel, Kestens, and Paquet (2009) corroborate the Paez et al. findings with their findings that “median household income was not related to the density of [fast-food outlets] or [fruits and vegetable stores]” in Montreal (p. 189)

In contradistinction to food deserts, “food swamps” according to Donald Rose et al. (2009) are “areas in which large relative amounts of energy-dense snack foods, inundate healthy food options” (p.2). In their study of Orleans parish, New Orleans, Block, Scribner, and DeSalvo (2004) found that African-American neighbourhoods have more fast food restaurants than do white neighbourhoods. However, Paez et al. (2010) have proven empirically that fast food access in Montreal is evenly spread across different socio-economic neighbourhoods. Moreover, Caspi, Sorensen, Subramanian, and Kawachi (2012) note that

[t]he evidence for fast food outlets and fast food consumption was the weakest, perhaps due to a relative ubiquity of fast food outlets compared to other food sources. Another possibility is that factors such as individual preference govern fast food-seeking behavior even more than either perceived or objective availability of fast food outlets (p. 1181).

Changing retail economics and “redlining” in the US are often cited as the explanation for the incidence of food deserts (Raja, Changxing, and Pavan, 2008 ; Walker et al., 2010; Wrigley, 2002). Wrigley (2002) has suggested that the changing economies of retail stores, relocating outside of the inner city to the suburbs to take advantage of lower rents and greater surface area, explains the presence of food deserts. Raja et al. (2008) found that grocery stores are often sited outside of racially segregated neighbourhoods as a result of past redlining policies. However, Montreal does not have a history of redlining nor has it experienced a great degree of retail relocation (Apparicio et al., 2007).

As noted by Wrigley (2002; 2003) the history and development of food desert research is a direct outcome of government studies conducted to determine the level of social exclusion faced by residents of socially deprived neighbourhoods in the UK, and as such has direct health applications. Wrigley, Warm, and Margetts (2003) conducted a study on the diets of residents of a food desert before and after a retail intervention to increase physical food access. They found positive change in the diets of those residents that switched to the new store, lived in close proximity to it, and had the lowest level of fruit and vegetable consumption. However, they note that the change itself was very minimal. Because the Wrigley et al. study is one of a few studies conducted on the “before and after” dietary habits of residents, researchers have concluded that there is a lack of empirical evidence suggesting that living in a food desert has a direct effect on the dietary health of residents (Apparicio et al., 2007; Walker et al., 2010). Moreover, in a recent

review of food desert literature, Caspi, Sorensen, Subramanian, and Kawachi (2012) corroborate that there is not enough evidence pointing to physical access leading to (un)healthy food consumption habits.

Cummins and Macintyre (2002) argue that the lack of critical analysis of the “food desert” metaphor has led to its acceptance as a fact. Furthermore, they state that this has led to health and social policy without enough discussion on whether food deserts even exist. They assert that the acceptance of taken-for-granted facts such as the food desert is made possible when the idea fits into the general worldview of policy makers (Cummins and Macintyre, 2002). An additional advantage of this view is that further evidence is not required when the idea fits into what governments want to do, e.g. urban renewal projects. Likewise, Shannon (2014) argues that projects designed to fight food deserts shut the door on discussions of food production, and urban economic segregation (p. 249). This is echoed in McEntee’s (2009) call to do away with the food desert metaphor.

The methodology of selecting an arbitrary distance cut-off such as 500 or 1000 metres to establish physical access to food retailers does not take into account relative mobility, as noted by Paez et al. (2010) in their study of physical food access in Montreal. Not to mention that this also makes comparative analysis very difficult when the distance measures are not the same (McEntee, 2009). Furthermore, the use of GIS and mapping is to “present a ‘god’s eye’ view representing food deserts as objective, calculable spaces rather than as sites of everyday practices” (Shannon, 2014, p.255). However, Bedore (2010) considers the most important contribution of food desert research as its identification that spatial inequalities to food access exist. Understanding that healthy eating habits are not simply determined by physical access, McEntee (2009) suggests academics drop the food desert metaphor and focus on food access. To McEntee studying food access must involve focusing on the physical, economic, and informational aspects. Whelan, Wrigley, Warm, and Cannings (2002) contribute to the study of food access “by providing qualitative insight into economic and physical constraints” of the individual and families (p. 2096).

There are many and more factors that affect food access and food consumption habits of people, a recent review on environmental influences of food security (Gorton , Bullen, and Mhurchu, 2010) highlights these as the most important, they are: economic (income, wealth, employment, living expenses, health, household facilities, transport, location); political (government policy, welfare support); and sociocultural (cooking and financial skills/nutrition knowledge, household composition, social networks, media, shame). All of those aspects listed above are experienced in different ways by different people every day. Some research that has sought to understand some of those relationships are identified below. Engler-Stringer (2010) grounded her study “of how social and physical food environments shape daily food and cooking practices” in the community and collective kitchens of Montreal (p. 211). Carney (2011) provided ethnographic insight into the lives of Latino families in Santa Barbara County, California by seeking to understand the “compounding crises of economic recession and food insecurity”.

McEntee (2009) states “that any assessment of food access must include qualitative measures that would be obtained from interviews, surveys, and focus groups” (p. 357). Moreover, Alkon et al. (2013) note that

To further understand the complicated sets of variables that go into food choice, and the varied food landscapes that low-income residents navigate, a qualitative analysis is required (p.128).

Engler-Stringer’s (2009), Carney’s (2011) and Whelan et al.’s (2002) studies are important because they provide insights into how people experience and describe their food access. Apparicio et al. (2007) and McEntee (2009) advocate for a more holistic approach to food access research. Future research must seek to assess culture, knowledge, and choice alongside economic and physical access to food (McEntee, 2009).

One path forward may entail recognizing the multiple ways in which individuals value and interact with their food environment [...] Rather than designing interventions meant to rationalize supposedly irrational food behaviors, greater attention to how these embodied differences matter in individuals’ everyday provisioning practices may help fashion a more nuanced and less stigmatizing portrait of low-income neighborhoods (Shannon, 2014, p. 259).

A Brief Political-Economy of Policy Actions

David Harvey (1990) makes clear that the collapse of the Fordist state and the practice of Keynesian economic theory that upheld it have led to collapses in secondary industries, e.g. factories and plants. This has led to industrial restructuring on a global scale. By moving factories from the “first world” to the “third world” capitalists have been able to accumulate more capital by cutting employment costs (Harvey, 1990). The new mode of production that has come to replace Fordism is Neoliberalism. This is a mode of production that employs neoliberal ideologies which are underlined by Hayekian economic theory.

The important part is that the change in economic paradigms led to massive employment cuts and the capital disinvestment of the inner city through plant closures and out-migration of wealthier residents (Harvey, 1990). This process that allowed for capital disinvestment in the inner city also made room for what David Harvey calls the “spatial fix”. Thus, over accumulation of capital now has a place to go. One could argue by taking the example of the food retail intervention described in Wrigley et al. (2003) and the argument put forward by Cummins and Macintyre (2002) that food retail interventions fit into the economic development model that are institutionalized in the practices of governments. Food desert interventions are a way to spatially fix capital into an area, and as Guthman (2011) argues can lead to the gentrification of an area. The effect is to further marginalize low-income residents of gentrifying neighbourhoods by replacing their everyday “spaces of consumption” with expensive specialty stores and higher priced food markets. This is why it is all the more important to provide a critical understanding of food access issues and food consumption habits of the lower classes to inform policy.

A Class-Based Critic of Policy Actions

Furthermore, it is important to understand that what organizations and governments implement as “problem fixes” are not necessarily what local residents want done (Guthman, 2008). Julie Guthman (2008) demonstrates that the lack of reflexivity on the part of those creating and implementing “solutions” to inequitable food access for inner-city African Americans leads to poor turnout by those they intend to help and an abandonment of the project. Though her analysis is geared towards race, some of what she says can be replaced with class.

Specifically, the rhetoric used within food movements are often “classed” i.e. the discourse of organic and local as a solution to increase food access (Guthman, 2008). Even though as Guthman points out organic, local foods are niche products that are sold at a premium, and one could buy global and chemically grown foods for less. Guthman suggests that instead of imposing projects onto people, they take the time to listen, watch and not always help. This is especially important when proposing project solutions to food access that may seem the norm but are imbued with class privilege.

Going Forward

As this literature review has shown, one of the clearest needs in food desert research is to examine the situation of the disadvantaged consumer in far more detail than has been the case. The literature on economic restructuring and gentrification also makes it clear that such areas are ones in most need of study at this point. Such key questions have therefore framed my concerns, which I have operationalized as the following research questions to be examined:

1. How do large chain grocery store policies affect food access for social assistance recipients?
2. How do supermarket circulars affect the spending/movement habits of social assistance recipients?

To examine these questions I will reposition local, low-income residents of Hochelaga-Maisonneuve as experts with regard to their personal experiences with food access. Talking about low-income “foodscapes” will help to keep the food—space relations at the center of this study

In the chapter that immediately follows, I present the methodology used to explore these questions, before turning (in subsequent chapters) to my analysis, discussion and conclusions.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

Setting

My case study is set in the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve borough of Montreal. The borough is delineated by The Canadian Pacific railway line just west of Prefontaine, Sherbrooke Street to the north, the St-Lawrence River to the south, and Viau to the east. Hochelaga-Maisonneuve was once a working class neighbourhood with strong industries. The Viau cookie factory was located there along with other factories and industry sectors. The changing economics of the city saw roughly half of the borough's population migrate out, going from a peak of 83,000 people in 1966 to almost half of that, 45,000, in 1996 (CDLC, 2009). Today there are roughly 46,000 people and the population has remained relatively stable (Bedard, 2009). The area is considered one of the most underserved and socially excluded areas of Montreal (CDLC, 2009). Roughly 24% of the population lives alone and 81% of the population are renters (CDLC, 2009). The average rent for the area is around \$580 (Bedard, 2009). The average renter allocates around 31% of their monthly income towards the rent (CDLC, 2009). The total population of people on welfare in the area has diminished from a high of 22% and 16% for men and women respectively to a low of 10% and 8% (CDLC, 2009); however, this drop is not explained. A little under half of the population is considered as low-income, that number standing at 42% as of 2006 (CDLC, 2009).

That is not the whole story. The reason for some of the more positive trends is that the area is gentrifying (Senecal, 1995). What began in the 1990s with local leaders lobbying the city for infrastructure development and rehabilitation of the housing stock developed into full on gentrification, with the discourse of neighbourhood rebalancing (Rose, Germain, Bacque, Bridge, Fijalkow, and Slater, 2012). In fact, the part of the borough that has gentrified is considerably well served with higher income levels in comparison to the area that has not. This can be seen in a map¹ of the area showing well served areas and underserved areas, developed by the CDLC (2009).

¹ Appendix B: Map of HoMa

In terms of food access as discussed above it is relatively evenly distributed across the island of Montreal, except some census tracts in Hochelaga-Maisonneuve are a little further away from a grocery store (Apparicio et al., 2007). Residents of HoMa (as this area is called) have over 70 depanneurs servicing the area with low-quality, high priced food stuffs, and only 10 grocery stores (CDLC , 2009, B). The area has one of the lowest life-expectancies on the Island of Montreal with an average of 74 years, and only 60 of those years in good health (Direction de Sante Public , 2011). The average food basket cost per person per day for the city of Montreal is \$7.69 (Dispensaire diététique de Montréal , 2012). In 2005 the average food basket cost per person in the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve borough was \$5.49 and the area had the lowest socioeconomic status rating of the CLSC (Dispensaire diététique de Montréal , 2005). The cost of food has risen by more than \$2 a day, while social assistance aid is \$610 a month (Government, 2014).

Case Study

It will be recalled that my two guiding research questions are:

1. How do large chain grocery store policies affect food access for social assistance recipients?
 - a. How do weekly supermarket prices in HoMa affect food access?
 - b. How do supermarket circulars affect the spending/movement habits of social assistance recipients?

Those questions have framed the interpretation of interview data from HoMa borough residents “to understand how the complex local political and economic conditions [...] affect urban food access” (Bedore, 2010, p. 63). Bedore (2010) suggests that the case study method may be the best way to get to know an area’s political, economic, social, and cultural dynamics at a particular time and place, and be able to abstract “relationships and phenomena to broader underlying forces and theories” (p.63). This becomes important in the context of food access and food consumption because they are enmeshed in the everyday lives of people and are very much spatial.

Pilot Study

In the spring of 2012, I conducted a pilot study on the food access issues that are perceived by social assistance recipients. This study was conducted in the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve area of Montreal, at a local organization called Centre d'Alimentation et de Partage St-Barnabe (CAP). I conducted eight interviews with a semi-structured, focused interview guide. The interviews themselves lasted between fifteen minutes and one hour. The result of these interviews was a conference paper for the Food Studies symposium held at Concordia in April 2012. What came out of the interviews was both unexpected and rather fruitful.

The interviewees, in their responses, brought up issues that I had not conceived of as being important, e.g. low-quality specials when the check comes out, and the links between food access and the feeling of being displaced in one's own community through changing social and economic dynamics of the neighbourhood. In retrospect, considering the experience as a whole, they seemed less worried about the social injustices and more worried about living. They wanted more than anything else a "normal" pattern of consumption to mark their lifestyle, e.g. the suggestion by one participant that to increase food access they add another grocery store to increase competition in the area and decrease traveling outside of the neighbourhood in search of specials. It is these interviews that have increased my interest in further understanding food access and eating habits so that policy directives are not haphazardly initiated without an idea of the social and economic structures that help mould food access and food consumption habits.

Qualitative Interviewing

Because the goal of my interviews is to get rich and emotional responses that will help to answer my questions, I chose to use a method known as "qualitative interviewing". Qualitative interviewing is important because it allows the researcher to "[tease] out deeper well-springs of meaning" (Cloke, 2004, p. 127). Certainly, the ability, "to see the world through different windows and to hear the world via a polyphony of different voices" (Cloke, 2004, p. 129) will help to show the relativity and contextuality of lived experiences within the frame of the questions asked.

Interviews

For the qualitative interview aspect of my field work I went back to the location where I had conducted my pilot study, Le Centre d'Alimentation et Partage St-Barnabe (hereby referred to as CAP); located on Bennett Avenue, corner Adam Street in the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve borough of Montreal. Arrangements to conduct interviews on the premises were made ahead of time with Ms. Jeanelle Bouffard, the director of CAP. All interviews were conducted at CAP.

The dates and interviews went as follows:

- April 23rd: 3 interviews
- April 25th: 3 interviews
- June 14th: 3 interviews
- June 18th: 3 interviews
- June 19th: 3 interviews
- June 20th: 4 interviews
- June 27th: 4 interviews
- July 3rd: 4 interviews

All 27 interviews, with the exception of two, were conducted in a small room located off of the main hall. The two exceptions were conducted in the main hall. Interviewees were given a consent-to research-participation form (Appendix C). The purpose of the research, intentions of use, and all details pertaining to the consent form were explained to each individual prior to their giving written and verbal consent. Participants were adequately informed before consenting. All consent forms were dated and signed, and can be verified by a third party if need be. The interviews were recorded, except for those where consent was not given, in this case two. The recorded interviews were then transcribed verbatim and translated from French to English. Participants were selected on the basis of their willingness to participate i.e. a volunteer was assigned to me by the director to ask the patrons of CAP on my behalf, those willing to participate were accepted without question. Therefore, only patrons who frequented the main hall long enough were asked to participate. How they were chosen by the volunteer is unknown to me.

The interview guide was semi-structured and open-ended (Appendix C). Questions were developed to get to the social assistance recipients' experiences of grocery shopping; developing upon the interview responses from the pilot study. At times, answers to questions were followed up with non-scripted questions to elicit and further develop points which I thought pertinent to the research question. The goal of the interviews was to get a sense of how grocery store specials and the circulars affect social aid recipients' food security, as well as to determine how implicated grocery stores are in creating classed urban food deserts.

In total, 16 of the 27 participants were female and 11 were male, as presented in Table 1. The main mode of transportation to and from grocery stores was walking. Only eight participants stated they had a medical condition that affected their day to day capacities. Most participants (16) rented their homes, three participants lived in an HLM (low-rent housing), and one participant lived at CAP St-Barnabe's social housing. Participants' (20) financial resources came from social assistance, one person received a pension, two were receiving Employment Insurance (EI), and two were employed.

Table 1. Interview Participant Demographics					
Participant	Gender	Mobility	Health	Housing	Income
1	F	Foot	Poor	HLM	SA
2	F	Foot	N/A	N/A	SA
3	F	Foot	N/A	Rent	SA
4	M	Foot/Bike	N/A	N/A	N/A
5	M	Foot/STM/Car	N/A	N/A	N/A
6	M	Foot/STM	N/A	N/A	SA
7	F	Foot/STM	N/A	Rent	SA
8	M	Foot	N/A	Rent	Employed
9	F	Foot/Car	Poor	Rent	SA
10	F	Foot	Poor	Rent	SA
11	F	Foot	Poor	CAP St-Barnabe	SA
12	F	Foot	Poor	N/A	SA
13	F	Foot	Poor	Rent	Pension
14	F	Foot	N/A	Rent	SA
15	F	Foot/STM	N/A	Rent	SA
16	M	Foot	N/A	N/A	SA
17	M	Foot/Bike/STM	N/A	Rent	SA
18	M	Car	N/A	Rent	Employed
19	F	Foot	N/A	Rent	SA
20	M	Foot	N/A	Rent	SA

21	F	Foot	Poor	Rent	SA
22	M	Foot	N/A	HLM	SA
23	F	Car	N/A	Rent	EI
24	M	Foot/Bike	Poor	HLM	SA
25	F	Car	N/A	Rent	SA
26	M	N/A	N/A	Rent	EI
27	F	Foot	N/A	N/A	SA

Constant Comparison

To analyze the eight hours of recordings, or 98 pages of text, I have subjected the data to what is called a “constant comparison” analysis. Constant comparison is an excellent tool for grounding the theory in the data. As noted by Charmaz (2005), researchers can apply grounded theory methods to social justice inquiry (p.507). Grounded theory allows researchers flexible analytic guidelines that do not impose a hypothesis on their work. Rather, the data collection and analysis are guided by the research questions, which are not so rigid – unlike a hypothesis (Ibid). Moreover,

A grounded theory approach encourages researchers to remain close to their studied worlds and to develop an integrated set of theoretical concepts from their empirical materials that not only synthesize and interpret them but also show processual relationships (Ibid, p. 508).

The importance of grounding the theory in the interviews that I collected cannot be overstated, as it “entails developing increasingly abstract ideas about research participants’ meanings, actions, and worlds and seeking specific data to fill out, refine, and check the emerging conceptual categories” (ibid, p.508).

Of greatest value here are the analytic tools that grounded theory affords the researcher, in my case the tool of “constant comparison”. Constant comparison as a method was developed by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s to bring a rigor to qualitative research that was ever only credited to quantitative research (Charmaz, 2005). Before going any further, it is clear that trying to bring quantitative rigor to qualitative research also implies carrying a bag full of positivist paradigms. Ideas like objectivity, validity, replicability, and generalizability are key tenets of a positivist paradigm, of which I am fully aware. As made clear by Charmaz (2005), in her succinct argument that all work is interpreted by the researcher, who themselves bring a past full of experience to the research, and who also chose their topic of study. I do not seek objectivity, generalizability, or any of that positivist mumbo jumbo. Rather, I aim to enlighten others on an

experience totally foreign to myself, and many others, that I believe to be a great injustice, and in so doing help to build concepts that might push for change.

Now, onwards to the details of performing a “constant comparison analysis”. The purpose of constant comparison is to categorize the data into conceptual coding and to compare/contrast the resulting categories. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) provide a very detailed account of how a researcher should go about enacting the methodology.

The first step is to read the data, then unitize the data into parcels of single meaning. The second step is to come up with exploratory categories that emerge during the process of reading over the data and developing the research project, then merge categories based on likeness or create more categories. Thirdly, to use the category that seems most significant and to place unitized data beneath that category based on their fit. (For example, if the unit does not fit, try another category, and use the feel/ look-alike criteria to compare/contrast the units already beneath the category. If that category does not work, make one using the words found in the unitized data.) Once six to eight units are under a category, it is time to come up with a rule of inclusion based upon the unitized data beneath. Then compare the categories to determine if there are like categories. If that is the case, reformulate the rule of inclusion to meet the new category, then add or remove units of data based upon the new rule. Following these rules, I continued this process until every unit of data was subsumed into a category and that the categories themselves were conceptual and no longer just descriptive.

Rather than tackle the interviews as a whole, I analysed three interviews at a time and built a scaffold of the categories as they came up. Then I compared the sets of interviews three at a time and continued until every interview had been compared. After which time, I reviewed all the interviews to see if there was anything I missed. In total I generated 47 categories or themes.

Clearly, it must be noted that if my data were analyzed by someone else, it would yield different results. I hold no claim to absolute knowledge. Though this is the general downside to interpreting data, the importance of this exercise is to develop sound themes that hold up to outside scrutiny and possibly lead to consensus among the broader community of food access researchers.

Chapter 4: Analysis of Grocery Store Circulars

Introduction

The distribution of food circulars is one of the ways in which the supermarkets Metro and Super C convey what products they have and at what prices. It is how they differentiate themselves from their competition, and how they attract consumers. Ultimately, they are aware that what they put on the front cover of their circulars is likely going to have a large impact on their weekly sales.

Some interesting questions arise from the fact that the government-regulated distribution of social assistance checks is set at the beginning of every month. For example: how is this reflected in the circulars produced by Metro Inc. and Super C? What might we expect in the final content of the store circular, given that the first week of every month sees a rise in income for HoMa residents? And, to turn to the residents themselves, how do social assistance recipients experience grocery store circulars?

Metro Inc. views all individuals as consumers, but as we know not all consumers are equal. Metro stores are known for selling quality foods at prices that reflect the brands and products they carry. They are not known for being inexpensive or carrying bulk items. Thus, Metro Inc. created their discount brand, Super C, to cater to price savvy consumers with an eye on saving. Their motto is “Beau. Bon. Pas Cher.”, which translates to “Nice. Good. Inexpensive.”. With the two stores operating within two distinct economic realities, we should expect that their respective circulars will reflect that reality regardless of week. However, through the many months of observing the food items that appeared on the front pages of circulars from both stores, one could argue that that is not truly occurring. Certainly, from the analysis of the front pages of supermarket circulars that will be presented in this chapter, we can point to Metro as having an explicit tactic of dealing with social assistance recipients the week they receive their aid checks. However, as our analysis shows, the same is not true of Super C.

As this analysis will show, the effect on social assistance recipients of marketing policies by Metro Inc. in HoMa has been to limit their movements in the neighbourhood and confront them with the seemingly inevitable fact of food insecurity. The real need for low-cost, quality

food specials at the beginning of the month is met with high-cost, low-quality foods. Metro Inc. employs tactics meant to discourage unwanted consumers from making the trip into their premium store i.e. Metro. Instead encouraging social assistance participants to shop at their bargain store i.e. Super C. Metro Inc.'s use of food specials to push social assistance recipients away from Metro and pull them towards Super C does not account for the variety of actions on the ground, as is reflected in the participant interviews conducted as part of this research.

Participants (19/27) argue that grocery stores in HoMa do not have low-cost, quality specials when the check comes out, and that the good specials come out usually mid-month. Moreover, 18 participants stated that they utilize grocery store circulars, underscoring the importance of circulars in managing food shopping. Grounded within participant interviews and “observation of circulars”, we will see how social assistance recipients experience the first week of the month through grocery shopping, and compare/contrast that with the findings from the circulars. In the final section of the chapter the meanings and importance attributed to buying food on special and the grocery store circular will show that social assistance recipients are constrained by Metro Inc.'s marketing policies, and how that affects them.

Constant Comparison

From participant interviews conducted for this research, we get a sense of what it is like to live with one paycheck a month, the feelings of anger and frustration with grocery shopping, the need to be rigorous in studying food prices and locations, the constant effort needed to acquire food, and having to contend with other financial obligations. Participants painted a portrait of their week with food that depicts a struggle between maintaining their health and financial budgeting, a choice most salaried individuals do not need to make. Their attempts to feed themselves at a fair price are in stark contrast to the attempts of grocers like Metro Inc. to encourage frivolous spending on unneeded foodstuffs.

The theme of “poor value specials” is one of the more important aspects that came out of the constant comparison. Along with the theme of reliance on the specials, we can see that the practices that surround food purchasing are very important. Practices include studying the circulars, planning grocery trips around specials, buying food on special, and asking/ not asking

for rainchecks when an item is out of stock. The details provided by the participants on their lives with specials will animate the analysis and bring it to life.

Ideas Present in Participant Interviews

Koch and Sprague (2014) discuss the beginnings and continued development of two discourses that emerged from participant interviews they conducted. The first they term the “chemical nutrition” discourse and the second is the “efficient shopper”. “Chemical nutrition” refers to the scientific breakdown of food to its composite parts, e.g. fats, starches, proteins, and sugars, and how that has changed how we view and purchase foods (Ibid). “Efficient shopper” has its roots in the household division of labour and later in home economics when women were instructed on best practices for grocery shopping and money saving (Ibid). Both of these discourses parallel the discourses that came out of the constant comparison. The “efficient shopper” parallels participants’ discourses on using the circular as a survival tool, a way to stretch resource, and to know where to go. The “chemical consumer” is in line with participants’ discourses on changing eating habits, responding to illness, and eating healthy. Similar discourses to those Koch and Sprague found were being actively engaged by my participants.

The authors also discuss a third discourse, “Control the Consumer”, whereby grocery stores are designed in such a way as to make keeping on task almost impossible for consumers, e.g. placing the dairy section in the back of the store so that customers will have to trudge through the whole store, past every aisle, before arriving at the dairy section (Ibid). Grocery stores do more than design their stores to be labyrinths; they also design their circulars to be enticing and seductive, and wholly treacherous to those with low incomes, as I will demonstrate below.

The discourses of the “efficient shopper”, “chemical consumer”, and “control the consumer” developed by Koch and Sprague (2014) substantiate the ways that the participants in my study engage with food and food shopping at grocery stores. Thus, I will frame the experiences of social assistance recipients as they became revealed in my constant comparison alongside the discourses of the “efficient shopper”, “chemical consumer”, and “control the consumer”. I will also make strong connections with the data on circulars that I gathered over

seven months. Through the use of such multiple methods, we will create a more complex – but far more valuable – understanding of food access, and stretch the more normal defining characteristics of the “food desert”.

Circulars: Methodology

As I was made aware of during my pilot project, social aid recipients and low-income people perceive that fewer items, of lesser quality, tend to be on special the week that the social assistance check is disseminated (Roussy, 2012). To determine the validity or truthfulness of this claim I set out to develop a methodology that would allow me to gather the necessary data required. So, over a period of seven months I collected the weekly store circulars of Super C and Metro² the three supermarkets located within the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve borough. Because the store circulars are set by their respective Head Offices they correspond to every Metro and Super C on the Island. Any exception is clearly written on the bottom of the circulars themselves. Therefore, the circulars I collected correspond, without exception, to the stores in the borough under study. The purpose of the collection is to take from each circular the items that appear on the front page. The reason why I have chosen the Front Page is simple, it is the first page customers see; thus, marketing teams will emphasize the items thought to be the most attractive and with the largest discounts upon it.

Thus, as mentioned above, I took the items that appear on the front cover of the circulars and grouped them by week of appearance. I collected 31 total circulars, 8 of which were Check Weeks and 23 were Non-Check Weeks. Each month is organized around the week that the social assistance check comes out, as indicated in Table 3. Only in the month of May does the Check fall outside of the first “Week of Month”; therefore, it was placed in the following circular week because it fell on the very last day of the circular. Table 3 shows how many items appear on average on the front covers of Metro and Super C on either a Check Week or Non-Check Week. Table 4 shows how many items were observed over the 31 weeks at both Super C and Metro and the total amount of item appearances over the 31 weeks.

All identical items are grouped together by size or format and the prices are ignored. The reason for ignoring the prices is that they are the best prices for that week, e.g. the Metro circular

² There are two Metro stores located in HoMa

had pork chops at \$6.59/kg the last week of March, at \$5.49/kg the second week of March, and at \$4.39/kg the second week of May. Moreover, the goal is to see how likely it is to have a specific product, regardless of price, appear on Check Weeks versus Non-Check Weeks. All prices are ignored and so all boneless pork chops would fall under one category, called Pork Chops B/L \$/kg. The same goes for all other identical items, e.g. orange juice 2.63l, chicken breasts without bone, cheese block 500g, cheese block 300g, etc.

The data has been inputted into an excel spreadsheet with the item categories as column titles and the week of check as row titles. All occurrences of the items are indicated as ones if present and zeroes if absent. A statistical analysis was run to analyze the incidence rate of items that are “more likely” to appear when the check is disseminated versus items that are “less likely” to appear. In so doing I am able to connect and build relationships between my analyses of the interviews with the empirical evidence from Metro and Super C’s circulars. The calculation used is posted below.

Before turning to a discussion of my results, it is useful here to describe the methods used in my calculations. Suppose you had the following hypothetical data: In 31 weeks of flyers, Pepsi-Cola appeared in 4 of the 8 front page flyers that were on pay days, and in 2 of the 23 front pages when it was not pay day. Then, Pepsi-cola is: $(4/8) / (2/23) = 5.75$ times more likely to appear on the front page on pay days than on non-pay days.

Stata calculates it as follows:

A) Basic structure of example

	Front Page	Not Front Page	Total
Pay Day	a	b	(a+b)
Non Pay-Day	c	d	(c+d)
total			

B) Actual example

	Front Page	Not Front Page	Total
Pay Day	4	4	8
Non Pay-Day	2	21	23
total			

$$\text{Ratio} = [a/(a+b)] / [c/(c+d)] = (4/8) / (2/23) = 5.75$$

This is called a proportional ratio (or risk ratio), because it is a ratio of two proportions. This tells you how much more likely the item is to appear on the first page on pay days, compared to the item appearing on the front page on non-pay days.

Stata software made all probability calculations; where one is “equally likely” to appear on both circulars, below one is “less likely” to appear on Check Week, and above one is “more likely” to appear on Check Week. Items that appeared only on Check Week or Non-Check Week created an issue for the software i.e. it dealt with division by zero by creating enormous numbers for “more likely” to appear and infinitesimally small numbers for “less likely” to appear. Metro, for example, had diced tomatoes in cans on special only on Check Weeks and the software gave it a probability ratio of 12077476; while live lobster only appears on Non-Check Weeks and has a probability ratio of 1.08^{e-07} . P-values were calculated for all food items, which can be found on Tables 11 to 14. Very few proportional ratios were found to be significant because the sample size was not large enough. However, these were the items that appeared on the front pages of grocery stores and therefore represent the reality of seven months’ worth of grocery store circulars.

The following tables present the basic data upon which my analysis of circular data begins

Table 2. Check Date and Corresponding Circular Weeks

Month	Check Date	Week Of Month	Circular Date	Total Days Between Checks
February	Feb. 1, 2013	1	Jan.31 - Feb. 6	29
		2	Feb. 7 - Feb. 13	
		3	Feb. 14 - Feb. 20	
		4	Feb. 21 - Feb. 27	
March	Mar. 1, 2013	1	Feb. 28 - Mar. 6	27
		2	Mar. 7 - Mar. 13	
		3	Mar. 14 - Mar. 20	
		4	Mar. 21 - Mar. 27	
April	Mar. 28, 2013	1	Mar. 28 - Apr. 3	34
		2	Apr. 4 - Apr. 10	
		3	Apr. 11 - Apr. 17	
		4	Apr. 18 - Apr. 24	
		5	Apr. 25 - May 1	
May	May. 1, 2013	1	May 2 - May 8	30
		2	May 9 - May 15	
		3	May 16 - May 22	
		4	May 23 - May 29	
June	May. 31, 2013	1	May 30 - June 5	28
		2	June 6 - June 12	
		3	June 13 - June 19	
		4	June 20 - June 26	
July	June. 28, 2013	1	June 27 - July 3	35
		2	July 4 - July 10	
		3	July 11 - July 17	
		4	July 18 - July 24	
		5	July 25 - July 31	
August	Aug. 1, 2013	1	Aug. 1 - Aug. 7	29
		2	Aug. 8 - Aug. 14	
		3	Aug. 15 - Aug. 21	
		4	Aug. 22 - Aug. 28	
September	Aug. 30, 2013	1	Aug. 29 - Sept. 4	

Table 3 shows the difference between a circular appearing during the Check Week and one during Non-Check Week. The difference for Super C favours Check Week by 1 item, while showing the opposite trend for Metro with 2 less items on Check Week. There are also more items on the front cover of a Metro circular than that of Super C’s, and it should be noted that that gap is even greater during a Non-Check Week.

Table 3. Average Food Items per Front Page			
	Check Week	Non-Check Week	Difference (Check Week)
Super C	9	8	1
Metro	11	13	-2

Total food item appearance over the 31 front pages is tabulated in Table 4, below. Metro totaled over 388 food items distributed over 31 circulars, while Super C showed far less with 256 over the same period. The number of unique items leans towards Metro as well, with a total of 164 out of the 388 items being unique. For Super C, the amount of unique items comes to 115 out of 256 total items. Though Metro has more unique items on the whole, as a percentage, unique items only account for 42% of their total, while for Super C that number is slightly higher with 45%.

Table 4. Total Food Items over the 31 Front Pages			
	Total Item count	Unique Items	Unique Percent Total (%)
Super C	256	115	45
Metro	388	164	42

Health & Affordability

To add more depth to the analysis, I have incorporated the health status of the items and their affordability. To define what is healthy and is not healthy I used a binary scheme of zero and one based on Harvard’s “The Healthy Eating Pyramid” (Health, 2014). The pyramid consists of five tiers. At the base of the pyramid we find daily exercise and weight control, two foundational principles for good health. The second tier are the products that should make up the bulk of our daily consumption i.e. fruits and vegetables; healthy fats and oil; and whole, unprocessed grains. On the third tier we find nuts, seeds, tofu, and fish, poultry and eggs, all of

which represent weekly consumption. The fourth tier is dairy products, which should be consumed once or twice a day. Atop the pyramid are the foods that should be eaten sparingly, they are: red meats, processed meats; butter; refined grains, pasta, white rice; salt; sweet, carbonated drinks; and potatoes (Health, 2014). By basing the binary scheme on the pyramid, I had no choice but to place everything on the fifth tier as a zero, or unhealthy, and everything including tier four and below as healthy. If the item was deemed healthy it received a one and unhealthy a zero.

The affordability of products was determined using the interview data (in which my participants discussed the cost of products, as well as the general price per kilo of the items). In order to operationalize this part of the analysis, I set a threshold of \$5.49/kg as the upper limit of affordability, anything above that is considered unaffordable. The majority of participants stated that they had roughly \$200 for food for the month that is about \$47 per week, so food items over \$6 dollars a pack are too expensive to buy. There are clearly problems with this – for example, I recognize that the affordability of an item may be different for single individuals living alone as compared with individuals living with others/ family members. Additionally, some participants have noted that they have far less money to allocate to food than \$200. The items considered healthy and affordable as well as the converse are the same for both Metro and Super C.

To calculate the affordability and healthiness of items I used this equation. (Note: healthy is interchangeable with affordable):

$$\frac{NH}{TNX} \times 100$$

Where NH is the number of healthy items and TNX is the total number of items on Check Week or Non-Check Week, depending on which time period was being calculated. Table 4 indicates the resulting numbers from the above calculation.

Table 5. Health and Affordability Index (%)

		Check Week	Non-Check Week	Difference (Check Week)
Super C	Health	61	63	-2
	Affordability	79	78	1
Metro	Health	52	67	-15
	Affordability	62	77	-15

Results & Analysis

Metro

Let us begin with Figures 1 to 4, which represent the food items that are “more likely” to appear on a Check Week circular at Metro than on a Non-Check Week. There are a few pertinent points to be pulled from this graph. (1) The “proteins” on sale are not accessible. Healthy “proteins” like salmon and fresh chicken breasts are unaffordable, and the only affordable and healthy option is fresh chicken breast with back. (2) There are few fruits and vegetables that lend themselves to making hardy meals, or that provide sufficient nutrition for a week of consumption. Of the “fruits and vegetables” only the canned diced tomatoes 796ml and EuroBest frozen fruits will not go to waste before their expiration dates. (3) Where “dairy and grains” are concerned it is worth going to Metro for pasta and yogurt. (4) Unhealthy and affordable food items like soda are “more likely” to appear on Check Week. (5) In sum, Metro is “more likely” to offer low-quality, high cost products on Check Week. Participants who shop at Metro are unlikely to find more than two or three items worth buying on Check Week, and are likely to spend a lot of money on healthy foods, and conversely spend less money on unhealthy food. The front page of Metro’s circulars during Check Week receive a Health Index score of 52% and an Affordability Index score of 62%, corroborating the points made above.

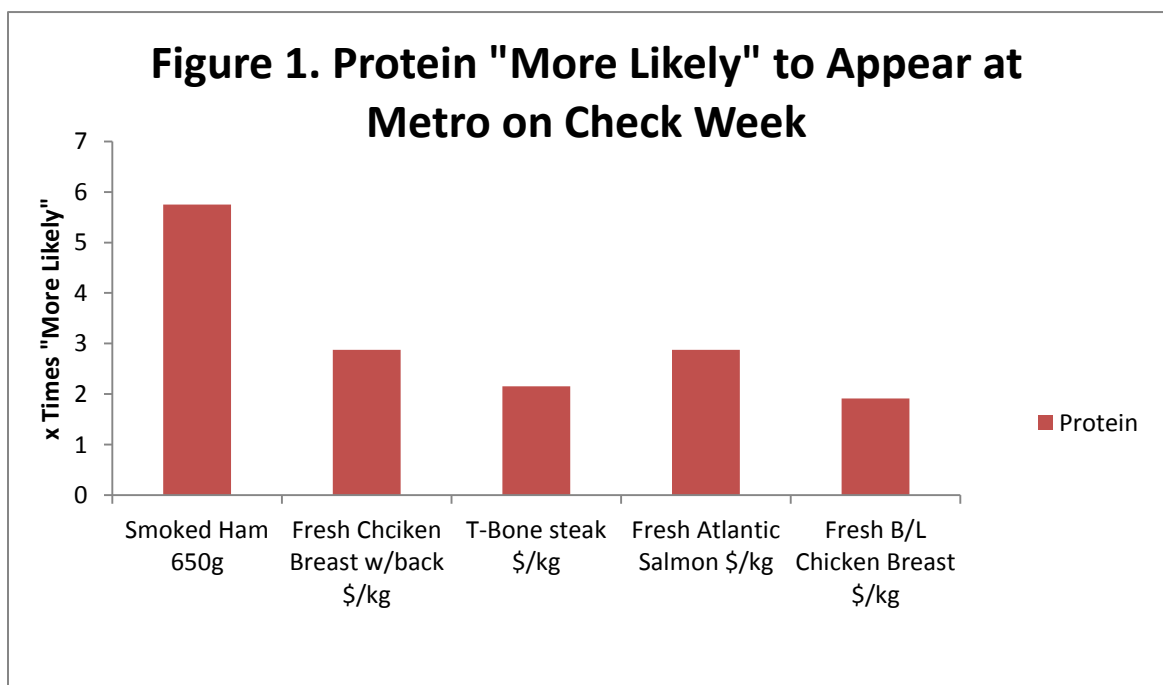


Figure 2. Fruit and Vegetable "More Likely" to Appear at Metro on Check Week

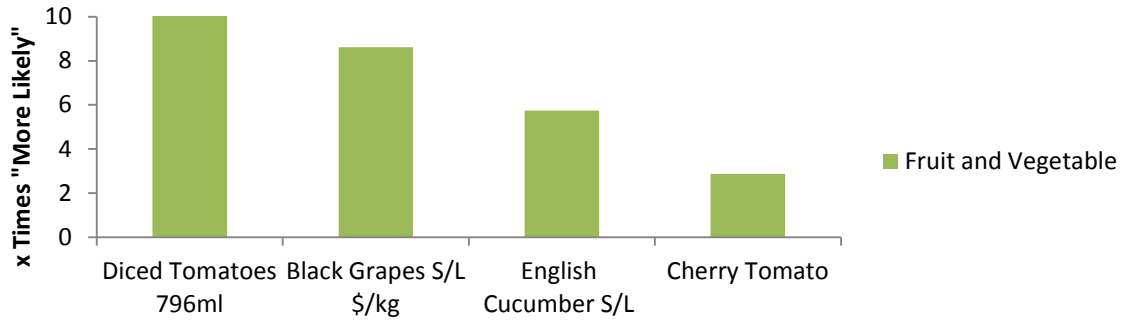


Figure 3. Dairy and Grain "More Likely" to Appear at Metro on Check Week

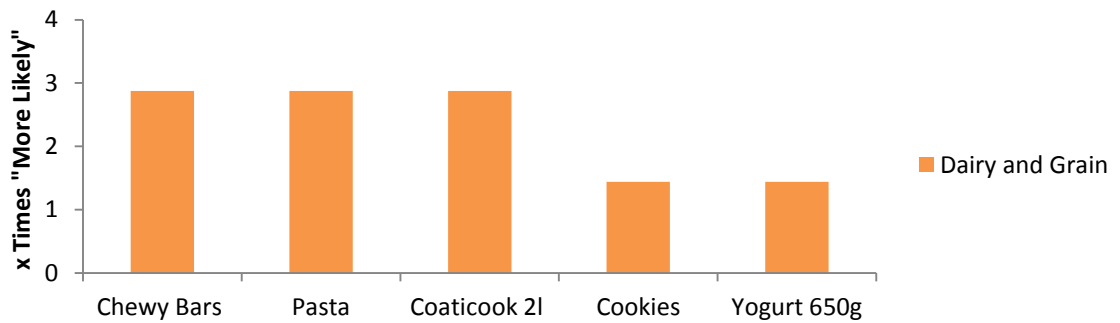
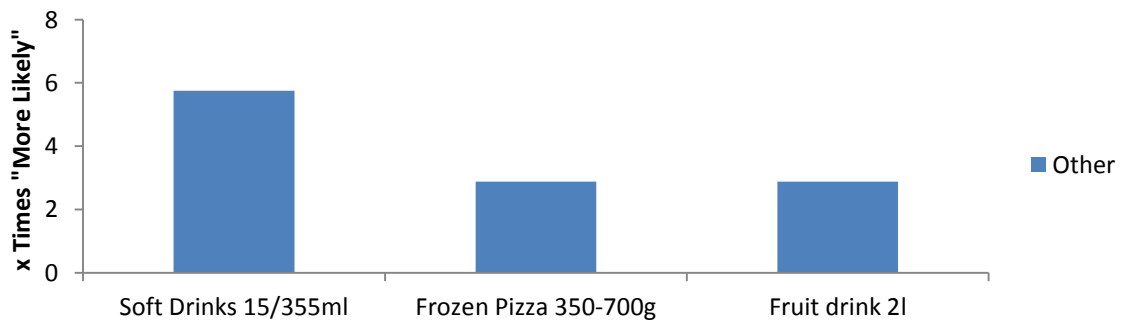


Figure 4. Other "More Likely" to Appear at Metro on Check Week



Figures 5 to 8 show Items that are “less likely” to appear on a Check Week. (1) There are more food options that are healthy and affordable than shown in Figure 1. However, there are also more Non-Check Weeks than Check Weeks increasing the total amount of items that appear. (2) Substantial “proteins” that make up many participants’ diets are “less likely” to appear on Check Week. In fact these items never appeared on the front page of a Check Week circular in the seven months of observations, they are: peanut butter, fresh chicken legs, and eggs. (3) There are more affordable and nutritious fruits and vegetables that are “less likely” to appear, moreover, they have longer shelf lives. (4) Cereals, milk, and cheese are all “less likely” to appear, and are all important food items to participants, as mentioned in the interviews. (5) Items that make up most people’s every day routine, like ground coffee and water bottles, are “less likely” to appear. (6) Overall, the selection of food items that are ‘less likely’ to appear is more diverse and representative of a balanced diet, one that is affordable and healthy. The Health and Affordability Indices show a marked increase of 15% from the scores of those food items that are “more likely” to appear, with scores of 67% and 77% respectively. Therefore, participants are more likely to find the food items they want and need before and after Check Week at Metro.

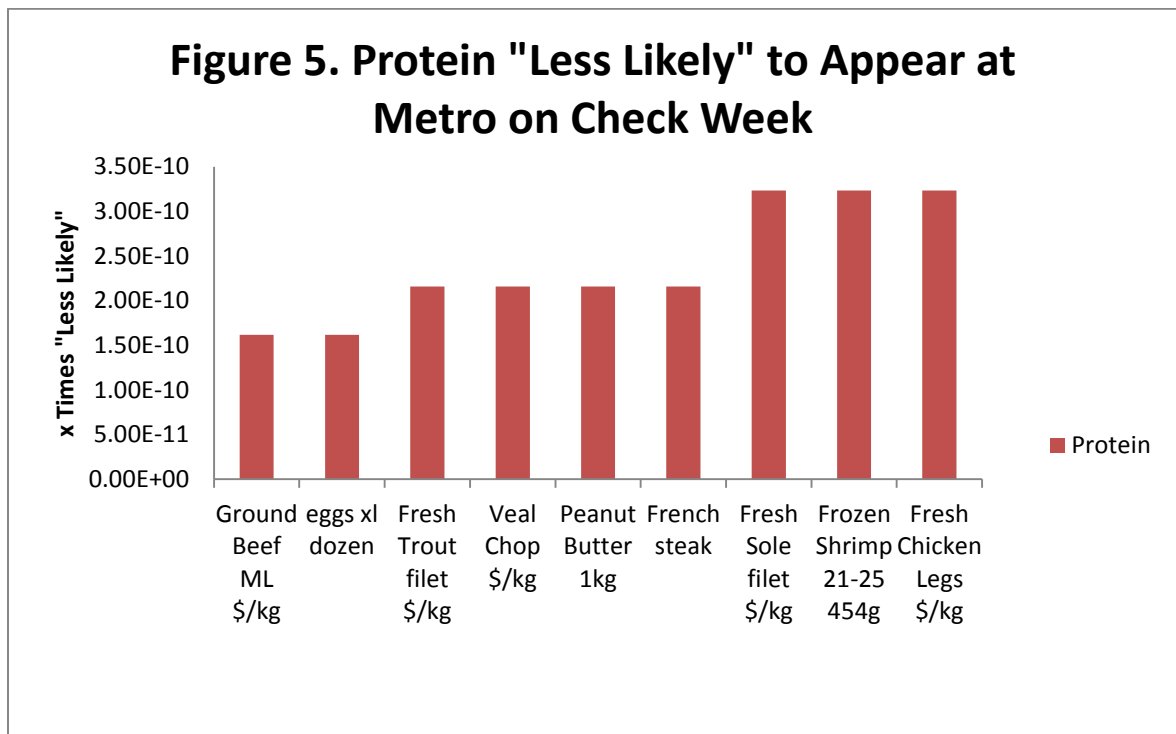


Figure 6. Fruit and Vegetable "Less Likely" to Appear at Metro on Check Week

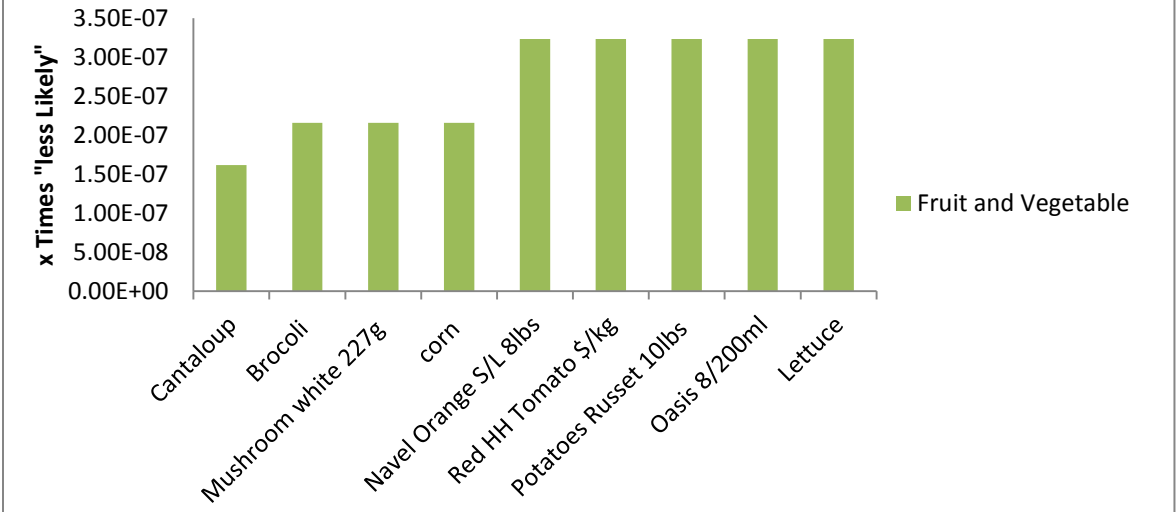


Figure 7. Dairy and Grain "Less Likely" to Appear at Metro on Check Week

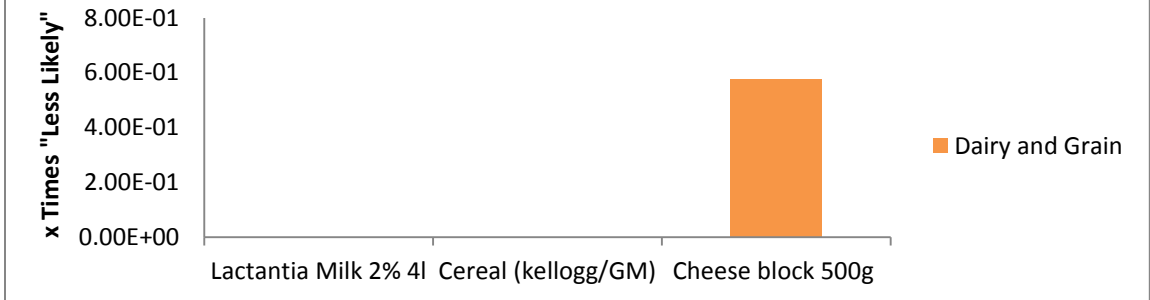
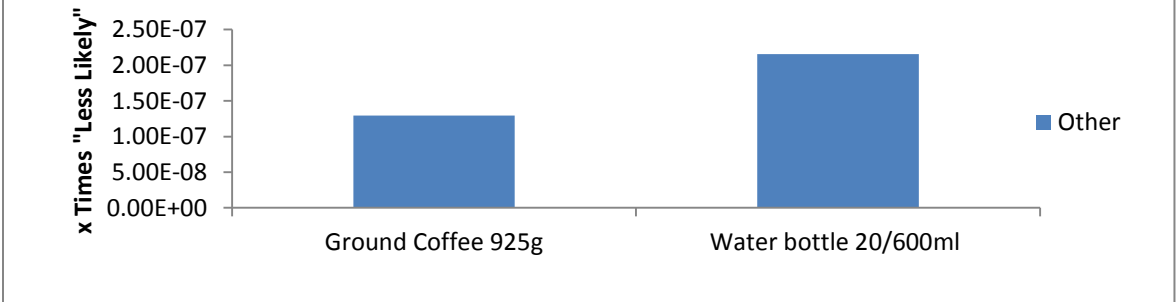


Figure 8. Other "Less Likely" to Appear at Metro on Check Week



For a more detailed look Tables 11 & 12 contains all the information that is displayed on the graphs below.

Participant experiences with Metro and Specials

The next section incorporates the participants' experiences, organized by constant comparison. The analysis of the supermarket circular results is centered on themes that came out of the constant comparison, as mentioned above.

I find most grocery stores don't have specials at the beginning of the month. That is basically when people get their welfare checks. (Susanne, 2013)

The relationship between social assistance recipients and the weekly specials is one of apprehension and precarity³. Many participants perceive that the specials on Check Week are low-quality and costly, and not the specials they want. Natacha, like other participants, will avoid going on Check Week. As she says,

But I never go the first, never the first, there are too many people and not enough specials. I find there isn't enough competition, you know, between places (Natacha, 2013).

Highlighting the difference in total items per front page in Table 2, we see that there are two less items offered during Check Week. The health and affordability of those items is 15% less than on a Non-Check Week; which gives credence to comments such as this,

The same damn things. Hotdog bread, hamburger bread, soft drinks, things like, little things (Pierre, 2013).

From Pierre's quote, we get the idea that grocery stores only sell high calorie, low nutrition foods, and in the case of Metro it is more likely to occur on Check Week than otherwise. Though the Health Index is lower during Check Week, it is still relatively low on Non-Check Week as well. There are more options of fruits and vegetables, of which those "less likely" to appear on Check Week are the ones most likely to appear in social assistance recipients' cooking. "Bread, milk, meat, potatoes, carrots, all kinds of things" (Veronique, 2013), these are all food items Veronique looks for when she goes grocery shopping, however, all food items that will be more expensive.

³ Precarity: is a condition of existence without predictability or security, affecting material or psychological welfare. Coined by Mark Fisher in his article, "Time Wars" featured on GonzoCircus.com.

Many staples in social assistance recipients, cooking repertoire rarely come on special when they have the means to buy them. But as Charles states,

Some months it happens, example chicken and minced meat are rarely the first of the month, but usually the middle (Charles, 2013).

In the seven months of Metro circulars, the only recurring “protein” that is healthy and affordable is fresh chicken breast with back. Moreover, ground beef and chicken legs are “less likely” to appear on Check Week, leaving Charles to either wait till they appear on special or pay more for those food items. Pasta is “more likely” to appear, and so are canned diced tomatoes, and not much else. However, participants have food preferences like:

Meat, pasta, how do I say it, tomatoes, salad, sometimes I take [...] (Pierre, 2013).

My husband likes meat, but doesn’t matter. It is just to say that sometimes we spoil ourselves a little more, but that is more or less rare (Josie, 2013).

Meats. Whatever is needed. Meats, vegetables, cereals, the basics, you know (Susanne, 2013).

Check Week does not account for all the food preferences, or buying habits of social assistance recipients. Many food items they want or need for cooking and nourishment are often on special on Non-Check Weeks. Thus, the timing of specials has negative effects on consumption and financial management. However, some participants are efficient with their finances and strictly adhere to a set budget. For example,

Josie: I make sure to always have 60 something. Just for meat I have about 60 and for the rest I have. I scale it to about 20 dollars per week for the rest

Me: So, 60 per week?

Josie: Nono. 60 dollars for the month, and 20 dollars for milk and the things we need for the house (Josie, 2013)

Specials create a situation whereby social assistance recipients, those that do plan and budget, have to make decisions about what they will buy, for how much, and what they will wait out and see what comes out the following week. Veronique shares her personal thoughts on the matter, “I buy for about 60 dollars when it is worth it, when it isn’t worth it I buy for about 20

dollars” (Veronique, 2013). Veronique is among a few participants who will do their best to wait out the first week and buy during the second week.

Figures 1 to 8 show what social assistance recipients have been saying and what came out of the constant comparison; that specials never land at the right time for individuals on social assistance, there are fewer items and prices are higher. Looking at Table 21 we can see that most participants (23/27) shop at Metro when they receive their assistance checks, and the potential obstacles on a social assistance recipients’ financial management are great. Moreover, social assistance recipients noted specials to be better in the second week than the first week of the month. However, they need to buy food anyways and will pay more for it. There are fewer options when participants receive their social assistance checks and these are not substantial foods that lend themselves to meal planning. Many participants are left to pay more for food than more affluent individuals. While some participants, looking at Veronique and Josie’s examples, pay attention to their budgets so as not to end up paying more for items that are usually on special following the Check Week. There is a perceived lack of competition that helps create the lived experience of participants. With two Metro’s and a Super C, they are the only large food retailers servicing the area (though there are little grocery stores and fruit stores in the neighbourhood).

Super C

Figures 9 to 12 show the food items “more likely” to appear on Check Week, while Figures 13 to 16 show those that are “less likely” to appear on Check Week.

Figures 9 to 12 provide insight into what foods are “more likely” to appear on Check Week. The front pages of Super C’s circulars show an almost opposing trend to Metro’s. Though, this may seem obvious because on the one hand Super C represents low-cost, bulk food, and Metro represents high-cost, diverse foods. There are effects to social assistance recipients and those points are worth drawing out from the Figures below. (1) Many of the “Proteins” on sale are affordable, but they are not healthy, e.g. minced meat, pork chops, and blade pot roast. (2) The fruits and vegetables on offer are few, but vegetables like potatoes (p-value 0.046) are versatile and inexpensive, though not always healthy. Orange juice and navel oranges are “more likely” to appear and provide needed vitamins. (3) There are no grains present on the “more likely” to appear list. Block cheese (cheddar; p-value 0.037) and yogurt are “more likely” to appear, they are also on many female participants’ grocery lists. (4) Everyday items like ground coffee and water bottles are “more likely” to appear on Check Week, but so is soda (24/355ml; p-value 0.0008). These points identify Super C as a favourable destination for grocery shopping Check Week. Social assistance recipients can buy basic food stuffs to make nourishing meals. However, there is little diversity of items and it is just as easy to buy unhealthy foods. Check Weeks have a health index of 61% and an affordability index of 79%.

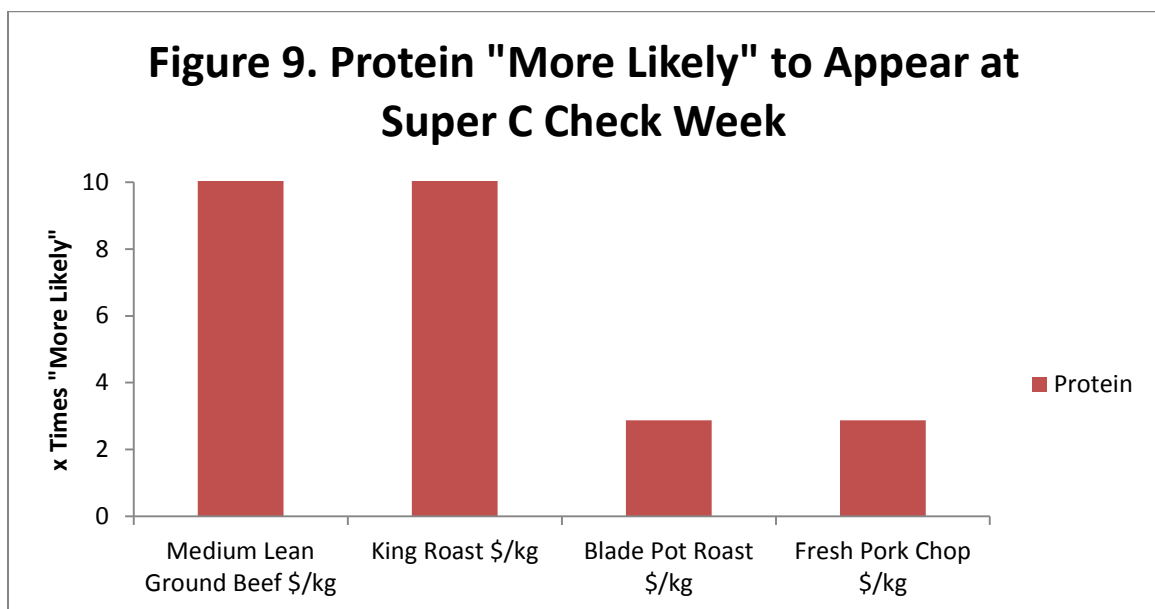


Figure 10. Fruit and Vegetable "More Likely" to Appear at Super C Check Week

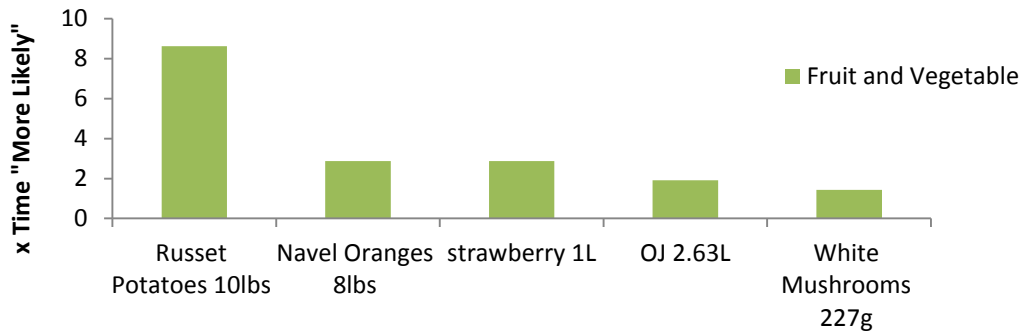


Figure 11. Dairy and Grain "More Likely" to Appear at Super C Check Week

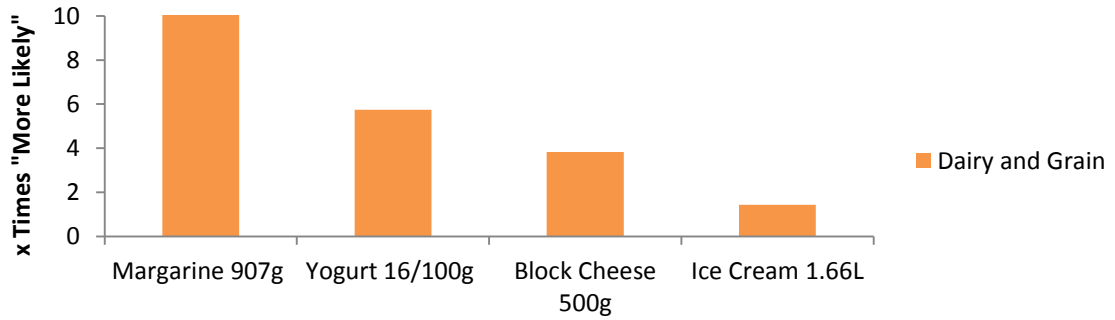
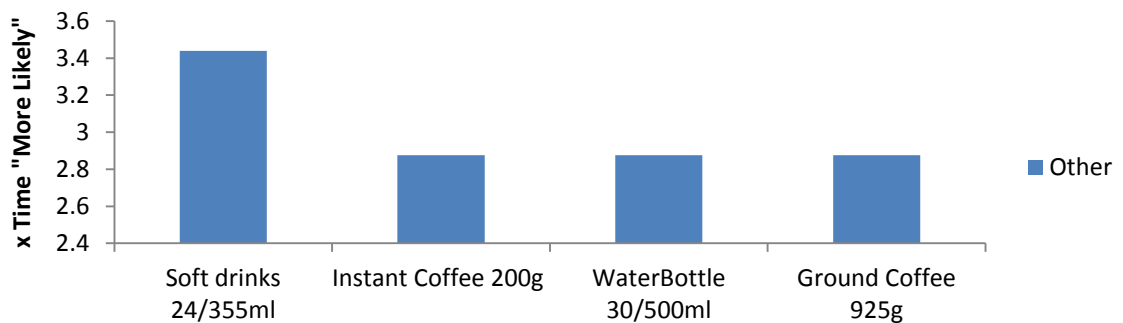


Figure 12. Other "More Likely" to Appear at Super C Check Week



Figures 13 to 16 show food items that are “less likely” to appear on Check Week. The key takeaways from these graphs are as follows. (1) Healthy and affordable poultry is “less likely” to appear on Check Week. (2) There is more than double the amount of fruits and vegetables on offer that are “less likely” to appear. (3) Pasta an important low-cost high-calorie staple of participants’ diet is “less likely” to appear, and so are cheese blocks of 300g. (4) A positive trend is that participants are “less likely” to have unhealthy products like soda (6/710ml and 2l), cookies, sugar, etc. that are “less likely” to appear on Check Week. Although, frozen meals and frozen pizza are also “less likely” to appear and though they are unhealthy these food items can provide nourishment when participants do not feel like cooking. What is important to note is that specials that are “less likely” to appear on Check Week are comparable to those that are “more likely” to appear in terms of the Health and Affordability Indices, with scores of 63% and 78% respectively. However, unlike Check Week specials, Non-Check Week specials are more diverse and cover a broader spectrum of tastes and food preferences.

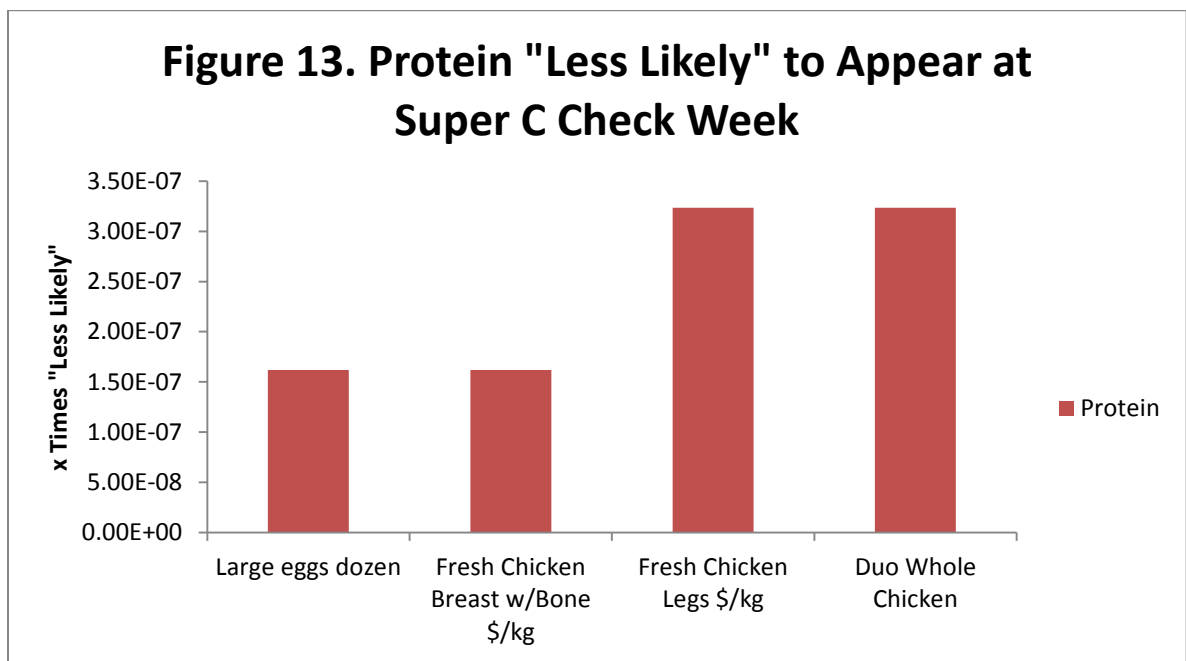


Figure 14. Fruit and Vegetable "Less Likely" to Appear at Super C Check Week

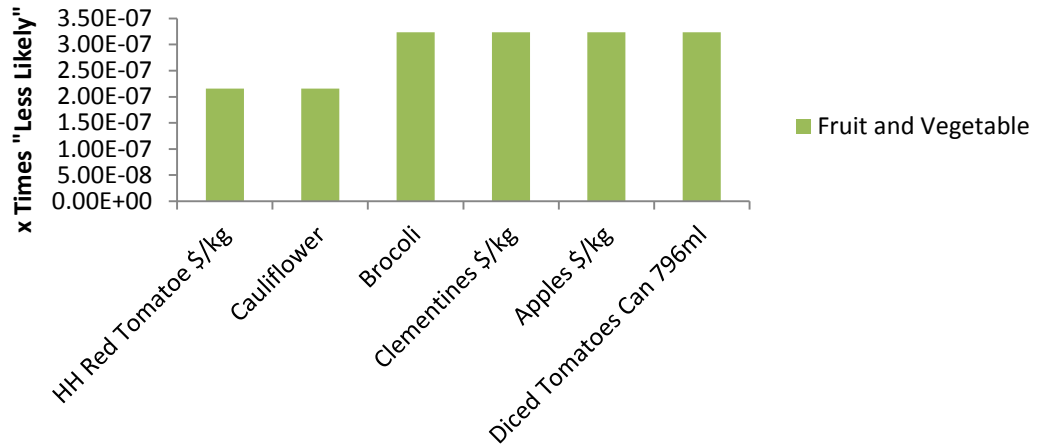


Figure 15. Dairy and Grain "Less Likely" to Appear at Super C Check Week

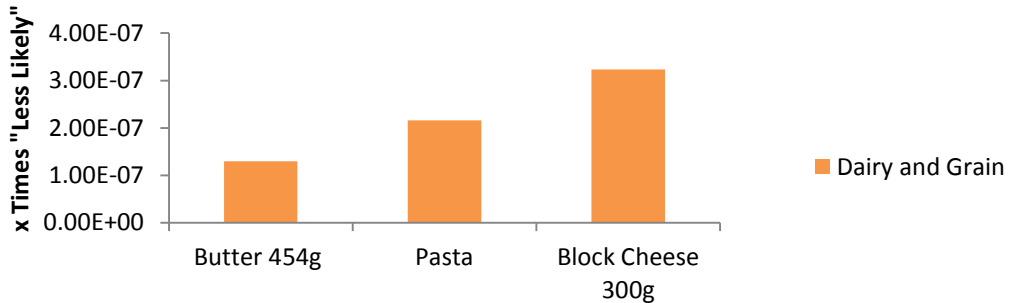
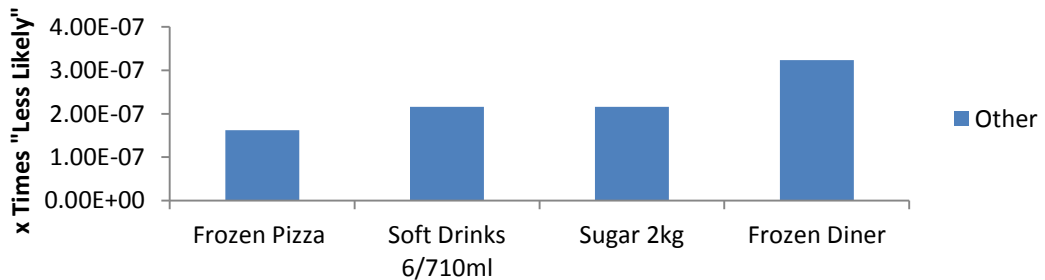


Figure 16. Other "Less Likely" to Appear at Super C Check Week



For a more detailed look Tables 13 & 14 contains all the information displayed on the graphs above.

The following section follows the same logic as the section on Metro.

Participant Experiences with Super C and Specials

Super C is viewed in a more positive light by most participants. Charles noted that of all the places where one is more likely to find good specials on check week is Super C,

It happens but not always, certain places it happens less, like at Super C, I think they are not scared, but Metro and IGA are (Charles, 2013).

Charles perceives Super C as being willing to sell more products at a loss – products that he desires – than other supermarkets. Metro is less willing to sell products at a loss and will limit the discounts offered on foods, which is how Charles sees it. The parity between Health and Affordability Indices compared between Check Week and Non-Check Week parallels Charles' experience.

Those that view Super C negatively focus more on the layout of the store, the aesthetics, and lack of services, e.g. bagging the groceries at the cash,

No, it's not a question of distance. I have to put it in my bags, there they put it in the bags or boxes and delivery it (Pierre, 2013).

The simple aesthetics keep Rene away from Super C. As he puts it,

No I don't like that, I don't like their style. I am used to Metro so I stay there (Rene, 2013).

However, not many people view the specials at Super C as limiting their ability to consume an adequate diet. Does the data corroborate participant perceptions? It is reasonable to think that the positive perceptions are because minced meat, potatoes, peanut butter, yogurt, cheese, and coffee make up staple food items for most participants and they are “more likely” to appear on Check Week. Moreover, Super C has one more item on the front page of its Check Week circulars. Further evidence for the positive appeal is the Health and Affordability Indices which are comparable between Check and Non-Check Weeks. However, the key points as discussed above point to the wider array of food items that are “less likely” to appear on Check Week. Moreover,

poultry, e.g. fresh chicken legs and eggs, a lean protein that can replace red meat consumption is “less likely” to appear on Check Week. Participants have to pay full price for poultry; green vegetables, e.g. broccoli; yogurt; and pasta.

Super C, already, is more comparable, they have more specials for me. On a lot more products that vary. At Metro they are more selective; they put the same ones on special to brain wash people. They say, ‘oh it’s on special its 4.99’, in the end it is not a special price, it really isn’t special. It’s just the influence sometimes (Natacha, 2013)

The quote above from Natacha, provides a comparative experience between her shopping at Metro versus her shopping at Super C on Check Week. Natacha sees Super C as having more to offer and at better prices than Metro, and she views Metro as employing sales tactics that are underhanded and deceitful. Super C caters to low-income people and provides much needed specials on Check Week. For example, a few participants spoke about peanut butter as being an essential part of their diets, like Jacques who says,

But it will happen that sometimes that the big peanut butter jars are 2 for the price of one I will buy it (Jacques, 2013).

Or Catherine who says,

This morning I ate peanut butter, another day I may eat peanut butter, instead maybe Cheez Whiz, or a banana on my toast. And cereals I can’t eat like I used to (Catherine, 2013).

However, Super C often places the same items on the front covers of their circulars. Table 3 shows that only 45% of the items that appear are unique. This leaves social assistance recipients to eat a reduced diet in terms of food diversity, as Catherine mentions above. Social assistance recipients, like Francine who looks for “meat, butter, bread, milk, flour, sugar, coffee, eggs, cheese” (Francine, 2013) when grocery shopping, will have to do their groceries over multiple weeks or pay full price.

Scrutinizing the graphs through the lens of the constant comparison themes of “poor value specials week of check”, “food essentials”, and “grocery store perceptions”. These themes emerged from the interviews with participants. Lean toward a conclusion that Super C, though limiting in what they offer, is more respected in terms of specials. Super C has a variety of specials that are comparative in regards to Check Week and Non-Check Week as was

demonstrated with the Health and Affordability Indices. However, there are still many items that are “less likely” to be sold on Check Week that would benefit social assistance recipients if they were sold.

Contrasting and Comparing between Metro and Super C

Comparing and contrasting similar food items at both Super C and Metro shows that Metro Inc. is alternating products between the two stores, as evidenced in both the following graphs, but whether they do this on purpose cannot be proven herein.

What we see in Figure 17, “Food Items “More Likely” to Appear at Super C and “Less Likely” to Appear at Metro”, that Super C is “more likely” to have the “essentials foods” on special Check Weeks while Metro is “less likely” to have those same products on Check Weeks. Figure 18 “Food Items “More Likely” to Appear at Metro and “Less Likely” to Appear at Super C” shows the flip image of the first graph, where Metro is “more likely” to have items Check Week where Super C is “less likely” to have them Check Week. However, these items, with the exception of three which are: pasta, canned diced tomatoes, and chicken breast with back, are expensive and non-essential to a healthy diet.

This highlights what both Natacha and Charles said about Super C (in the previous section about Super C) that it supplies low-income people with the essentials at rates that are more suited to their financial situations. However, this benefit comes with a lack of service as noted by Pierre, and a lack of diversity of products that Metro offers.

Moreover, Super C is known to sell in bulk so for Francine, who I asked why shop at Metro instead of Super C, responded, “Yes. Because they sell in larger formats and I am alone”. Therefore, the convenience of smaller format sizes and the perception of selling in bulk divert people from buying at Super C even though it would be in their best interest to shop there on Check Week. Participants that live alone will consume smaller quantities of food and are therefore less likely to buy large format sizes which are most often on special at Super C. Although, there are individuals like Catherine, who also live alone, but find that buying certain food items in bulk is convenient and necessary,

I freeze also, I buy my fish. Everything that is meat I eat. I buy in large quantity like meat that is on special. Like large minced meat because you make anything with minced meat (Catherine, 2013).

Figure 17. Food Items "More Likely" to Appear at Super C and "Less Likely" to Appear at Metro

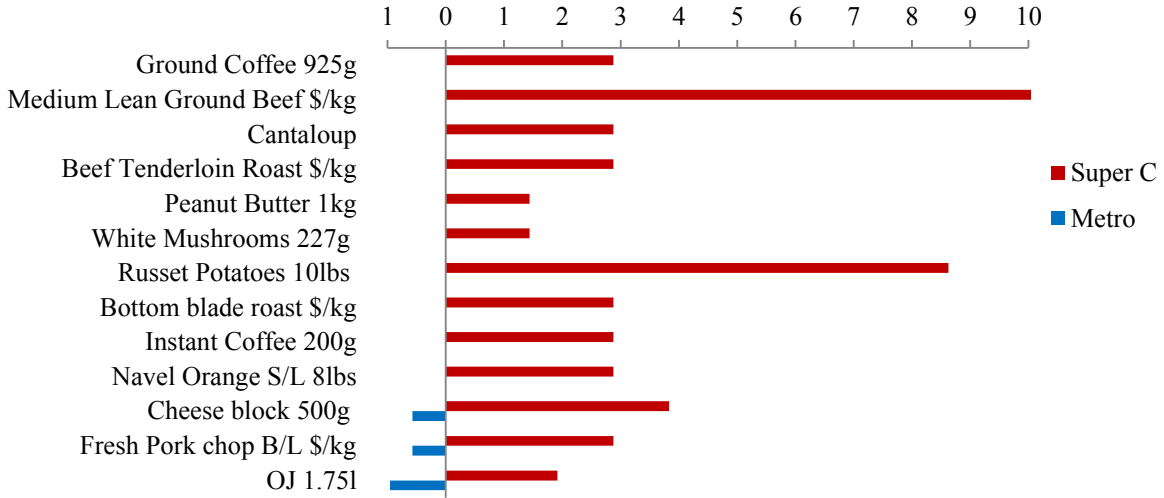
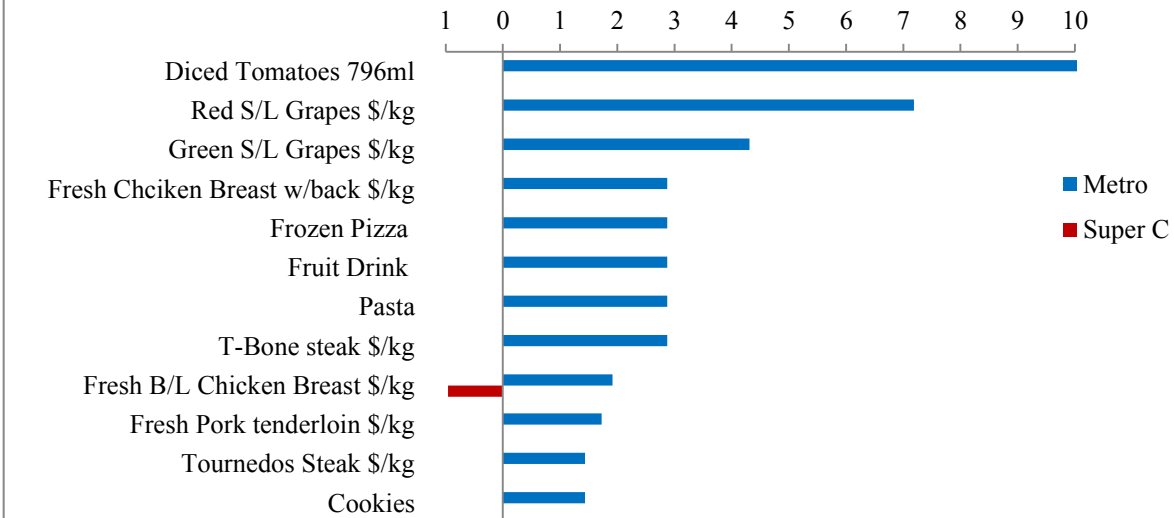
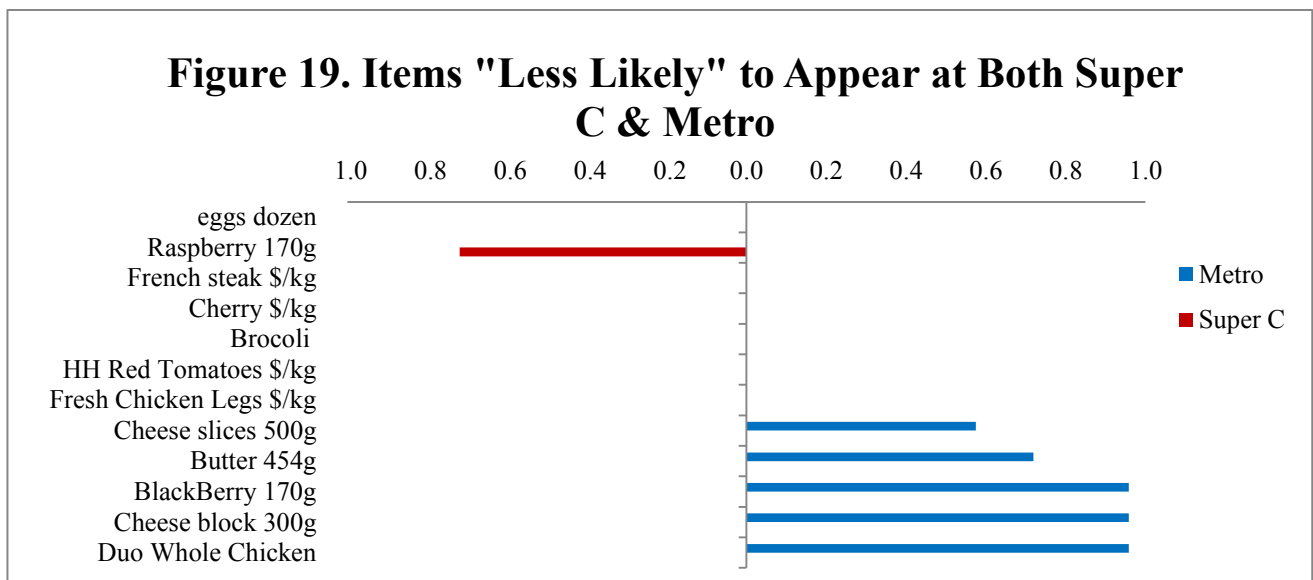


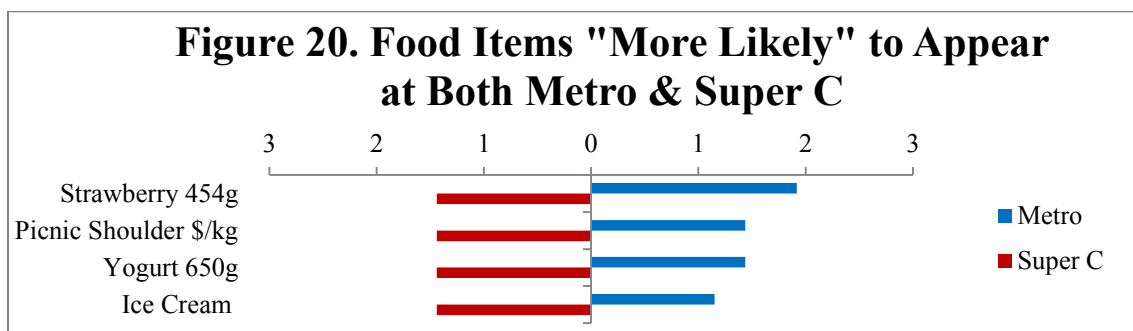
Figure 18. Food Items "More Likely" to Appear at Metro and "Less Likely" to Appear at Super C



The next set of graphs show which items are “less likely” to appear at both Super C and Metro, and “more likely” to appear at both stores. Items that are “less likely” to appear at both stores are “essential foods” to most social assistance recipients who participated in the interviews, such as: eggs, tomatoes, cheese, chicken legs, and butter. All of which are rarely seen on a Check Week Circular. Thus, participants that would enjoy specials like three dozen eggs for \$5 will likely have to pay the \$3.29 for one dozen. The same goes for chicken legs which can retail at \$4.59/kg regular price or \$2.84/kg on special, a substantial difference when ones total weekly budget is less than \$50.



In contrast to the 12 items that are “less likely” to appear on Check Week, there are only four food items that are “more likely” to appear on Check Week at both stores. With the exception of yogurt and strawberries they are unhealthy and do not help promote a healthy and diverse diet i.e. they do not promote and complement a food secure diet.



Social Assistance Recipients: Using the Grocery Store Circular or Being Used?

How do participants respond to the pressures to be efficient, maximize their health, and contend with Metro Inc.'s marketing policies?

Grocery shopping provides a unique vantage point on the economy because it straddles both the marketplace and the household (Koch & Sprague, 2014, p. 242)

Grocery stores are institutions that moderate food distribution and consumption within cities; they are entry points into the personal lives of individuals and food consumption on a societal level. Though grocery stores are often viewed as passive institutions reacting to the demands of consumers and the market at large, the data herein helps build an argument to the contrary. As was mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, three discourses parallel and succinctly summarize what my interview participants discussed throughout our conversations. The results of the constant comparison are nested within the Koch and Sprague discourses to build a stronger connection between social assistance recipients' shopping behaviour and the results of the grocery store circular analysis. Sorting the ideas of the efficient shopper, chemical consumer, and controlling the consumer, with the themes that came from the constant comparison we get this:

- Efficient shopper: Importance of circulars, household inventory and grocery shopping, buying food based on need, timing of grocery trips, financial strategies, and buy everything the Check Week
- Chemical consumer: seeking healthy and nutritious foods, and health issues
- Controlling the consumer: poor specials week of check, limited time, and store inventory
- Constraining the poor: stores do not think of social aid recipients, and food security

The contradictory behaviour discussed by participants is represented within the conceptual categories that came out of the "constant comparison".

Efficient Shopper

The efficient shopper is someone who maintains a budget, follows the specials, buys food at the lowest price, and makes it their goal to plan every step needed to achieve maximum efficiency (Koch & Sprague, 2014).

Engler-Stringer (2010) in her study of low-income women in Montreal found that “Grocery store flyers play an important role for many participants who use them to plan their purchases” (p.221). Through the constant comparison I found that circulars are used by many participants to plan meals, know where to find specials, and create grocery lists, like Linda

Yes Yes. If I need something I will look... yes I look at the circulars, I like the circulars and I check them, then I make a list but I don't buy everything I write down because it would cost a fortune (Linda, 2013).

Some of the younger generations have noted the ease and accessibility of internet circulars,

Yes, a lot, me a lot. But I don't rely on the paper circular. I use the web circulars; we live in an age of technology. We all have smart phones. I rely a lot on circulars (Natacha, 2013).

Quoting Natacha above, we see that though poor she still uses technology in a way that helps her save money by finding the food items at the lowest prices. It is important to note that circulars are viewed by most as a sort of survival guide and a decision making tool. A tool with the power to dictate the quality of one's life depending on whether or not it is used, as Catherine noted, “because people who have low means, it helps them [...]but more often than not people do not check the specials” (Catherine, 2013). However, some people do not use them, and do not find them important.

Participants have multiple spending strategies. Some participants calculate how much money to give for certain products, while others do not. Some people determine whether it is worth the cost and will buy as a function of the value associated to the product, and as a function of what is available versus what they need. Engler-Stringer (2010) found similar results with her participants who buy using a mental hierarchy of price, quality, and then availability. Some people will keep money for a certain week to be able to navigate around the poor specials and wait for the good specials during the month. Therefore some participants will keep money aside for weekly groceries, while others do not or cannot.

However, less than a third of participants (8/27) actually discussed the need to budget, or how they allocate their finances. It is difficult and at times the budget may not permit. As Natacha remarked

Sometimes I go by the week. Sometimes when my budget permits I go by the week, but if it don't I go by the month (Natacha, 2013).

Managing of funds is important but not easy given all the external pressures, as exemplified by Josie,

I try to keep money for every week. Sometimes it isn't evident, but it is really... because I find the specials every week (Josie, 2013).

Here is what other participants had to say about budgeting:

Yes I make a budget every month. I respect my budget. I always have enough money just to the end of the month. If I have \$20 at the end of the week it will pay for milk and bread for the last week. I make sure I always have \$20 for the last week, not to spend all my money with two weeks left to the month (Linda, 2013).

I go in the middle when I need something because I manage my money for five weeks like that I can see what specials are offered during the week. If the first week there is no specials and the second week there are I make sure. I take one envelope a week and don't touch the others (Jeannine, 2013).

Some participants buy food based on the space they have for storage, what foods they are missing, and how much they can consume. Individuals who live alone will buy small to medium sized formats. However, sometimes it can happen that they forget what they have at home, if they did not make a list, and buy too little or too much of a product. Therefore, some make sure to write out what products they need and how much they need, like Linda, who

at the end of everything it could happen that I buy items that I have enough of and that it isn't an emergency, after that I make a list a little more reasonable according to the amount of money I have at my disposal (Linda, 2013).

Some participants consume only what is on special. And often they have to wait for their check to refill their fridge. Freezers help participants to be able to conserve food and buy bulk groceries.

I put it in the gladly [freezer] bags, the big extra-large, and then I put half the minced [meat] and the other half I freeze them. If I don't use the beef stew for to make stew I freeze it. With the tomatoes I can't, because the tomatoes go hard in my fridge (Wendy, 2013).

Meat, I consume a lot, my freezer is full, it is because I can eat what I want, you know if you want sausages but you don't have any you need to go to the grocery store, so if you aren't up for going and the weather is no good, you know (Linda, 2013).

Many participants will not buy food when they do not need to. But if they cannot buy food they will make sure to have some food to eat, e.g. milk, bread. Some people will focus on buying food that is healthy. As well, they will buy specials first, while others will not or do not care to do so, and some will only buy must-have groceries. Others believe that it is difficult to buy products at anything but full price given the infrequency of specials.

Some Participants go grocery shopping when there are less people, which usually happen in the morning, and not at night. They go the first day of the check, or some wait till the next week of specials to go. Some people go bi-weekly, but mostly those that receive pay checks are able to do so. Some go only when the specials are good. Others wait till mid-month to shop. Many cannot wait and simply go when they have money. Some will buy more when the specials are good and less when they are bad. Many social aid recipients buy their food once they receive their social assistance check; some spend all their money on food in one day, and only go grocery shopping once.

Many participants enjoy cooking their meals. Engler-Stringer (2010) found that many of her participants “explained that they make many of their meals based on grocery store specials” (p. 222), which is common even among the participants I interviewed; like Ivette who says, “Uh, yeah. It is what I can buy on special that I plan what I will eat. That’s it” (Ivette, 2013). They will plan out meals for the week and make enough to freeze. When money begins to run low they adapt and change what they prepare, to more simple items e.g. sandwiches, Pierre compensates by spending on easy to prepare meals, “I’ll buy cold cuts and make sandwiches. I’ll buy bread” (Pierre, 2013). But not everyone is good at it i.e. they lack the skills necessary to cook proper meals, while others simply dislike cooking. Others simply do not have the time or prefer simple prepared meals. While others rather cook everything themselves due to all the unknowns in prepackaged meals. They use what they have available and will make meals by substituting ingredients, “No. I have recipe books at home. So I try to follow the recipes, but sometimes... I put what I have at home” (Josie, 2013). But sometimes it is about having a quick meal when you

feel lazy. And the diversity of eating habits is everywhere on the scale. And some participants will eat out at restaurants when they can.

Chemical Consumer

The chemical consumer is focused on buying foods that meet nutritional needs, food that is healthy, and food that is positively associated with aiding illnesses. They read the ingredient labels to make sure that their nutritive needs are being met and they avoid non organic foods (Koch & Sprague, 2014)

Some participants are concerned with their health, therefore they buy foods that are marketed as healthy or for a certain condition, for example Wendy buys cheese with added calcium to help fight osteoporosis, and Linda buys “jam I buy double fruit or E.D. Smith, they have less sugar so I will buy those” (Linda, 2013). They shop with their health in mind,

That is what I try to find, the things that have the least, things that have low fat written on them. I need to be careful for my health (Josie, 2013).

They buy less meat, and focus on fruits and vegetables,

I start with the fruits and vegetables. When I was younger food was never missing and it was the most important (Martine, 2013).

Although some, like Paul, are not sure what is or is not healthy anymore,

I don't eat much meat, I buy healthy products like molasses, but today I don't know what is and is not healthy (Paul, 2013).

Some participants suffer from medical conditions, which tend to be directly related to their diets, e.g. diabetes, cholesterol, heart disease, etc. One participant requires calcium enriched foods to help fight osteoporosis, Wendy. Another has trouble walking which makes grocery shopping difficult. Overall, many of the older participants are not in good health and have many extra medical costs in part due to their eating habits, however, some have made changes to their diets to increase their quality of life, and I will let Catherine explain:

I have to check all the tickets [...] seeing as I am diabetic they told me that I need insulin, to eat soda crackers with cheese, because we diabetics need a lot of protein. It is for that that I am starting to know what to eat. [...] Yes, I eat steak. But I lowered that because, like pork, it isn't good... for the cholesterol. I have high cholesterol. It has been at least 1 or 2 months that I have stopped that. Like butter, I changed the type, I buy Becel (Catherine, 2013).

Controlling the Consumer

Grocery stores, Metro Inc. included, try to manipulate consumers into buying their products and spending as much money in their stores as possible i.e. “the supermarket strategy is thus designed to encourage customers to buy more than they planned and to encourage impulse buying through marketing techniques” (Koch & Sprague, 2014, p. 252). Thus, Metro Inc.’s goal is to counter the “Efficient shopper” and “Chemical consumer” through a multitude of methods that we will discuss below.

The starting point of the argument and the basis for this subsection is that participants perceive that the specials Check Week are of poor quality and higher prices, and not what the specials they want. The data examined above demonstrates that there is a manipulation of the food items on special to be marketed on certain weeks. Through circular marketing, Metro Inc. is able to dictate what products are available for consumers to purchase. Metro’s Check Week circulars seem as though they are meant to prevent social assistance recipients from flooding in on Check Week and lead them over to Super C where the specials are more appropriate. However, controlling what goes on special and what appears on the front page of the circulars may work for participants who follow the specials, it does not work for those participants who only shop at Metro. Moreover, participants who stated that they did not use grocery store circulars and did not care about what was on special were the ones who shopped at one store. Metro’s clientele are the more affluent residents of HoMa and not the social assistance recipients, as is evidenced in their circulars. But, those social assistance recipients that do shop at Metro on Check Week are likely to pay higher prices than if they would shop at Super C, or wait to shop another week. Thus, the circulars and specials have an influence on the shopping habits of those who follow the specials, but not those who do not.

Once in the store, however, grocery stores have multiple ways of keeping consumers in check and loyal, and for social assistance recipients this means less savings. One such method is

the reward points card that Metro offers (not offered at Super C). Here is Wendy's account of her experiences with the card,

Metro, when you make an order they do the points, and I get them like that. So that saves me too. They date it for me the 26th of the month for July the 10th. And I have a metro card to make the order; I have it in my wallet at home. Once I get that they will know how much points to take off of me. So they send me the slips and it works like that. I don't mind I take it, there are 4 tomatoes in a package, I can take that, or I can take milk, cheese, and eggs (Wendy, 2013).

Wendy only does her groceries at Metro. Another method is through pricing and signage strategies,

Managers encourage impulse buying with strategies like using signage that imply a price reduction when none exists, or that special pricing requires purchase of multiple items when that is not the case (Koch & Sprague, 2014, p. 252).

David explains how signage marketing techniques work,

Sometimes yes, and not just the specials, but also the way the product is presented, like the exaggerated packages, or sometimes a word could cause confusion. One example I could give you. They had cups at 50cents at the back so they put them on special at 1 dollar and they sold them all, the most tricky name "special". Or they reduce an item that has large packaging and they reduce the quantity and put it into a different package, but the price/quantity is higher. So they trick you into thinking you will save money (David, 2013).

Thus, signage is often used to confuse consumers into believing one thing and purchasing a product they may not have otherwise purchased.

When the specials are unavailable Metro Inc. offers rain-checks, so the consumer can come back the next day to see if the item is back in stock. Many participants have stated that they ask for rain-checks whenever a food item or product on special is out of stock, and almost as many said they did not use them or did not know what they were. However, it often happens that the specials do not come back the next day or even the next week. Moreover, employees are told not to offer rain-checks to customers unless they ask, and not all participants were aware that they existed. The negative aspect of rain-checks as pointed out by two participants,

No because they come to nothing. You can't wait, especially if it is a family, it takes two months before the product comes back on special so they can use their coupon; they will buy something else (Ivette, 2013).

To start chasing after products because you have the coupon but they don't have the item (Adriane, 2013).

Thus, the time spent waiting for items to come back in stock is seen as not being worth the wait and some individuals cannot afford to wait for them so they will end up buying other more expensive/less useful food items in the meantime. However, the consequence of not asking for the rain-check is to completely miss out on a special, which is what the grocery stores want. So many social assistance recipients grocery shopping when they receive their checks has the negative consequence of emptying out food counters and leading them to purchase other items at full price.

Certain food products have advantageous pricing, e.g. products with corn syrup, GMO fruits and vegetables, factory farmed beef, pork, and chicken. While their counter parts, organic, chemical and hormone free, no preservatives, and no sugar/fats added are all disadvantaged and come with significant price markups compared to their lesser quality counterparts. Grocery stores make more money selling a lot of low cost products than they do high cost products, as noted by Koch and Sprague (2014) "in our political economy, healthier food is typically more expensive food while the least healthy food products are the most profitable" (p.253).

Constraining the Poor

Combining the three discourses with the data from the circulars, gives a picture that shows participants are constrained by Metro Inc.'s policies. Social assistance recipients have different ways of trying to maximize their limited finances and stretching every dollar they have to be able to eat an adequate diet. However, they run up against a wall at the grocery store. Offering poor specials during Check Week at Metro and fair specials at Super C forces participants to act within a highly restrictive set of rules. They only have so much money, so much time, the specials change on a weekly basis, and the only two chain stores around are Metro and Super C, both of which are actually owned by Metro Inc. Most social assistance recipients rely on the specials (25/27) on a weekly basis, and more-so on Check Week than any other. Moreover, most participants do the majority of their grocery shopping at either Super C

(20/27) or Metro (23/27), and 26 participants do their shopping at either/or. Thus, the constraints discussed above and the reliance of social assistance recipients on specials and circulars leave many participants to feel left out of having a normal consumptive experience. And all of this leaves participants with a sense that they are second-class citizens because grocery stores do not think about social assistance recipients as consumers – even though they participate in the act of consumption.

However, they do not believe there is a specific reason for this. A couple of my respondents noticed that they marketed unhealthy products on big holidays – which is a problem because when social assistance recipients are low on food they will buy whatever the least expensive food items are. My respondents argue that without a good salary you are stuck to buy what is on special regardless of its quality. Some participants have different views as to why this occurs. Roger believes that they would run out of stock if they had good specials the first week, and that would look bad on the company, “no, the companies know, they do not want a stock rupture. If they do too many specials they won’t have space left” (Roger, 2013). Charles sees it like this:

They know people will spend anyways at the beginning of the month. Because they will lose money, they sell big specials at a loss, so they won’t sell it during the beginning of the month. So they say welfare recipients will buy food like bread even not on sale. They are not interested in losing money (Charles, 2013).

Participants that do not plan a weekly budget are the ones that suffer the greatest consequences when it comes to poor specials. They would like to see good specials Check Week, and not just when salaried employees are paid, e.g. weekly/bi-weekly.

The effect of this is to reduce the ability of social assistance recipients to eat well, and have food security. Some participants feel that the grocery store specials during Check Week can negatively affect food security:

Of course it affects it, of course. We don’t eat enough. We are hungry. With what they give us we don’t have much (Pierre, 2013).

Yes, yes because I find that a lot of people rely on it [specials] to do their groceries. To do a grocery, honestly I have friends that have very little revenue and they abuse themselves on it to feed themselves. I find that terrible, terrible... you see people getting skinnier. So you say, ‘oh

start consuming more' and they say, 'no it's not that it is because I don't eat like I used to'. Me, I went from 168 to 100 my parents will say what is happening with you, well I live in an apartment, you know, it costs a lot. Its ok, I accept life. If I didn't accept it I wouldn't eat. I would always eat the same thing, it is fucking boring (Natacha, 2013).

It is certain that it affects it, but what I don't understand is how a pork tenderloin of 450g could be 4 then the next week it is 8 (William, 2013).

Well, yes, because often they will put specials on things and then people will exaggerate, for example they will put a big special on English cream, candies, and it isn't that it is not good, but there are people that will not take care and will jump into it. Often I have seen that. I like the English cream, but how often I have seen that it is on special, when they know that Quebec has an obesity problem, maybe they could put a bit on, I don't know, bread or meat. Something that wouldn't damage our health. Minced meat less expensive I don't know, it is my opinion. It's true (Ivette, 2013).

The specials really affect how social assistance recipients consume and how they feel towards consumption. Participants' ability to consume a healthy diet of their choosing is almost none existent, and there is deep resentment towards grocery stores.

The consequences of what have been noted to be: (1) people (25/27) relying heavily on grocery store specials to do their groceries. (2) Low-income individuals cannot eat healthy because it is too expensive. (3) Although the specials offered the week of the check are unhealthy and expensive people will buy them anyways because they need to eat. (4) Participants have noticed that product format sizes have decreased while grocery stores increase their prices. (5) Low-income individuals need to look hard to eat well. (6) The price fluctuations do not make sense to participants. All in all, it is abundantly clear from this analysis that food security is very precarious when one is on social assistance.

Chapter 5: Analysis of Weekly Price Audit

Introduction

It is well known that large grocery store chains like Metro Inc. have their prices set by the head office. An interesting question that follows from such a centralized pricing policy is how might we expect to see their food prices vary over time. That is, can we expect there to be a difference in store prices between times when the social assistance check is disseminated versus the non-check weeks, and how might that affect social assistance recipients? That is the research question that I have endeavoured to answer by gathering food prices at branches of both Metro and Super C – Metro’s discount store.

The general connection between the timing of social assistance checks and changes in supermarket prices is reported in the literature (Tanguay et al. 2005), and I found considerable support for that view in my own work. Thus, my interview participants have stated that the “Check Week” is the most expensive week to buy food. As Rene remarked, “fuck, they increase the prices when you have money” (Rene, 2013). Fully half (13) of the social assistance recipients I interviewed stated that they spend most of their money on food when they get their check – one example, Denise, states that she does her groceries “at the beginning of the month when the check comes out” (Denise, 2013). Marguerite, another of my respondents, states that she goes shopping “when I have my social assistance check” (Marguerite, 2013).

American data shows “that the average expenditure on food by social welfare recipients peaks sharply in the first three days after the receipt of food stamps” (Tanguay et al., 2005, p. 146). Therefore, this type of spending behaviour is common among people who receive a single source of monthly income. They are placed in a very precarious situation. Do Metro Inc.’s prices reflect this trend, and how do my participants experience it?

In the analysis that follows, in order to develop a more complete interpretation of the data, I will intertwine themes from the constant comparison with the weekly price audit data to show how social assistance recipients experience grocery store pricing policies, taking from the price audit data what was emphasized throughout the interviews. To situate the participants’ price knowledge, economic studies have shown that consumers are able to remember aggregate

prices for food categories and make comparisons between products and stores (Jensen and Grunert, 2014, IN PRESS). Therefore, participants are competent in discerning price changes.

This section therefore seeks to show how prices can affect the experience of grocery shopping for social assistance recipients and how they are made to move around their neighbourhoods in search of better prices. The price audits will demonstrate how food purchasing is both spatially challenging and temporally contingent. Thus, social aid recipients, as consumers, must be fully prepared to travel wherever and whenever prices are best, though that is not as evident as we think.

Methodology

This facet of the research project is motivated by the work of Tanguay et al. (2005). Tanguay et al. conducted a study of grocery store food prices in the Villeray borough of Montreal over a span of 26 weeks. They sought to determine how and whether prices vary between weeks, and the possible correlation between social assistance checks in Quebec. They selected 31 products based upon strict criteria: weekly availability, high-volume sales, and relative ease with which prices can fluctuate without negatively impacting the retailer, amongst others (Tanguay et al. 2005, p.148). Their criteria for product selection were not considered for the study. The principle and goal remain the same: to determine how the timing of social assistance checks affects grocery store food prices, and how social assistance recipients are thus affected i.e. how do prices change week to week and with what effect to consumers?

My methodology was as follows. Over the months of May, June, July, and the first week of August, 2013, I conducted 26 (2x stores for 13 weeks) price audits⁴, once a week and once per store, in the Metro on 4405 Rue Sainte-Catherine Est, and Super C on 2050 Boulevard Pie IX. The audits took place on the evenings of either Tuesdays or Wednesdays⁵ (the last day of the circular week).

⁴ No food audits were conducted during the week of July 4th

⁵ Because I chose Wednesdays there is a slight possibility that item price tags were in the process of being changed by staff preparing for the changing inventory and pricing for the new circular week. Though it is possible that prices were changed, I did not see any staff doing so, which leads me to believe that the task was done later in the evenings or early mornings. Therefore, this should not affect the prices I noted or the weeks they are supposed to represent.

As mentioned above, the goal of this audit, as a goal of the research project itself, is to determine whether or not the price of food is higher, lower, or equal the week the check is issued versus all other weeks of the month. An additional question the data allows us to investigate concerns whether there are weekly price fluctuations that would hinder food purchasing for those with a single monthly check as compared to those with weekly or bi-weekly financial resources.

Over the period I observed the prices of 91 items at Metro with 1069 total observations, and 92 items at Super C with 1040 total observations. The items themselves were chosen based on their ease of use and preparation, affordability, high-sales volume, appearance on the front cover of the circulars, and availability. On a weekly basis I created a list of food items to observe and while at the grocery store selected the lowest price on the shelves or in the counter for that food item, e.g. cookies could be found at \$3.99, 2/\$5.00, and \$2.99, I would select 2/\$5.00 as that is \$2.50 per pack, etc. I repeated that process for 13 weeks at both stores. Food items that had less than 6 observations were removed from the list i.e. if they appeared less than half of the time during the observation period they were not considered. Any sales prices are included within the average prices calculated for each category.

After collection I separated the food items into eight distinct categories, they are: Red Meat; Fish; Poultry; Fruits; Vegetables; Dairy; Grains; and Grocery. “Grocery” represents items such as: oil, vinegar, cookies, condiments, jelly, peanut butter, etc., these are all items that are found within the grocery section of the store. I compared the weekly prices between weeks for each set of Food item category, as well as between Metro and Super C. These comparisons are represented in the following set of graphs. The calculation used is an average (Σ) for the amount of observations (n) within each category using their prices (x) and respective to each store resulting in an average price (\bar{x}) per category per week:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\Sigma x}{n}$$

The Check Week during the period under investigation is always the first week of the month i.e. week one, all subsequent weeks are none check weeks. Standard Error was calculated for all average prices and displayed on all graphs, and can be found in Tables 19 and 20. Confidence intervals were also calculated and can be found in Tables 19 and 20.

Table 6, below, gives the total number of observations made each week, per category, and per store. A quick glance at the table below and one can see that most observations were made during week 1, Week of Check. However, the distribution of trips made is the reason for the higher numbers. My total trips per week are as follows:

1. 4
2. 3
3. 3
4. 2
5. 1

So, as you can see the total number of observations is linked to the total number of trips made on a given week of the month. Also, throughout the time I conducted price audits only the month of July had 5 circular weeks. What this means is that during the month of July social assistance recipients saw 4 weeks' worth of circulars go by and a few days before receiving their checks the best prices - the most accessible prices on food, sorely needed - passed them right by.

Table 6. Total Observations by Food Category at Metro and Super C

	Week	Red	Poultry	Fish	Vegetables	Fruit	Dairy	Grain	Grocery	Total
<i>Both</i>	1*	121	70	29	130	65	28	56	95	594
	2	110	58	25	106	50	23	45	84	501
	3	106	58	24	109	54	22	47	87	507
	4	76	37	16	71	31	16	32	57	336
	5	34	19	10	35	20	8	16	29	171
	Total	447	242	104	451	220	97	196	352	2109
	<i>Metro</i>	1*	61	32	13	66	37	14	30	51
2		54	28	14	54	27	11	24	45	257
3		52	30	13	53	28	10	24	45	255
4		35	20	9	33	18	8	16	29	168
5		15	9	5	18	11	4	8	15	85
Total		217	119	54	224	121	47	102	185	1069
<i>Super C</i>	1*	60	38	16	64	28	14	26	44	290
	2	56	30	11	52	23	12	21	39	244
	3	54	28	11	56	26	12	23	42	252
	4	41	17	7	38	13	8	16	28	168
	5	19	10	5	17	9	4	8	14	86
	Total	230	123	50	227	99	50	94	167	1040

* Week of Check

** Total # of Groups Observed 183; Met, 91; Sup C, 92.

Results and Analysis

Throughout the course of my interviews, some participants mentioned that prices are less accessible – specifically, Check Week –, and more accessible from mid-month to the end of the month, As Rene remarks:

This week it was less expensive but when we have our checks they increase the prices, shit. I watch them (Rene, 2013).

Using the price audit data gathered as described above, it is now possible to demonstrate these conclusions with more numerical precision. Thus, as can be seen from Table 7, Metro (with the exception of dairy, grain, and fish), sold meat, vegetables, and fruit at the lowest prices during the fifth week i.e. the last week of July. However, when we exclude the fifth week of the month

the prices at Metro are actually the best during the Check Week. Starting with Week 2, only Fruit and Poultry have better prices than the Check Week all other categories are less expensive. Week 3 does not have a single category that is less expensive than the Check Week. Finally, Week 4 is more expensive than the Check Week, with the exception of Grocery items (\$0.02). These findings suggest that for most food categories the Check Week is the least expensive week of the month at Metro. This does not coincide with what participants said about food prices that “the prices aren’t right the first week” and “everything goes up”. There is thus a seeming contradiction between some participants’ lived experience and empirical price data from Metro.

Before raising a variety of more general possibilities for this result, It is worth considering the other supermarket in our analysis to see if the same observation holds If we do this by food category and compare the least expensive weeks (excluding Week 5, we observe the following main points):

- Red Meat: least expensive, Week 2 (Super C)
- Poultry: least expensive, Week 2 (Metro)
- Fish: least expensive, Week 3 (Super C)
- Vegetables: least expensive, Check Week (Super C)
- Fruit: least expensive, Week 2 (Super C)
- Dairy: least expensive, Week 3 (Super C)
- Grain: least expensive, Week 4 (Super C)
- Grocery: least expensive, Week 3 (Super C)

Interestingly, since the months of May and June did not have five circular weeks, looking at Super C does validate participants’ claim about higher prices during the Week of Check.

However, it also brings up another point, which is: where are participants most apt to shop? If some participants are more likely to shop at Super C, they may only shop at Metro for the specials and not go other weeks. .Certainly, when asked what they thought of Metro, Jacques said,

Well it is certain that I don’t go to metro because it is 20% more expensive for the same thing. I don’t have the means to pay 20% for nothing. A grocery of 100 dollars at Super C you do it at metro it costs 125 (Jacques, 2013).

Others, like Linda, state that

Sometimes I get specials at Metro when they have. At full price I find it too expensive, because Metro is expensive (Linda, 2013).

The intra-week price comparison at Metro favours Check Week. While the intra-week comparison at Super C favours weeks' 2 and 3. However, Table 6 shows with a 95% significance confidence interval that Metro is \$0.39 more expensive regardless of week and of item than Super C, thus adding proof that the lived experience of participants is realistic. Participants who shop at Super C will pay higher prices on Check Week than other weeks, but they still pay less at Super C than at Metro, with the exception of Poultry and Fish.

Table 7. Price Difference between Metro and Super C

```
. xtgls price i.check i.metro i.type_of_item b2.wom_overall, p(h) c(a) force rho(dw)
```

Cross-sectional time-series FGLS regression

Coefficients: **generalized least squares**
 Panels: **heteroskedastic**
 Correlation: **common AR(1) coefficient for all panels (0.7659)**

Estimated covariances	=	183	Number of obs	=	2109
Estimated autocorrelations	=	1	Number of groups	=	183
Estimated coefficients	=	14	Obs per group: min	=	6
			avg	=	11.52459
			max	=	13
			Wald chi2(13)	=	5211.03
			Prob > chi2	=	0.0000

price	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P> z	[95% Conf. Interval]	
1.check	-.0124342	.0553542	-0.22	0.822	-.1209264	.096058
1.metro	.3946969	.0862169	4.58	0.000	.2257149	.563679
type_of_item						
2	-4.926667	.2307761	-21.35	0.000	-5.37898	-4.474354
3	6.575373	.770265	8.54	0.000	5.065681	8.085065
4	-9.083735	.1481409	-61.32	0.000	-9.374086	-8.793384
5	-6.620663	.1433605	-46.18	0.000	-6.901645	-6.339682
6	-7.809841	.1915394	-40.77	0.000	-8.185251	-7.43443
7	-6.886258	.1378087	-49.97	0.000	-7.156358	-6.616158
8	-8.182947	.1367698	-59.83	0.000	-8.451011	-7.914883
wom_overall						
1	.0049892	.0511202	0.10	0.922	-.0952046	.1051829
3	-.0053866	.0224336	-0.24	0.810	-.0493556	.0385825
4	.0012462	.029145	0.04	0.966	-.055877	.0583693
5	-.0585549	.0369005	-1.59	0.113	-.1308784	.0137687
_cons	11.0575	.1077193	102.65	0.000	10.84637	11.26862

Table 8. Average Price by Food Category at Metro and Super C

	Week	Combined	Red Meat (\$/kg)	Poultry (\$/kg)	Fish (\$/kg)	Vegetables (\$ & \$/kg)	Fruit (\$/kg)	Dairy (\$)	Grain (\$)	Grocery (\$)
<i>Both</i>	1*	6.33	11.68	7.78	14.88 [^]	3.05	4.5	3.74	3.78	3.66
	2	6.53	11.74	7.88	15.5	3.14	4.29 [^]	3.8	3.82	3.69
	3	6.45	11.76	7.99	15.05	3.19	4.76	3.83	3.91	3.67
	4	6.55	11.84	7.78	15.04	3.33	4.49	3.82	3.76 [^]	3.61 [^]
	5	6.27 [^]	10.87 [^]	7.73 [^]	16.46	2.84 [^]	4.37	3.66 [^]	3.9	3.74
	Difference**	0.05	0.81	0.05	-0.16	0.21	0.21	0.08	0.02	0.05
<i>Metro</i>	1*	6.35 [^]	12.05	7.62	14.39 [^]	3.25	4.9	3.74 [^]	4.14 [^]	3.78
	2	6.78	12.56	7.55 [^]	16.09	3.36	4.8	3.93	4.23	3.82
	3	6.82	12.49	7.95	16.31	3.36	5.09	4.12	4.19	3.91
	4	6.84	12.25	7.6	16.52	3.62	5.04	3.96	4.27	3.76 [^]
	5	6.44	11.15 [^]	8.32	17.43	3.18 [^]	4.76 [^]	3.74 [^]	4.38	3.9
	Difference**	-0.08	0.9	0.07	-1.7	0.07	0.14	0	-0.05	0.02
<i>Super C</i>	1*	6.30	11.29	7.91	15.27	2.83	3.97	3.74	4.07	3.52
	2	6.26	10.95	8.19	14.76	2.92	3.69 [^]	3.68	4.2	3.54
	3	6.09 [^]	11.05	8.04	13.56	3.02	4.4	3.58	3.99	3.41 [^]
	4	6.27	11.49	8.01	13.14 [^]	3.07	3.74	3.68	3.92 [^]	3.44
	5	6.11	10.64 [^]	7.21 [^]	15.49	2.49 [^]	3.88	3.58 [^]	4.02	3.58
	Difference**	0.22	0.65	0.7	2.13	0.34	0.28	0.16	0.15	0.11

* Check Week highlighted in Blue font.

** Check Week minus Week highlighted in Orange font equals difference highlighted in Red font.

[^] denotes the least expensive Week of the Month.

RED MEAT

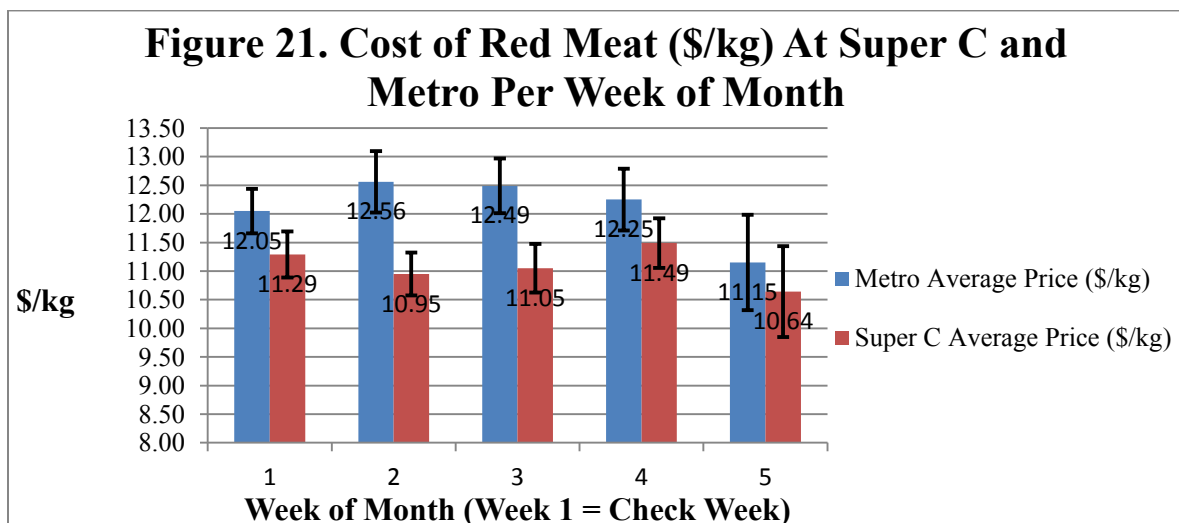
Turning now to an analysis of specific categories of food items, the food audit research supports a series of findings, which will be considered here. Thus, meat is expensive, it did not matter who I asked. When asked if meat was expensive, Pierre responded, “Metro, oh yeah. Especially the meat” (Pierre, 2013). Looking at the graph of Red Meat below, we get a picture that indicates excessively higher prices at Metro regardless of week. And, even though Red Meat should be eaten in moderation that does not mean that buying one pack of meat a week should incur costs of \$10 or more. Marguerite notes that by adding meat to one’s grocery bill that it will inflate the total costs,

Some weeks it could be more if I buy more meat, let’s say I buy less meat one week and the next I buy pork, chicken, and beef it will be more expensive than just eggs and cheese (Marguerite, 2013).

Interestingly, if one were to buy Red Meat at Super C on the second (\$10.95/kg) or fifth (\$10.64/kg) weeks of the month they could enjoy reduced prices. However, that would mean that participants abstain from buying during Check Week. There is some evidence for this behaviour in the interviews I conducted. Thus, some participants will wait for

The first and maybe the second. I always wait for the second week, look the first week they don’t have any specials, they have them the second week (Claudine, 2013).

However, many participants do not, because it requires extremely disciplined consumption habits.



POULTRY

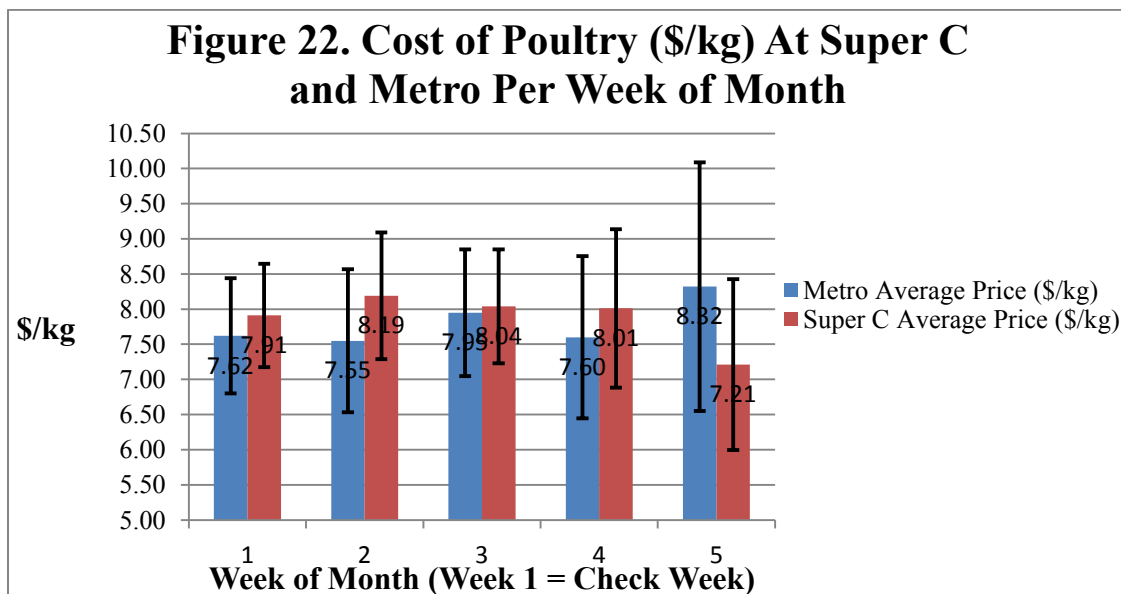
While discussing the cost of meat, Poultry was often brought up by my respondents as a regular part of their diets. However, poultry is becoming more and more expensive along with everything else; these quotes from Lucie identify her struggles. As noted by Lucie,

Do they have accessible prices? That makes sense. We are in 2013. Everything is going up so don't try to get a pack of minced meat at \$4 unless you get a small one. Even at that. I advance with what they have presently. (Lucie, 2013).

This does not mean that Lucie is content with the situation,

Well, like meat, I buy it, but it is getting expensive, pieces of meat, yeah. Chicken the other day at Metro \$13, it wasn't cooked and it had no spices on it. I preferred buying cooked chicken at \$9.81 with spices, the cooking is done so no electricity wasted, rather than taking the chicken at \$13 not cooked, I find it is getting expensive for a chicken (Lucie, 2013).

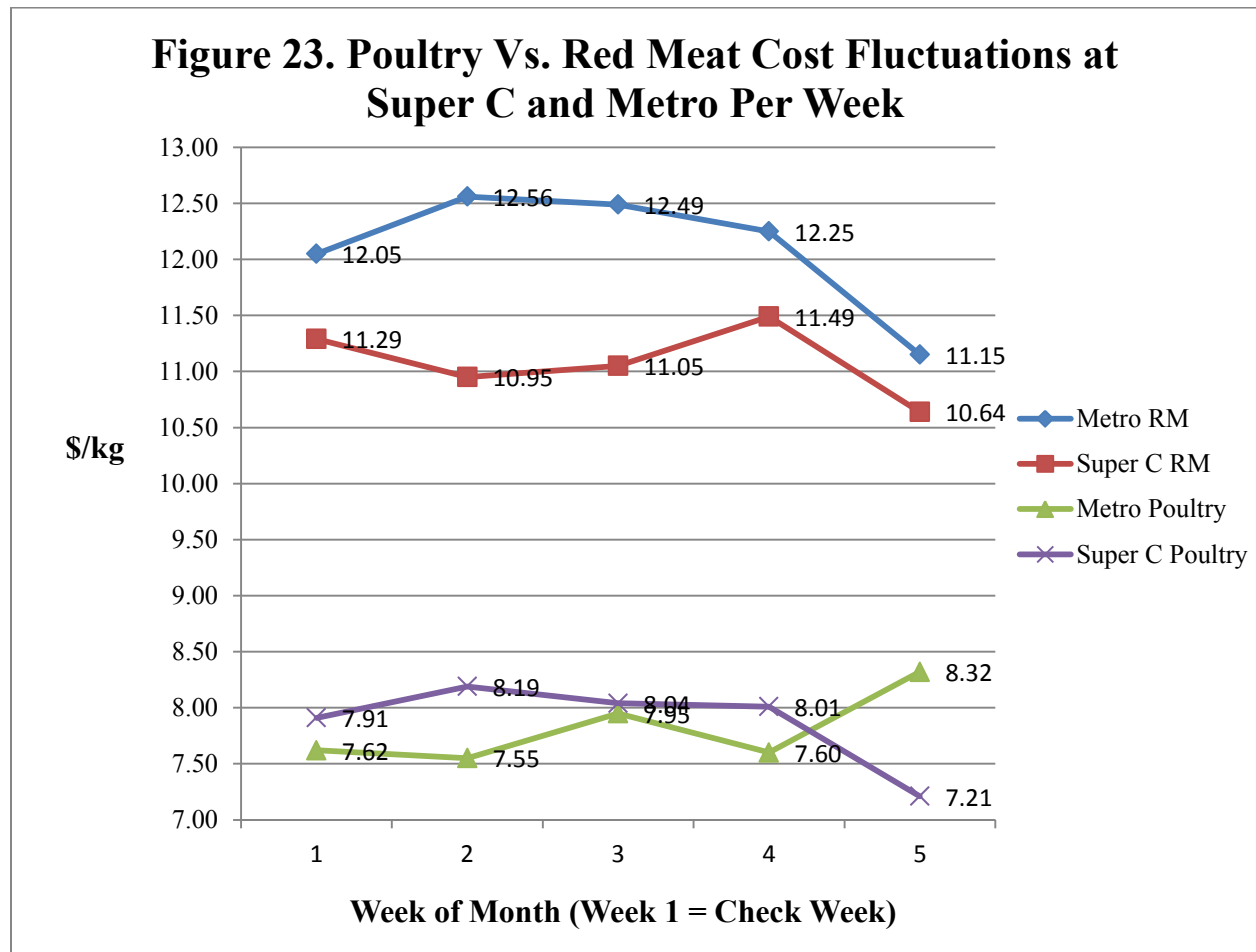
In other words, Lucie is apt to buy already seasoned/cooked meats over the non-cooked versions because the price is often less expensive and less time consuming to prepare. However, Lucie's experiences do not parallel the prices I found at Metro, which is actually less expensive than Super C when it comes to the price of Poultry. That being said, Metro only sells grain fed chicken in single packs at roughly \$13 a pack, absolute cost not price per kilogram. Unlike Super C who sells duo chicken packs at \$10. Nevertheless, participants who were to go to Metro on the second week rather than Super C could find less expensive cuts of chicken.



It appears that when one variety of meat goes on special, the other ones will be unaffordable. Asked about this tendency, Stephanie commented,

Always, Always, yes. And, they make me laugh, for example they have beef on special, but then the chicken is no longer affordable, but then the next week the chicken is on special and the beef is no longer affordable. A real comedy (Stephanie, 2013).

Although Stephanie was focusing only on the difference between special and non-special pricing, our price audit data also support this general conclusion. Thus, taking a look at Figure 11, we can see that when the price of Red Meat at Metro goes up the price of Poultry goes down and vice-versa (with the exception of Week 4 when both go down). The same holds for Super C where we can see that prices for Red Meat and Poultry move in opposition to one another (with the exception of Week 5 when both go down).



In Stephanie's quote we can see that this is something that she runs up against often and that it causes grief. The only solution, assuming the pricing structure does not change, would be for social assistance recipients to shop at Super C for red meat during the second week and Metro for poultry in the second week as well. The walking distance between the two is roughly 5-10min, depending on which Metro you go to.

FISH, FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Participants have noted that eating healthy is one of the biggest challenges they face, because healthy food is expensive. When asked whether she eats healthy, Josie put it succinctly, "well we try as much as possible. It isn't evident. Fruits and vegetables are expensive".

Participants find fruits and vegetables to be expensive, as well as a luxury; fruits and vegetables expire rapidly and need to be bought often, and eaten immediately. Engler-Stringer (2007) reported similar findings from her interviews with community kitchen members across Canada,

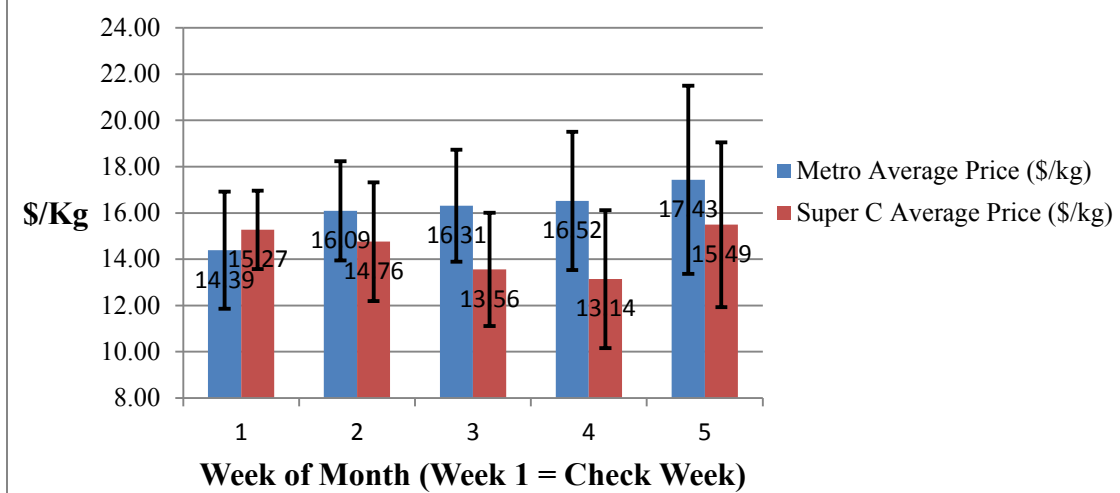
They explained that it was too expensive for them to buy many vegetables because of waste, as CK [community kitchen] members in particular found it difficult to eat foods before they went bad. To not waste food, they would buy only foods that could be purchased in small quantities, which excluded many vegetables (p. 80).

However, participants know of the importance of eating fruits and vegetables, and that they should be eaten daily. Lucie, in particular, has acknowledged that she cooks fatty meals, but that is how she learned to cook from her mother, and trying to switch to a healthier diet is too expensive, as she says it:

Look. Example, you want to eat a salad, they say to eat fish, sea food, you can't, you can't. I make my food like my mom, but it is fatty, minced meat is fatty. I can't eat healthy products like bio, and things like that, No-no. Like I'm telling you, no (Lucie, 2013).

What does that say about the cost of fish in grocery stores? It says "unaffordable", and "for the rich". That same story is reflected in the prices of Fish at both Super C and Metro. The lowest price for Fish is seen in the fourth week and by then almost all participants have ran out of money, "Look I spend the least after the second week, because I have no more money" (Stephanie, 2013). And those that do have money left are not spending it on fish, but rather the necessities, e.g. bread, milk, etc. Frozen fish is a more affordable alternative to fresh fish; however, I do not have any data on the prices or weekly fluctuations.

Figure 24. Cost of Fish (\$/kg) At Super C and Metro Per Week of Month



Coming back to Fruits, some participants have noted that the quality of the products on offer has gone down and that food items that are described as “Biological” or “organic” are too expensive to buy with a social assistance check. Even fruits that are not “Biological” or “organic” are considered expensive, but participants are still willing to buy them because they know that their health is very important.

Well, no. No, no. Because our food health is very important anyways, you need to eat, in the month. Nono, it is really important (Josie, 2013).

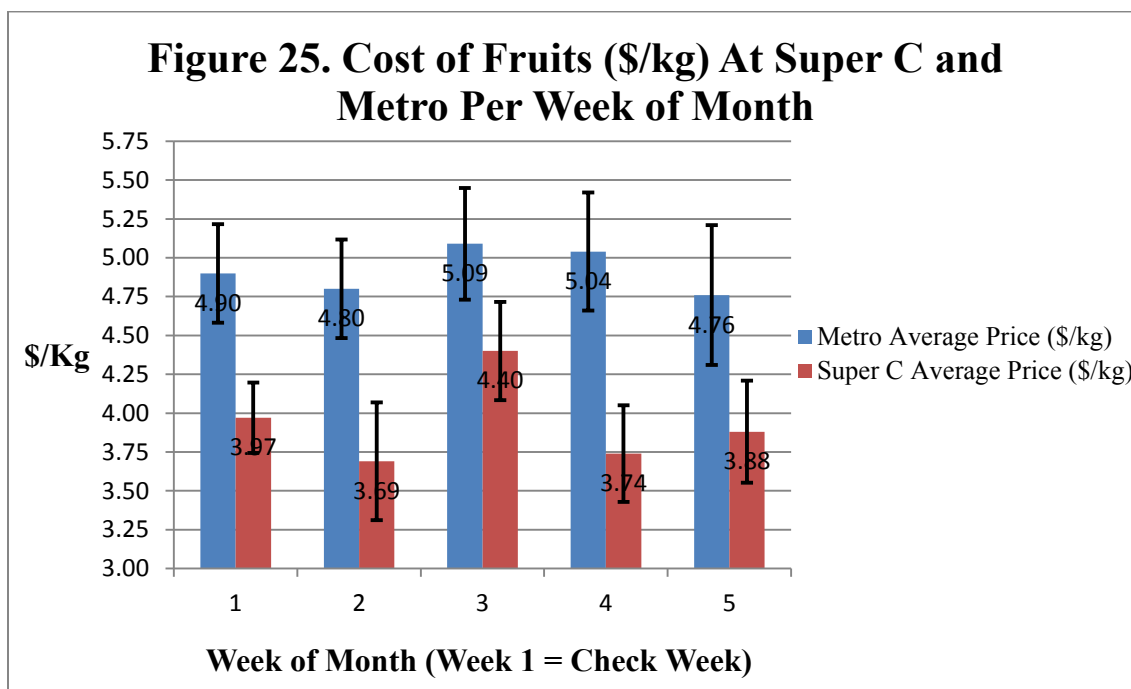
At the base like I said is our food health and if we don’t have food health we are shackled from the start (David, 2013).

The price of fruits in the Figure 13 are listed as \$/kg which means that the more fruit you buy the more it will cost. Stone fruits, e.g. peaches, nectarines, plums, etc., can cost anywhere from \$2.79/kg to \$6.39/kg in any given week which makes buying more than a couple fruit at a time difficult, especially when they ripen quickly, resulting in unwanted food waste.

Even though I did not include the prices of organic produce the prices are still considerably higher at Metro than at Super C during all 5 weeks of the month. As Catherine noted,

But in the fruits and veg, and the fruits and veg, the best grocery store is Super C. I am now studying the products that I buy (Catherine, 2013).

Therefore, it is more reasonable to travel to Super C to buy fruits. However, the best prices are in Week 2 (\$3.69/kg) and Week 4 (\$3.74/kg) – differences that result in an almost \$0.30 (\$0.28) difference between Check Week and Week 2. Once again, this graph illustrates the higher prices that social assistance participants are confronted with during the Check Week.

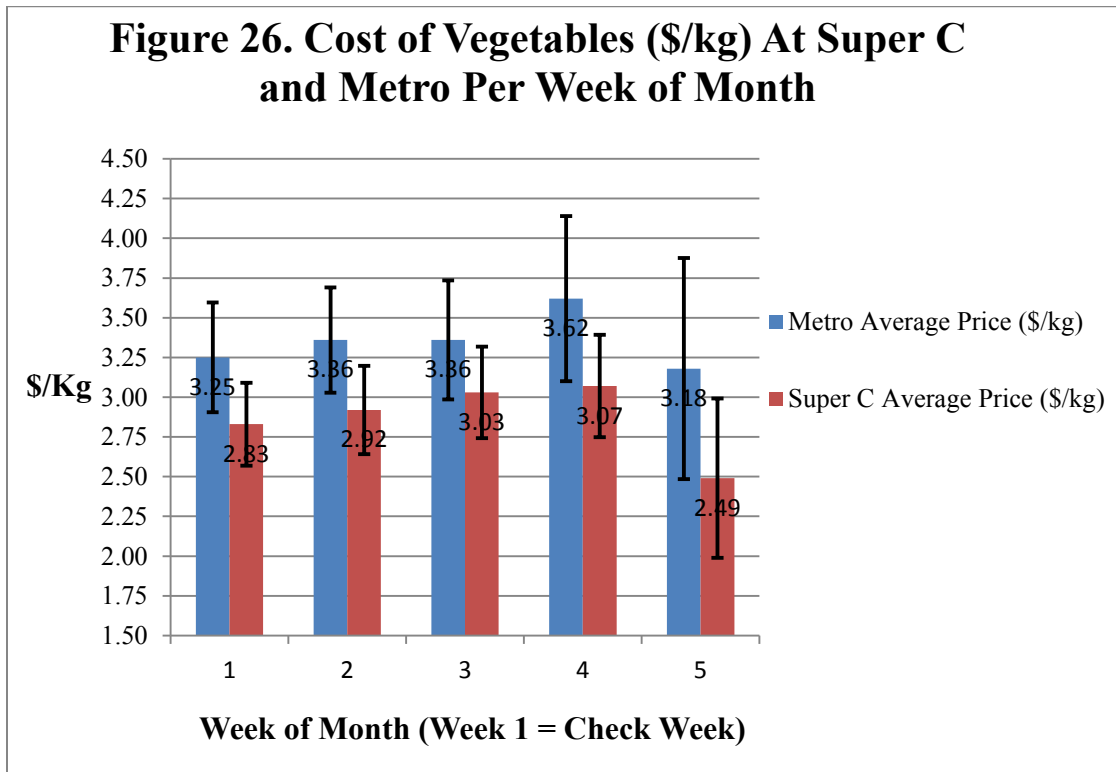


The added value that is attributed to bio/organic fruits and vegetables is not represented in my data and would engender significant price increases in terms of \$/kg. The price of “organic” produce is higher than that of produce grown using industrial methods (Marian et al., 2014). Super C does not sell “organic” produce so to include those products would inflate the price differential between Super C and Metro. Metro does not have as much bio/organic. As Adriane explains,

The Metro a little, but it is always too expensive unless they have specials, example kiwis this week at [inaudible]... there is also Aliments Merci, but no fruits. Marche Maisonneuve they are starting to have more and more (Adriane, 2013).

Therefore a healthy lifestyle requires social assistance recipients interested in bio/organic to really shop around. A frustrated David says, “they make us pay more for bio than GMOs, what is the joke!?” (David, 2013). And even though the costs associated with bio/organic are much higher some participants, like David and Adriane, will still buy them.

As previously noted, the participants in my survey are acutely aware of the high prices for fruits and vegetables, and the weekly fluctuations that force them to make monetary decisions about their health. Vegetables⁶, unlike fruits, are actually at their least expensive during Check Week (if we exclude Week 5). Social assistance recipients like Veronique rely on low prices on food staples like, “bread, milk, meat, potatoes, carrots, all kinds of things” (Veronique, 2013), to create meals for herself and her daughter. Thus, the lower prices for vegetables during the Check Week are a positive; though it does not make up for the other high prices she will encounter while shopping for food.



⁶ It should be noted that the prices for Vegetables, and Vegetables only, include both \$/kg and absolute \$ amounts. This is due to items sold in sacks like onions and potatoes, broccoli, cauliflower, etc. sold at absolute dollar amounts, versus items like cabbage, tomatoes, and peppers which are sold as price per kilogram. My data assumes that items like cabbages, tomatoes, and peppers are bought by the kilo, though in reality they are not. Therefore, the prices may actually be higher than they otherwise should be.

DAIRY

Some participants who consume certain food items regularly, e.g. dairy products, notice how expensive they are and how rarely they are on special. When asked what she eats most often, Natacha stated, “most often, dairy products, yeah”. And Wendy relies on dairy products to help alleviate her condition,

I take pills for calcium cause of my bones, so I take cheese for calcium. I have to take that, I take milk for calcium and I buy 2% (Wendy, 2013).

The importance attached to dairy products cannot be overstated, calcium and vitamin d in milk, probiotics in yogurt, these vitamins and minerals are essential to bone maintenance, and since women are more prone to osteoporosis they are necessary parts of a healthy diet. But, as Natacha also notes,

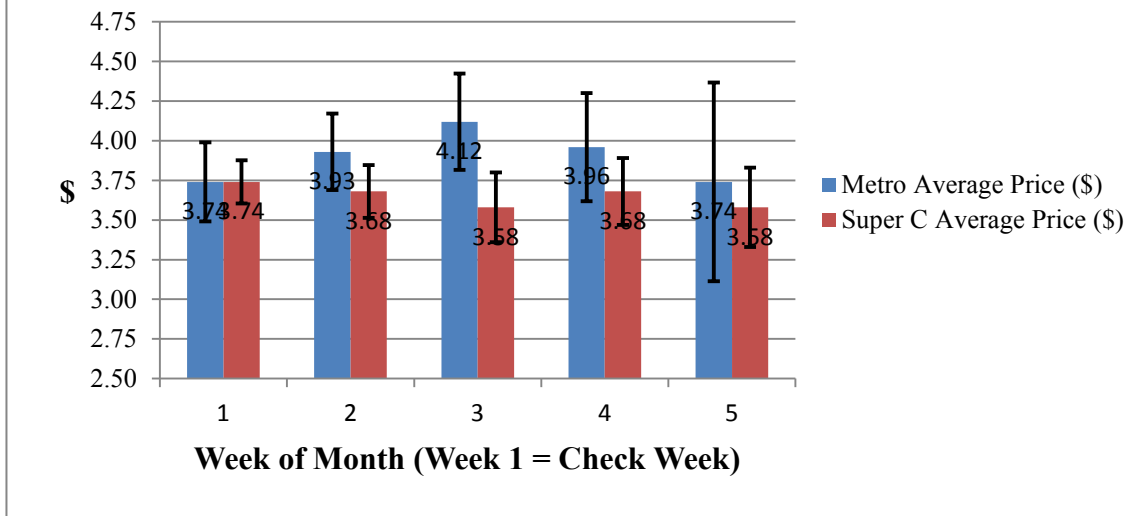
I'll give you yogurt as an example, yogurt. I am a yogurt fanatic. Sometimes you go to one place it is less expensive then you go to another place it is the same thing, one week difference, or it is on special one week at one place, and the next week at another place (Natacha, 2013).

The pricing of dairy as shown in Figure 15 forms a pyramid, the prices at Super C go down towards Week 3 (\$3.58) and then back up, a total of \$0.16 difference between Week 1 and Week 3. At Metro, dairy prices are at their lowest in Week 1 (\$3.74) and peak during Week 3 (\$4.12), a \$0.38 difference. The difference in total price between the more expensive week and the less expensive week is lesser at Super C than at Metro, which leaves greater weekly opportunities for social aid recipients to access dairy products.

However, both Super C and Metro offer the same prices for dairy products during the Check Week. Natacha's statement represents this issue well, “I find there isn't. There is no competition created. So people will throw themselves faster at a product (Natacha, 2013). Adriane offers us an example of the temporal dynamic of fads and the costs they impart in food,

When possible I try to buy healthy food, but with the marketing nowadays, like when I was a young adolescent yogurt was not given, now with the marketing enters products, I now have to exclude them (Adriane, 2013).

Figure 27. Cost of Dairy (\$) At Super C and Metro Per Week of Month



GRAINS

Grains were hardly mentioned by participants in the interviews. However, many participants did mention making meat sauces for their pasta – another reason inexpensive meat is important. And this quote from Paul, when asked if he would buy expensive minced meat, demonstrates the connectedness of products,

No, I will buy it anyways. I will make less. I will make maybe less but I will make one anyways. Usually ill make two good meals with a spaghetti sauce (Paul, 2013).

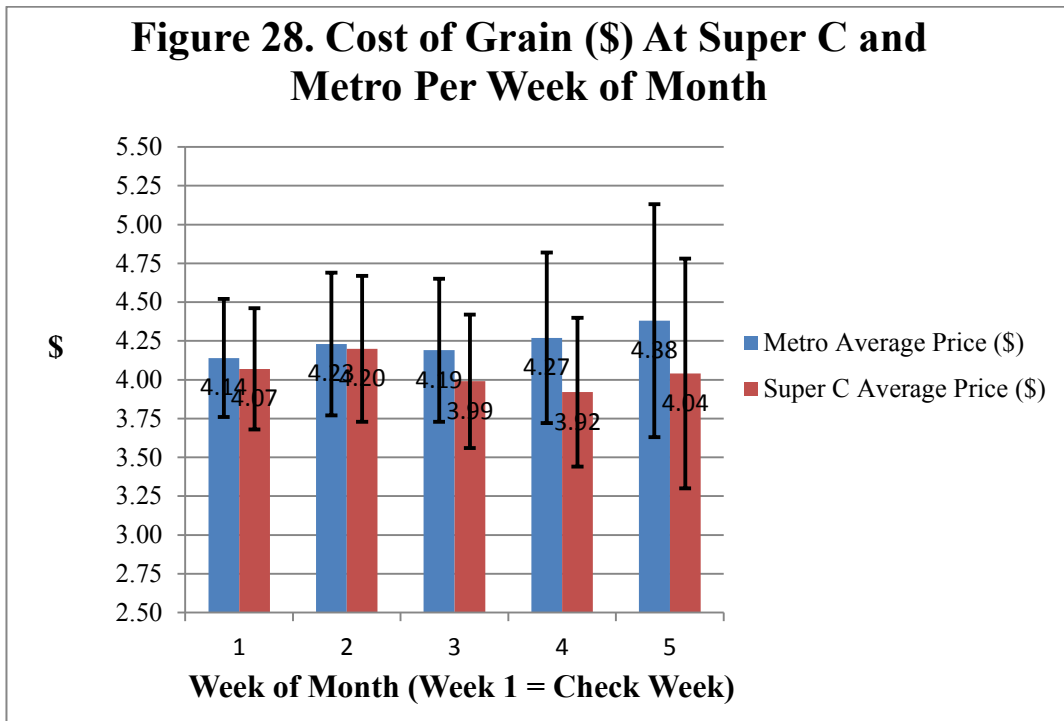
Though, grains like pasta are not mentioned much, it would seem that they tend to be relatively inexpensive and leave options open for social assistance recipients. However, eating pasta every day for a week is monotonous and painful. One could purchase pasta at either Super C or Metro at rates of \$0.99 per box, 3/\$5, and 4/\$5, so pasta is not out of reach, though it is one of the only easily accessible food items. Bread which is very important and considered by many as a necessity is often bought at depanneurs. As one of my respondents remarked

If I'm short, the metro is too far. I have a depanneur across the street where I live. I buy a loaf of bread, milk, and a coffee. He says ok you coming in, I say yeah. It's only across the street. I buy the family bread and I buy a carton of milk and he sells the calcium there (Wendy, 2013).

For participants who live further away from Grocery stores, it is more convenient to buy weekly necessities at the depanneur. However, the depanneur is considered “too expensive”, as

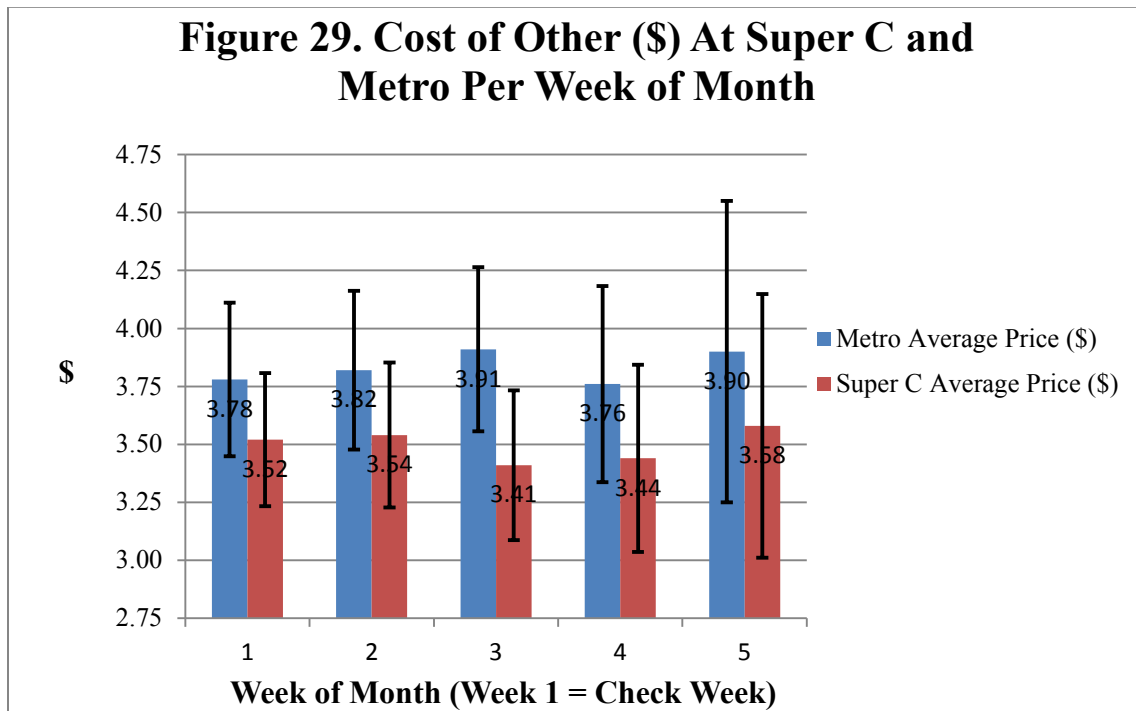
Lucie notes. Thus, like Natacha said it is important that grocery stores offer accessible prices at the right time,

It is something that should be... bread, milk, it is all things like that, margarine; they should be affordable for people with low revenue because we all need to nourish ourselves (Natacha, 2013).



GROCERIES AND OTHER ITEMS

The Grocery section at Super C is much cheaper than at Metro. Comparing their least expensive weeks, Super C is \$0.35 less expensive than Metro, and I compared the exact same products across the board. They have the same house brands, but the least expensive week is Week 3 – leaving social aid recipients waiting for good prices to buy products.



Family Packs and Single Packs of meat have differing importance and value to the many differing family situations that social aid recipients are faced with. Individuals that live alone or have small families, like Adriane, will tend to buy single packs of meat to avoid waste,

We do not eat a lot of meat, since we are a small family, we would buy the single pack, but the meat we ate before we cannot afford to eat now (Adriane, 2013)

David, another respondent remarked,

The quantity there, I don't look at that. I'm all alone so I don't get a large amount because it would be a loss (David, 2013).

According to my interviews, some families prefer family packs (allowing them to economize on the quantity and feed their whole family), and some individuals prefer to portion and freeze what remains:

Yes, family packs I cut them up and freeze them to economize (Charles, 2013).

Metro, the more prestigious of the two, favours selling single packs at higher relative cost than family packs at lower relative cost.

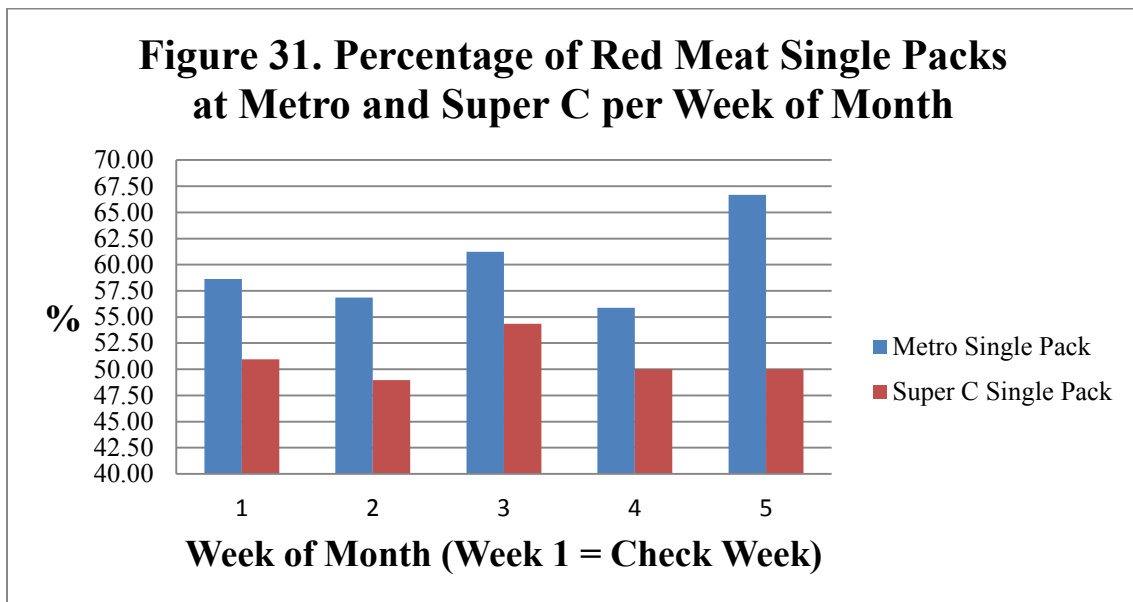
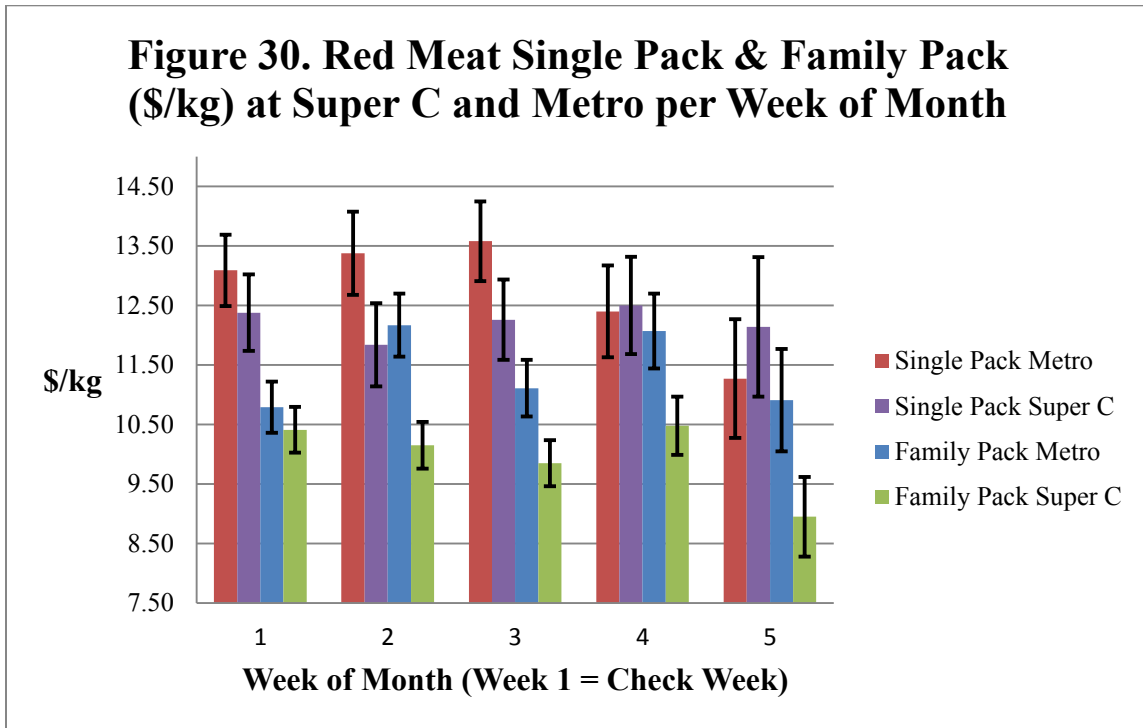
Table 9. Cost of Red Meat per Format size & Format Size on Offer				
Red Meat				
	Week	Family Pack (\$/kg)	Single Pack (\$/kg)	Single Pack %
Metro	1*	10.79 [^]	13.09	58.62
	2	12.17	13.38	56.86
	3	11.11	13.58	61.22
	4	12.07	12.4	55.88
	5	10.91	11.27 [^]	66.67
Super C	1*	10.41	12.38	50.94
	2	10.15	11.84 [^]	48.98
	3	9.85	12.26	54.35
	4	10.48	12.5	50
	5	8.95 [^]	12.14	50
*Week of Check				
[^] Denotes the least expensive pricing				

The graph below shows the costs of Red Meat by single pack and family pack, as well as by grocery store. As can be seen, Metro has higher prices when it comes to both single packs and family pack, with the exception of weeks 4 and 5 where Metro has its lowest prices. Metro offers more single packs (66.67%) at the lowest price (\$11.27/kg) the week before the check is set to come out. In terms of family packs Metro offers its lowest price (\$10.79/kg) the Week of Check; however, there are fewer cuts of meat offered in family packs (41.38%).

Super C is not known for its single packs, as a discount brand it is known for selling items in “bulk” – not Costco size. So it is no wonder that it offers its lowest prices during the second week for single packs (\$11.84/kg) with a total of 49% of packaging in single formats.

Family packs are at their lowest during the fifth week with an even 50/50 split between format sizes offered.

In both cases the format sizes one wants are not well-priced when people want them. This adds another layer of temporal and spatial complexity to grocery shopping, something most people take for granted.



Discussion and Conclusion

How does the data collected herein compare to Tanguay et al.'s (2005) results? Firstly, their study took place between 2000 and 2001 in Villeray, over 26 weeks, with 31 products, and at 7 different stores. My data is the result of 13 weeks in the summer of 2013, at two stores, with 2x91 products, in HoMa. Also, their results were agglomerated into a single price per week, regardless of item. I, on the other hand, looked at the prices of food items within their nutritional categories. The table they produced, below, goes as follows: Check Week is the least expensive week to buy food and every subsequent week is more and more expensive. The data I presented shows the opposite pattern for most food categories and it is substantiated by personal anecdotal evidence obtained through participant interviews. Though participants provided anecdotal evidence, their price knowledge is a valid and legitimate source of data to make comparisons with, as highlighted by Jensen and Grunert on consumer price knowledge (2014, IN PRESS).

Table 10. Average Price by Week-of-Month and Week-of-Cheque

<i>Week-of-Cheque = Week 1</i>		<i>Week-of-Cheque = Week 5</i>	
<i>Week</i>	<i>Avg. Price (% Δ WOC)</i>	<i>Week</i>	<i>Avg. Price (% Δ WOC)</i>
1	\$2.90	5	\$2.94
2	\$3.11 (+ 7.24%)	1	\$3.20 (+ 8.84%)
3	\$3.14 (+ 8.28%)	2	\$3.11 (+ 5.78%)
4	\$3.14 (+ 8.28%)	3	\$3.14 (+ 6.80%)
5	\$3.24 (+ 11.72%)	4	\$3.14 (+ 6.80%)

Tanguay et al. (2005)

Tanguay et al. (2005) justify the increasing weekly prices as a product of diminishing mobility as a consequence of reduced financial means. Therefore, grocery stores will increase prices because social aid recipients will have no other choice but to purchase their food at inflated prices (Ibid). However, the results of my data suggest that prices are better the second and third weeks of the month. So what might explain my findings?

Hochelaga-Maisonneuve has a large population of social assistance recipients. They, as discussed with the interview participants, wait for the aid checks before going out to buy food. That means that many of the social assistance recipients living in HoMa will go buy food at Metro and Super C on Check Week. Therefore, with many social assistance recipients spending

most of their food budget Check Week, they have no choice but to pay the prices Metro and Super C demand. As put by two participants:

Most people do their budgets on a monthly basis so grocery stores get more people the first of the month” (Francine, 2013);

and

No, the companies know, they do not want a stock rupture. If they do too many specials they won’t have space left”, (Francois, 2013).

Some participants have remarked buying food that they needed at higher prices because they had no choice.

Well I don’t think my groceries are only in line with the specials. You know what I’m saying. If I really need something and it isn’t on sale I will buy it anyways (Natacha, 2013).

Well, often sadly, people do not have the choice. Me personally, if they don’t have any I will buy something else that would be at roughly the same price, I am not difficult when it comes to food. I tell myself, at 50 years old, whether I eat chicken or beef it doesn’t bother me, but people with kids it isn’t the same (Ivette, 2013).

Though we cannot assume that Metro Inc. purposely increase their prices on Check Week. That is the situation that social assistance recipients are faced with. Many participants internalize the higher prices as a matter of logical economic policies on the part of the grocery store.

In the analysis presented above, I have connected themes that came out of my comparison with the price audit data, such as:

- The excessive cost of meat;
- inability to eat healthy;
- the need to buy appropriate format sizes;
- and the higher costs of food during the Check Week.

The result is that many participants feel that food prices are unattainable when broke. While food prices have risen with the cost of living, social assistance is rather stagnant. So participants are forced to buy other foods to meet their hunger needs, but these food items do not always meet their nutritive needs. Samantha notes that

Sometimes it is expensive. Look, I did my groceries at 80 dollars and got two little bags, it is rising, and the meat (Samantha, 2013).

Whereas before it was significantly less expensive. Adriane points out that

Tuna now sells for 1.49, but a year ago it was at 1.19, now it is on sale for 1.25 (Adriane, 2013).

William adds that,

Yes, two, three years ago at metro the cream cheese Philadelphia was 2.69, now it is 4.65, and before the hotdogs selection were 375g now it is 450g same price (William, 2013).

What these participants are reporting are price changes that have negative effects on their physical and financial health, with exception of getting more hotdogs for less. Most participants would agree that food costs are getting more and more expensive as the years go by. A few participants have accepted rising prices as an economic fact, “yes, but that is life, things have to change” (Francine, 2013).

The intra-monthly variation in food prices has the effect of forcing social assistance recipients to spend more money on food during Check Week, because not all items are at their lowest in the same week. Social aid recipients are required to study food prices, make a budget, allocate funds to a particular type of food, and travel to the specific location during the specific week to do their groceries, every single week. That is the simplistic version. Let us add a layer of complexity, timing, the timing of food purchasing would have to correspond to when supermarket inventory is at its fullest, and when the specials are most appealing. As I have demonstrated with the price audit data and participant anecdotes, social aid recipients are faced with temporal inaccessibility which limits their ability to nourish themselves sufficiently, thus impeding their food security. Food purchasing is not evident when faced with so many forces competing for their time and resources. Those that endeavour to buy food with little to no financial means are fully aware of the difficulties they face.

Chapter 6: Social Assistance Recipients' Foodscapes

Food Oasis or Food Mirage?

There are a lot of ideas that have come out of the food desert literature and the many critiques of the subject. But there is one in particular that helps to explain what social assistance recipients are going through in the context of HoMa. That is the idea of the “food mirage” and “oasis”, which has developed a more nuanced and critical facet to food desert work.

As we have seen in the analysis conducted for this research, higher food prices, and lower-quality, poor value specials during Check Week have an effect on social assistance recipients' use of public and private spaces of consumption. As we have seen, many participants stated they had between \$100 and \$200 for food per month, and that their largest food expenditure came during Check Week. As well, many participants do the bulk of their food shopping at Metro and Super C in the neighbourhood. Structural constraints such as: single monthly income, utility and housing bills, the high-cost of public transit, limited food specials, and higher food prices combine to restrict food access for many social assistance recipients after about two weeks, at which point they begin to run out of money to purchase food. When social assistance recipients have money, they can purchase food from most food retailers. However, when buying at Metro they are paying more than if they would buy at Super C. And, when buying at Super C during Check Week they are paying more than they would during weeks two and three. Social assistance recipients are running out of money faster than if prices and specials were equally good at both stores and amongst all weeks. Thus, some participants' first-hand experience with Metro Inc.'s price structures has required them to adapt their “spaces of consumption”, both temporally and spatially – as HoMa alternates between being a “food oasis” and a “food mirage”.

The terms “mirage” and “oasis” first appear in the title to Short et al.'s (2007) work on the impact of small grocers on food insecurity in their study areas. Though Short et al. (2007) do not define the terms in their paper, they are meant to be understood in the same way as their literary counterparts. A mirage is “something [...] that is seen and appears to be real but is not actually there” and “something illusory and unattainable [...]” (Merriam-Webster, 2014). The metaphor of the “mirage” helps to explain how so many social assistance recipients are unable to

access food even though they live in close physical proximity to food retailers. An oasis is “a pleasant place that is surrounded by something unpleasant” and “something that provides refuge, relief, or pleasant contrast” (Ibid, 2014). The “oasis” represents the myriad of food retailers easily accessible to social assistance recipients during Check Week. Participant’s experiences will be framed using the metaphors of “oasis” and “mirage” to describe food access throughout the month.

I argue herein that social assistance recipients’ spatial access to normal venues of food consumption is limited by the passage of time within the month. Therefore, by the third week of the month grocery stores no longer make up social assistance recipients’ spaces of consumption, because they no longer have economic access to large-chain food retailers. In what follows, we will first discuss how Hochelaga-Maisonneuve can appear to be a “food oasis” one week and become a “food mirage” the following week. Second, we will engage the idea of the “food swamp” while discussing the “food mirage” as a matter of localized context.

HoMa As Food Oasis

Having to contend with low-quality, poor value specials, and higher food prices, Check Week many participants have adapted their use of HoMa’s “foodscape”. Adapting their food shopping methods within the structural constraints they are faced with is one way that participants cope. When faced with Check Week social assistance recipients are able to apply a variety of methods to access foods across HoMa and across the city.

Many participants have pointed out that they will travel to multiple food retailers, such as: Dollarama, the pharmacy, CAP St-Barnabe, Metro, Super C, Aliments Merci, Marche Maisonneuve, depanneurs, etc. The need to visit so many locations is based upon the idea of finding the lowest prices and being an “efficient shopper”. Some participants put it like this,

Yeah exactly. It is just to say that I shop around a lot (Josie, 2013).

I think they are, because a lot of people run around for specials. Like they can go to Super C for one thing, or another thing at Metro, um, IGA whatever, Maxi (Susanne, 2013).

Many participants do not leave HoMa, and with 10 grocery stores, 28 specialty stores, e.g. bakeries, fruiteries, butchers, etc., and over 70 depanneurs there are options available within the neighbourhood (CDLC, 2009, B). For example Bertrand states, “just the HoMa area. I go to

the stores that are close to me” (Bertrand, 2013). Social assistance recipients are able to shop around the area when they have money. Many participants localize their food trips, and talked about buying certain products at certain locations because they know where to find the lowest prices. Knowledge of their neighbourhood “foodscape” enables social assistance recipients to eat and save money where they can.

I have a place near me. I found a fruiterie that isn't expensive so I try to go with that (Adriane, 2013).

I went to the place on Ontario, when I lived near there. I could get one month of meat for 45 dollars, sometimes I still go there (Samantha, 2013).

Aliments Merci for spices, and a little Indian market for specialty spices (David, 2013).

But when I have the chance I go on St-Cath to a store that sells bread, and it is really not expensive. The bread is \$1.75, they sell chips, cakes, and bread (Linda, 2013).

Participants' situated knowledge brings them to other parts of the neighbourhood. However, the majority of participants still use Metro and Super C to do the bulk of their groceries. For some participants to travel outside the neighbourhood has to meet a rationalized hierarchy,

A few places, it depends on the specials, two the quality, three when I can I try to buy biological products but that goes with the prices, sometimes it happens that the bio products can be less expensive (Adriane, 2013).

A few participants follow the specials around the city. As one participant put it,

Question of price, and question of what products I want for me. I have to go outside if I want the price and quality (Adriane, 2013).

Travel outside of HoMa is a necessity to those that “run the specials” for better prices,

Because sometimes I go with the special they have during the week. I am a girl that runs the specials (Natacha, 2013).

Yeah. I chase after the specials (Josie, 2013).

It happens; it could be that I go to Maxi, Place Versailles. Halles d'Anjou sometimes, it is expensive but it can be worth it (Charles, 2013).

Engler-Stringer (2010) found that many of her respondents spent a great deal of time travelling around the city in search of better deals, as some of my respondents also pointed out. However, the added cost of taking public transit and the time it takes to run around in search of specials is seen by some as a burden. Even forcing some social assistance recipients to stay local,

The cost of public transit. If you have 20 dollars you lose 6 you have 14 left (Martine, 2013).

I could but it would mean travel costs, and more elevated if I go to Loblaws, Super C is fine (David, 2013).

Because we cannot go, if there are 5 grocery stores, we cannot, like I don't have a car I can't go to the five (Catherine, 2013).

It isn't evident, it isn't evident. And I am independent on that side; I am not one to ask for help. So when you bring a little carriage you look a little old, but it doesn't matter, when you bring that around, you look silly, but it doesn't matter, but at least you have your groceries, but you see the looks on people. But yeah I'm on foot (Natach, 2013).

Participants' use of space is based upon personal decisions, often financial, that have direct consequences on where, why, and when they shop. Some participants are glad to stay within HoMa and have found the locations that best serve their needs. While others will take to public transit and track down the best specials across the city. What we see here is that when participants have money, they can access foods in normal venues of consumption i.e. grocery stores, supermarkets, and specialty shops – though, shopping at Metro and Super C will engender higher costs and reduced food diversity. Some participants have found ways to partly navigate that issue by traveling around or outside the neighbourhood. But not all participants do, and those that only shop at Metro and Super C will spend more for less food. Thus, HoMa during Check Week becomes a “food oasis”, because whether one saves money by traveling or spends more for less, everyone can access food. However, the effect of Metro Inc.'s pricing structure is to speed up the time it takes before HoMa goes from “food oasis” to “food mirage”.

HoMa as Food Swamp and Food Mirage

The experience of food access varies across the spectrum of participants between the first two weeks of a month and the last two weeks of a month. Even participants with above average money management skills have problems accessing food in the final week of the month, before receiving their social assistance check. Indeed, after two weeks have passed the private “spaces of consumption” once having served as much needed “food oases” start to resemble “food mirages”. And as Chapters 4 and 5 show, participants’ food access is blocked by the convergence of Metro Inc.’s restrictive pricing and marketing practices and the Quebec provincial government’s distribution of social assistance checks once per month. The economical food specials and prices offered at Super C and Metro during the last two weeks of the month are not accessible to many social assistance recipients. Accordingly, social assistance recipients find that the supermarket is no longer a “space of consumption”. Instead, “spaces of consumption” become reconfigured around the public venue of food aid organizations, and private venue of *depanneurs* – “food swamps”.

Food Swamp

After social assistance recipients have spent most of their check money, the only private venue for food consumption becomes the *depanneur*. *Depanneurs* are established institutions in Montreal’s built environment, and the word ‘*depanneur*’ comes from the French verb ‘*dépanner*’ which means ‘to help out of difficulty’. Because of the general proximity of *depanneurs* to where people live, they are easy to access.

When many participants have little money left to go to a supermarket they will shop at *depanneurs* for bread and milk. With over 70 *depanneurs* in HoMa, physical access is not a problem.

Depanneur, yes for milk (Line, 2013).

*Yes delivery, because sometimes I am in a wheelchair, I had arthritis in my feet, so I ordered bread at the *depanneur* and sometimes soft drinks, I wasn’t able to go myself (Linda, 2013).*

*Yeah, I like the *depanneur* me (Wendy, 2013).*

However, *depanneurs* are more expensive than supermarkets; which makes some participants more apprehensive about spending what little money they have at a *depanneur*.

Too expensive! [laughs] (Ivette, 2013).

Well I go to the *dep* [*depanneur*] if I'm missing bread or milk, but I don't buy food there because it is double Super C (Jeanine, 2013).

No longer shopping at supermarkets, some participants' only food options are bread and milk. *Depanneurs* rarely sell anything healthier than bread and milk, focusing on desserts and junk food.

Some social aid recipients will even borrow money to purchase food, putting them into debt, as exemplified by Adriane, "I borrow money to make sure we can eat" (Adriane, 2013). Moreover,

There are a lot of people who don't have any money at the end of the month and borrow. They rely on donations and food services (Paul, 2013).

The contradiction of social assistance recipients spending more money for food when they have less money to spend is difficult to explain. Close proximity is one possible explanation. Many social assistance recipients will more frequently buy bread and milk at *depanneurs* rather than at distant supermarkets. HoMa, in the lived experience of a social assistance recipient, is in a very real sense, in itself, a "food swamp".

Food Mirage

In the last two weeks of the month many participants are unable to access food in normal "spaces of consumption". With private "spaces of consumption" centered around the more expensive *depanneurs* most social assistance recipients will prefer to access public "spaces of consumption" i.e. food assistance organizations. They are so reliant on food assistance organizations that they are in a sense at the mercy of them.

Difficulty making ends-meet in the last weeks of the month is a monthly recurrence for many social assistance recipients.

After a week and half or two weeks [does not have any more money] (Bertrand, 2013).

Look I spend the least after the second week, because I have no more money (Ivette, 2013).

We don't have enough to eat for the month (Martine, 2013).

When I can't find money to buy, for the last two years it has been harder for us. If we had the money it would be the first thing I would invest in. Food has a huge effect on health. (Adriane, 2013).

Accepting food aid is the only recourse for participants and social assistance recipients generally. Public places of food consumption are the only venues available to them.

Sometimes it does, but I don't say nothing, and I come here, Jeannelle told me don't be shy they will give you something. She said you are not the only girl that is stuck, but I don't like to ask for help. And Jeannelle told me that there is no use to being embarrassed, but she said that you are stuck and she filled my Christmas basket, me I don't like that, but she says that there are more people than you and they spend their money on drugs. So then I look at her and... I don't like to beg me, but she said don't be shy you have been here long enough and you are entitled to it (Wendy, 2013).

No-no, well, just to give you an example people the first week of the month come here to get food aid. That is just to give you an example I could give you many examples like that (Josie, 2013)

I come here to eat (Veronique, 2013)

Till the end of the month I ask for aid (Bertrand, 2013)

However, public places of food consumption do not meet the needs of everyone for a number of reasons. To start, the offerings are non-negotiable; participants either take it or leave it.

We have help for food at the Carrefour Familiale, we get bread, it may not be the bread I would buy, but it is at least quality bread, and that is a good initiative from different areas. [...] Instead of throwing them out they give them to different organizations (Adriane, 2013).

Secondly, each food bank/charitable organization has physical boundaries which limit who can get food.

For example the Salvation Army gives more, but if you come here you can't go there (Martine, 2013).

But then again people may not go to these places because they go to food banks. You get food here. And you get them every second week at another place. And once a month at sun youth. A lot of people make up their own leases to get food bags from organizations (Susanne, 2013).

Thirdly, there can be age limitations on who is entitled to food assistance.

At the very end, end, end. I won't hide it, but we are lucky because at night at a quarter to midnight we have a truck that comes around and gives hotdogs for kids 16-25 years old. And it...[speaking too quickly] let's people eat hotdogs and have bags of food assistance so I'll tell you at the end of the month, really, when you have a week left it is the most rushed, a little for everyone in the area here. We are lucky to have the truck; we have hotdogs, at least (Natacha, 2013).

And finally, not everyone knows where and when they can access food aid. And while some participants believe that HoMa has a large variety of food assistance, others disagree.

Yeah we have opportunities. And I try to help my friends profit as well. And increase my chances and the openings in the neighborhood. It isn't all the neighborhoods that are lucky, we are lucky us youth to have that. Not everyone is as lucky but you know. Even older people come anyways, though it is 16-25yrs. but we get a bag of food assistance, they give canned food, but it is always canned food that can help you to finish the month. We have two times a month the Wednesday and Sunday and it is something that I find, wow. It is a great idea (Natacha, 2013).

Well I go to food banks, which isn't enough for the month. I come here to eat at night, I have no choice. Or every last Monday of the month we get sandwiches and soup on St-Cath. When they say that there is more food help here it is not true. I was better off in St-Leonard and Villeray (Martine, 2013).

The “foodscapes” of social assistance recipients, once much vaster, are now narrow in time and space, limited to very few places and to specific times, as discussed in the quotes from Natacha and Martine. The expansion and constriction of their “foodscapes” is a monthly cycle created by the single source of monthly revenue and further exacerbated by the restrictive pricing and marketing actions of Metro Inc. The consequence is social assistance recipients having to rely on public “spaces of consumption”, the food assistance organization. We have seen how social assistance recipients navigate through the cyclic transformation of “foodscapes”, from “food oasis” to “food mirage”.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Eating is a life necessity and a public right. But food enters cities through privately held enterprises that act as regulators and governors of food access and consumption. Because of this, it is important that the stories and experiences of marginalized individuals be the focus of food desert research. Grounding the research in participants' situated knowledge through experiential processes has shown how food access is complex and contextual. Through discussions, social assistance recipients shared with me the issues that they feel reduce their access to a food-secure life. That is the single monthly assistance check and the manipulation of weekly prices and specials by Metro Inc. By gathering empirical data on weekly pricing and specials I have been able to corroborate social assistance recipients' experiences. That is the contradictory experience of being poor and having to spend more time and more money to nourish oneself than middle-class individuals. Moreover, we have seen how Metro Inc.'s pricing strategies and the lump sum social assistance policy can have consequences on the spatial and temporal patterning of food access, as illustrated with the ideas of "food oasis" and "food mirage".

Metro's prices have been shown to be more expensive than Super C's by \$0.39, statistically significant at 95%. Super C's prices are more economical during the second and third weeks of the month, which force some participants to adapt their monthly/weekly budgets to attend to this fact. Moreover, the food that Metro has on special Check Week is empirically less nutritious and less affordable than they are every other week of the month, which corroborates most participants' experiences. Although Super C's specials on Check Week are more economical than Metro's, and equivalent between Check Week and Non-Check Weeks in terms of health and affordability indices, they are still not as diverse as compared to their specials the rest of the month. This data validates the experiences that many participants have when shopping for food. Through participants' shared experiences living within HoMa's "foodscape" we have been able to identify areas that are of direct concern to food access, and food desert research.

Participants experience difficulty leading normal lives of food consumption, and despite their efforts they can never be "efficient shoppers" nor "chemical consumers", as exemplified by both Josie and Adriane. Their human agency is being constrained by classed structures. From

their single source of monthly income, to the higher food prices Check Week, to the lower-quality and lower diversity food specials Check Week. Social assistance recipients' actions can only sustain them for so long. Participants have no choice but to rely on food assistance which is by no means a sustainable solution to food access, and food security more broadly (Riches , 2011). Food access is an illusion.

In a study with similar objectives Miewald and McCann (2014) have found that the only way to adequately attend to food access is with the help of those who live with food insecurity on a daily basis. As Miewald and McCann (2014) put it,

What makes foodscape a useful concept for positioning food as the focus of geographical research on poverty and survival is that its social constructionist, relational, and processual perspective allows us to conceptualize the complex and changing interconnections that shape food access and to point to the politics of food in ways that the mapping of specific food system attributes fails to do. Thus, through the notion of a foodscape, we can go beyond descriptions of where people can access food to narrate the experiences and strategies of finding food and unpack the political implications of its very provision (p.552).

Thus, food desert research must reconcile the need to point out deficiencies with food environments through quantitative means and grounding the basis for study in the situated knowledge of those they seek to aid. This is exactly what I have done throughout my thesis.

Limitations

There are limits to the analysis and conclusions held herein. General conclusions must always be tempered to the context and time of data collection. The results are specific to the people who participated in the research and the stores. Furthermore, the questions asked limited the responses given. We can try to generalize outside of the HoMa area and to residents of other neighbourhoods, and we can safely assume that experiences will be similar, but they will not be the same.

The price data collection itself is limiting in that it was not done over a long enough period of time to allow for statistically significant results. Moreover, the price data I collected may not be of items that are bought regularly, if bought at all, by the participants or social assistance recipients generally. However, with 92 items observed it is more than likely that these

are items consumed by social assistance recipients. A full year's worth of grocery store circulars would have been better. Keeping the prices attached to the food items on special would have made the results more robust.

Future Research

There are many approaches that future research into food deserts, “food mirages”, and “food oasis” can take. Below I will discuss three possible avenues and some examples of research that have been conducted outside of the city of Montreal.

Similar projects would do well to consider other actors involved in the food retailing world other than low-income consumers i.e. store managers and employees, maybe even marketing teams. The relationships between manager and customer, and marketing team and market segment are important to understanding if store policies and actions are directed towards certain categorizations of people.

More in-depth participant observation techniques, such as food shopping with low-income consumers would help highlight their buying habits and justifications. As well as show how low-income consumers perceive foods and talk about them while performing everyday acts of food shopping. Thompson et al. (2013) obtained rich in-depth knowledge of food shopping behaviour while assisting their low-income participants in the act of food shopping. A similar study done here would help further identify difficulties in food procurement for low-income individuals.

Technical studies of food deserts should not be overlooked or forgotten. GIS has been instrumental in spatializing food access and reconceptualising food health as a matter of structural inequality, as opposed to individual responsibility. One study in particular, by Breyer and Voss-Andreae (2013), looked at how to map food store price data with distance data to create a more robust understanding of food access. Moreover, they were able to identify areas as “food mirages” by accounting for the process of gentrification. Research like this would do well in Montreal where low-income people are currently faced with neighbourhood gentrification, like in the case of HoMa. However, future studies should also take a participatory stance on “foodscape” mapping, and structure research around participants’ understandings and experiences.

Complicated, Depends on the
Specials:

Beginning of the month

From one week to another

Look at the circulars

Write what you need

Budget

Be patient

Have to go everywhere

It isn't an emergency

You have to check

Don't buy everything

Worth it

Cost a fortune

Beginning of the month

From one week to another

Study the prices

Don't look for brands

Difficult

Wait for the specials

When you know the price

Full price

A good price

Family packs

Worth it

Cost a fortune

Beginning of the month

From one week to another

Write down the specials

Check them both

Rebate items

Super C, Metro

You need to know where to go

It will cost less

Be the first there

Don't always go for brands

Worth it

Cost a fortune

List of specials	Have the check but it won't be on special
Compare	Cheese makes no sense
One grocery store to another	Always too expensive
Too expensive	Buy
Bar items	Discounted
Little more reasonable	Put some money away
List of specials	Have the check but won't be on special
Two hamburgers, spaghetti sauce	Vary what you eat
Two or three meals	Do not always need everything in reach
You have enough	Buy what is on special
Diversify your vegetables	Goes up fast a grocery bill
Little more reasonable	Put some money away
List of specials	Have the Check but won't be on special
More expensive every year	A lot of time
Quality	Have money
It is rare	Go grab it
Over ripe	Nothing left in the counter
Little more reasonable	Put some money away

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Appendix A: Analysis of Store Circulars - Tables

Table 11. Probability Ratios of Food Items “More Likely” to Appear on the Front Page of a Metro Circular on Check Week

Food Item	Observations	Probability Ratio	P-Value (0.05)
Diced Tomatoes 796ml	3	12077476	0.130
Black Grapes S/L \$/kg	4	8.625	0.046
Red S/L Grapes \$/kg	7	7.188	0.007
Yogurt 500-750g	3	5.749	0.130
English Cucumber S/L	3	5.749	0.130
Smoked Ham 650g	3	5.749	0.130
Soft Drinks 15/355ml	3	5.749	0.130
Green S/L Grapes \$/kg	5	4.313	0.073
Frozen Pizza 350-700g	8	2.875	0.067
T-Bone steak \$/kg	4	2.875	0.247
Soft Drinks 12/355ml	4	2.875	0.247
Pasta	4	2.875	0.247
Frozen rib	2	2.875	0.435
Fresh Chicken Breast w/back \$/kg	2	2.875	0.435
EuroBest Frozen Fruit	2	2.875	0.435
Romaine Lettuce Hearts	2	2.875	0.435
Cherry Tomato	2	2.875	0.435
top sirloin steak \$/kg	2	2.875	0.435
Coaticook 2l	2	2.875	0.435
Chewy Bars	2	2.875	0.435
Fruit drink 2l	2	2.875	0.435
Fresh Atlantic Salmon \$/kg	7	2.156	0.233
Fresh B/L Chicken Breast \$/kg	5	1.916	0.425
Strawberry	5	1.916	0.425
Fresh Pork tenderloin \$/kg	8	1.725	0.367
Cookies	6	1.438	0.634
Flamingo Chicken Pieces	3	1.438	0.753
Yogurt 650g	3	1.438	0.753
Pineapple	3	1.438	0.753
Picnic Shoulder \$/kg	3	1.438	0.753
Tournedos Steak \$/kg	3	1.438	0.753
Crackers	3	1.438	0.753
Ice Cream 1.5l	7	1.15	0.848

Table 12. Probability Ratios of Food Items “Less Likely” to Appear on the Front Page of a Metro Circular on Check Week

Food Item	Observations	Probability Ratio	P-Value (0.05)
Live Lobster \$/kg	6	1.08E-07	N/A
Ground Coffee 925g	5	1.29E-07	N/A
eggs xl dozen	4	1.62E-07	N/A
Brochettes \$/kg	4	1.62E-07	N/A
Cantaloupe	4	1.62E-07	N/A
Raspberry 170g	4	1.62E-07	N/A
Ground Beef ML \$/kg	4	1.62E-07	N/A
Lactantia Milk 2% 4l	3	2.16E-07	N/A
Cherry \$/kg	3	2.16E-07	N/A
Broccoli	3	2.16E-07	N/A
Mushroom white 227g	3	2.16E-07	N/A
corn	3	2.16E-07	N/A
French steak	3	2.16E-07	N/A
Veal Chop \$/kg	3	2.16E-07	N/A
Beef Tenderloin Roast \$/kg	3	2.16E-07	N/A
Fresh Trout filet \$/kg	3	2.16E-07	N/A
Peanut Butter 1kg	3	2.16E-07	N/A
Water bottle 20/600ml	3	2.16E-07	N/A
Fresh Chicken Legs \$/kg	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Navel Orange S/L 8lbs	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Mango	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Apple snack	2	3.24E-07	N/A
watermelon	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Red HH Tomato \$/kg	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Potatoes Russet 10lbs	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Pasta sauce 700ml	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Lettuce	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Bottom blade roast \$/kg	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Hotdogs 450g	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Barded French Style Roast	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Strip loin Roast \$/kg	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Strip loin steak \$/kg	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Angus Beef Flap Meat \$/kg	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Fresh Sole filet \$/kg	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Cereal (Kellogg/GM)	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Cereal Family Size (Kellogg)	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Maxwell Instant coffee	2	3.24E-07	N/A

Oasis 8/200ml	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Frozen Shrimp 21-25 454g	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Frozen Shrimp 16-20 454g	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Cheese block 500g	6	0.575	0.586
Cheese slices 500g	6	0.575	0.586
Fresh Pork chop B/L \$/kg	6	0.575	0.586
Frozen Treat	6	0.575	0.586
Butter 454g	5	0.719	0.751
Fresh pork Back ribs \$/kg	5	0.719	0.751
Blueberry 170g	9	0.821	0.775
OJ 1.75l	8	0.958	0.952
Duo Whole Chicken	4	0.958	0.969
Cheese block 300g	4	0.958	0.969
BlackBerry 170g	4	0.958	0.969
attitude baby spinach 312g	4	0.958	0.969
Beef Rib steak \$/kg	4	0.958	0.969
Oasis juice 960ml	4	0.958	0.969
Frozen shrimp 31-40 680g	4	0.958	0.969

Table 13. Probability Ratios of Food Items “More Likely” to Appear on the Front Page of a Super C Circular on Check Week

<i>Food Item</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Probability ratio</i>	<i>P-Value (0.05)</i>
Medium Lean Ground Beef \$/kg	5	60387382	N/A
Margarine 907g	2	24154953	N/A
King Roast \$/kg	2	24154953	N/A
Russet Potatoes 10lbs	4	8.625	0.046
Yogurt 16/100g	3	5.749	0.130
Block Cheese 500g	7	3.833	0.037
Soft drinks 24/355ml	15	3.439	0.0008
Instant Coffee 200g	4	2.875	0.247
Fresh Pork Loin Rib End \$/kg	4	2.875	0.247
Ground Coffee 925g	2	2.875	0.435
Fruit Drink Cans 12/340ml	2	2.875	0.435
Cantaloupe	2	2.875	0.435
Navel Oranges 8lbs	2	2.875	0.435
strawberry 1L	2	2.875	0.247
peach 3L	2	2.875	0.435
Blade Pot Roast \$/kg	2	2.875	0.435
Smoked Ham \$/kg	2	2.875	0.435
Beef Tenderloin Roast \$/kg	2	2.875	0.435
Fresh Pork Chop \$/kg	2	2.875	0.435
Water Bottle 30/500ml	2	2.875	0.435
OJ 2.63L	5	1.916	0.425
Strawberry 454g	6	1.438	0.634
Yogurt 650g	3	1.438	0.753
Ice Cream 1.66L	3	1.438	0.753
PB 1kg	3	1.438	0.753
Shoulder Picnic Roast \$/kg	3	1.438	0.753
Fresh Pork side rib \$/kg	3	1.438	0.753
White Mushrooms 227g	3	1.438	0.753

Table 14. Probability Ratios of Food Items “Less Likely” to Appear on the Front Page of a Super C Circular on Check Week

<i>Food Item</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Probability Ratio</i>	<i>P-Value (0.05)</i>
Butter 454g	5	1.29E-07	N/A
Tournedos steak \$/kg	5	1.29E-07	N/A
Frozen Pizza	4	1.62E-07	N/A
Large eggs dozen	4	1.62E-07	N/A
Fresh Chicken Breast w/Bone \$/kg	4	1.62E-07	N/A
Fresh pork tenderloins \$/kg	4	1.62E-07	N/A
French steak \$/kg	4	1.62E-07	N/A
Soft Drinks 6/710ml	3	2.16E-07	N/A
Cherry \$/kg	3	2.16E-07	N/A
Red Grapes \$/kg	3	2.16E-07	N/A
Pasta	3	2.16E-07	N/A
Fruit Drink 1.75L	3	2.16E-07	N/A
Rib steak \$/kg	3	2.16E-07	N/A
Sugar 2kg	3	2.16E-07	N/A
HH Red Tomato \$/kg	3	2.16E-07	N/A
Cauliflower	3	2.16E-07	N/A
Soft Drinks 2L	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Block Cheese 300g	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Cheez Whiz 500g	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Sliced Cheese 500g	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Cookies	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Blackberry 170g	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Green Grapes \$/kg	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Clementine \$/kg	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Apples \$/kg	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Plum \$/kg	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Peach \$/kg	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Nectarine\$/kg	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Frozen Diner	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Fresh Chicken Legs \$/kg	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Duo Whole Chicken	2	3.24E-07	N/A
T-bone steak \$/kg	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Wing steak \$/kg	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Broccoli	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Diced Tomatoes Can 796ml	2	3.24E-07	N/A
stemmed red tomato \$/kg	2	3.24E-07	N/A
Blueberry 170g	5	0.719	0.751

Raspberry 170g	5	0.719	0.751
Fresh Chicken Breast \$/kg	4	0.958	0.969

Table 15. Where Food Items at Metro are “Less Likely”, and Super C “More Likely” to Appear on Check Week

Grocery Item	Metro Negative	Super C Positive
	Probability Ratio	
Ground Coffee 925g	1.29E-07	2.875
Medium Lean Ground Beef \$/kg	1.62E-07	60387382
Cantaloupe	1.62E-07	2.875
Beef Tenderloin Roast \$/kg	2.16E-07	2.875
Peanut Butter 1kg	2.16E-07	1.438
White Mushrooms 227g	2.16E-07	1.438
Russet Potatoes 10lbs	3.24E-07	8.625
Bottom blade roast \$/kg	3.24E-07	2.875
Instant Coffee 200g	3.24E-07	2.875
Navel Orange S/L 8lbs	3.24E-07	2.875
Cheese block 500g	0.575	3.833
Fresh Pork chop B/L \$/kg	0.575	2.875
OJ 1.75l	0.958	1.917

Table 16. Where Food Items at Metro are “More Likely”, and Super C “Less Likely” to Appear on Check Week

Grocery Item	Metro Positive	Super C Negative
	Probability Ratio	
Diced Tomatoes 796ml	12077476	3.24E-07
Red S/L Grapes \$/kg	7.188	2.16E-07
Green S/L Grapes \$/kg	4.313	3.24E-07
Fresh Chicken Breast w/back \$/kg	2.875	1.62E-07
Frozen Pizza	2.875	1.62E-07
Fruit Drink	2.875	2.16E-07
Pasta	2.875	2.16E-07
T-Bone steak \$/kg	2.875	3.24E-07
Fresh B/L Chicken Breast \$/kg	1.917	0.958
Fresh Pork tenderloin \$/kg	1.725	1.62E-07
Tournedos Steak \$/kg	1.438	1.29E-07
Cookies	1.438	3.24E-07

Table 17. Where Food Items at both Metro and Super C are “Less Likely” to Appear on Check Week

Grocery Item	Metro	Super C
	Probability Ratio	
eggs dozen	1.62E-07	1.62E-07
Raspberry 170g	1.62E-07	0.719
French steak \$/kg	2.16E-07	1.62E-07
Cherry \$/kg	2.16E-07	2.16E-07
Broccoli	2.16E-07	3.24E-07
HH Red Tomatoes \$/kg	3.24E-07	2.16E-07
Fresh Chicken Legs \$/kg	3.24E-07	3.24E-07
Cheese slices 500g	0.575	3.24E-07
Butter 454g	0.719	1.29E-07
BlackBerry 170g	0.958	3.24E-07
Cheese block 300g	0.958	3.24E-07
Duo Whole Chicken	0.958	3.24E-07

Table 18. Where Food Items at both Metro and Super C are “More Likely” to Appear on Check Week

Grocery Item	Metro	Super C
	Probability Ratio	
Strawberry 454g	1.917	1.438
Picnic Shoulder \$/kg	1.438	1.438
Yogurt 650g	1.438	1.438
Ice Cream	1.15	1.438

Appendix B: Price Audit Data Tables with Confidence Intervals and Standard Error

Table 19. Food Category Average Price at Metro and Super C per Week of Month						
		Week of Month				
		1*	2	3	4	5
Red Meat	Metro Average Price (\$/kg)	12.05	12.56	12.49	12.25	11.15
	95% Confidence Interval	11.28	11.48	11.53	11.14	9.36
		12.84	13.63	13.46	13.35	12.94
	Standard Error	0.39	0.54	0.48	0.54	0.84
	Super C Average Price (\$/kg)	11.29	10.95	11.05	11.49	10.64
	95% Confidence Interval	10.48	10.20	10.19	10.62	8.97
		12.09	11.69	11.90	12.37	12.31
Standard Error	0.40	0.37	0.43	0.43	0.79	
Poultry	Metro Average Price (\$/kg)	7.62	7.55	7.95	7.60	8.32
	95% Confidence Interval	5.95	5.46	6.10	5.18	4.25
		9.29	9.64	9.79	10.01	12.39
	Standard Error	0.82	1.02	0.90	1.15	1.77
	Super C Average Price (\$/kg)	7.91	8.19	8.04	8.01	7.21
	95% Confidence Interval	6.43	6.35	6.38	5.62	4.46
		9.40	10.03	9.70	10.39	9.95
Standard Error	0.73	0.90	0.81	1.13	1.21	
Fish	Metro Average Price (\$/kg)	14.39	16.09	16.31	16.52	17.43
	95% Confidence Interval	8.86	11.46	11.04	9.62	6.14
		19.92	20.72	21.58	23.41	28.72
	Standard Error	2.54	2.14	2.42	2.99	4.07
	Super C Average Price (\$/kg)	15.27	14.76	13.56	13.14	15.49
	95% Confidence Interval	11.66	9.04	8.10	5.84	5.61
		18.88	20.48	19.03	20.43	25.37
Standard Error	1.69	2.57	2.45	2.98	3.56	
Vegetables	Metro Average Price (\$/kg)	3.25	3.36	3.36	3.62	3.18
	95% Confidence Interval	2.56	2.69	2.61	2.57	1.71
		3.94	4.02	4.11	4.68	4.65
	Standard Error	0.35	0.33	0.38	0.52	0.69
	Super C Average Price (\$/kg)	2.83	2.92	3.03	3.07	2.49
	95% Confidence Interval	2.31	2.37	2.46	2.42	1.42
		3.36	3.48	3.61	3.73	3.55
Standard Error	0.26	0.28	0.29	0.32	0.50	
Fruits	Metro Average Price (\$/kg)	4.90	4.80	5.09	5.04	4.76

	95% Confidence Interval	4.25	4.15	4.35	4.24	3.75
		5.54	5.46	5.83	5.85	5.76
	Standard Error	0.32	0.32	0.36	0.38	0.45
	Super C Average Price (\$/kg)	3.97	3.69	4.40	3.74	3.88
	95% Confidence Interval	3.50	2.90	3.75	3.06	3.13
		4.43	4.48	5.05	4.41	4.64
Standard Error	0.23	0.38	0.32	0.31	0.33	
Dairy	Metro Average Price (\$)	3.74	3.93	4.12	3.96	3.74
	95% Confidence Interval	3.20	3.39	3.44	3.15	1.75
		4.28	4.47	4.81	4.77	5.74
	Standard Error	0.25	0.24	0.30	0.34	0.63
	Super C Average Price (\$)	3.74	3.68	3.58	3.68	3.58
	95% Confidence Interval	3.45	3.31	3.09	3.18	2.78
4.03		4.04	4.06	4.17	4.37	
Standard Error	0.14	0.17	0.22	0.21	0.25	
Grains	Metro Average Price (\$)	4.14	4.23	4.19	4.27	4.38
	95% Confidence Interval	3.39	3.34	3.30	3.20	3.34
		4.89	5.12	5.08	5.34	5.42
	Standard Error	0.38	0.46	0.46	0.55	0.75
	Super C Average Price (\$)	4.07	4.20	3.99	3.92	4.04
	95% Confidence Interval	3.32	3.29	3.14	2.97	2.59
4.82		5.11	4.84	4.87	5.49	
Standard Error	0.39	0.47	0.43	0.48	0.74	
Other	Metro Average Price (\$)	3.78	3.82	3.91	3.76	3.90
	95% Confidence Interval	3.12	3.13	3.20	2.90	2.50
		4.45	4.51	4.63	4.63	5.29
	Standard Error	0.33	0.34	0.35	0.42	0.65
	Super C Average Price (\$)	3.52	3.54	3.41	3.44	3.58
	95% Confidence Interval	2.94	2.91	2.77	2.61	2.35
4.10		4.17	4.07	4.27	4.80	
Standard Error	0.29	0.31	0.32	0.40	0.57	

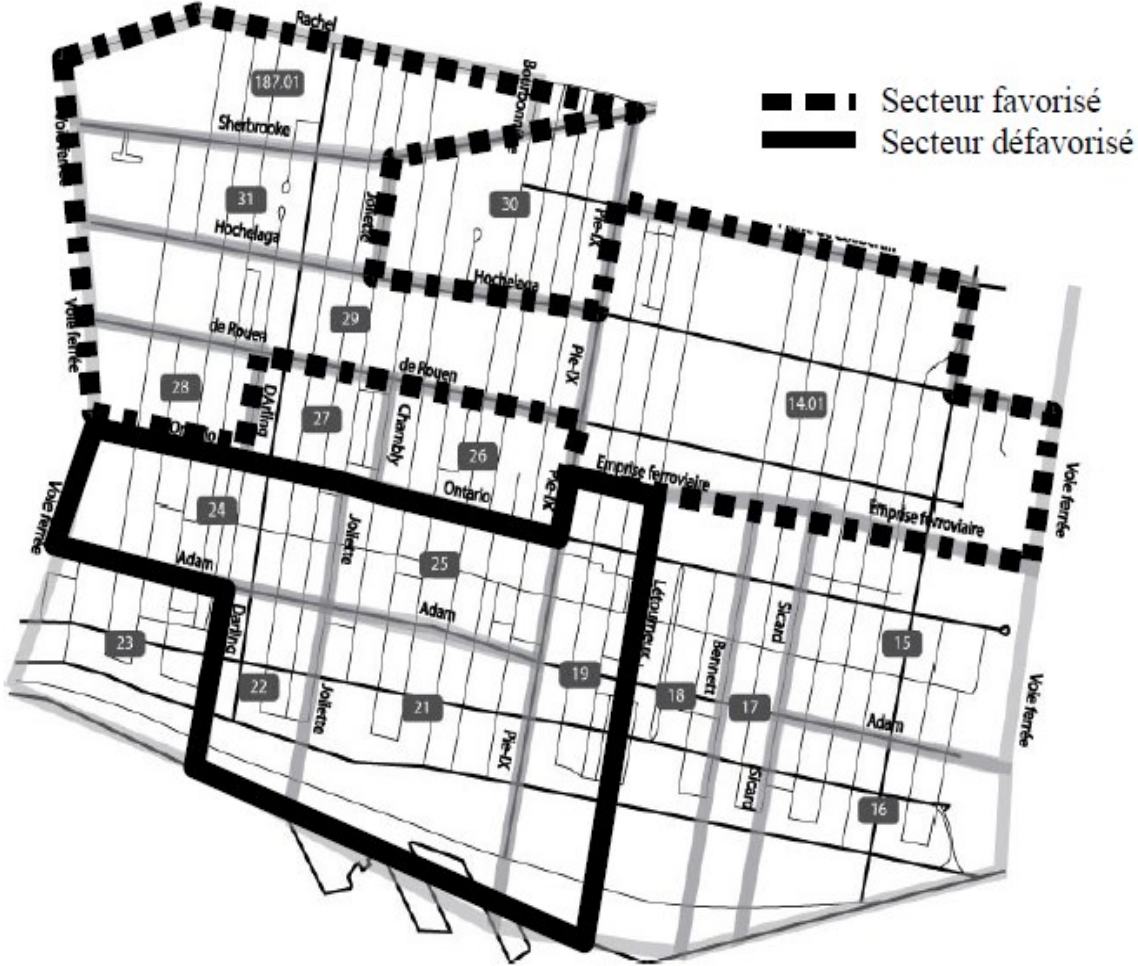
*Denotes Check Week

Table 20. Average Price of Red Meat Family Pack and Single Pack Format Sizes at Metro and Super C per Week of Month

		Week of Month				
	Red Meat	1*	2	3	4	5
Metro	Family Pack Average Price (\$/kg)	10.79	12.17	11.11	12.07	10.91
	95% Confidence Interval	9.60	10.39	9.48	10.16	7.67
		11.98	13.94	12.73	13.97	14.14
	Standard Error	0.43	0.53	0.48	0.63	0.86
	Single Pack Average Price (\$/kg)	13.09	13.38	13.58	12.40	11.27
	95% Confidence Interval	12.14	12.17	12.48	11.11	9.39
		14.03	14.59	14.69	13.70	13.15
	Standard Error	0.60	0.70	0.67	0.77	1.00
	count	24.00	22.00	19.00	15.00	5.00
		34.00	29.00	30.00	19.00	10.00
% Single Pack	58.62	56.86	61.22	55.88	66.67	
Super C	Red Meat	1*	2	3	4	5
	Family Pack Average Price (\$/kg)	10.41	10.15	9.85	10.48	8.95
	95% Confidence Interval	9.16	9.13	8.47	9.15	6.42
		11.66	11.17	11.23	11.81	11.47
	Standard Error	0.39	0.39	0.39	0.49	0.67
	Single Pack Average Price (\$/kg)	12.38	11.84	12.26	12.50	12.14
	95% Confidence Interval	11.30	10.71	11.15	11.39	9.98
		13.46	12.97	13.37	13.60	14.31
	Standard Error	0.64	0.70	0.67	0.82	1.17
	count	26.00	25.00	21.00	18.00	8.00
27.00		24.00	25.00	18.00	8.00	
% Single Pack	50.94	48.98	54.35	50.00	50.00	

*Denotes Check Week

Appendix C: Map of HoMa



Appendix D: Participant Interview Documents

Table 21. Stores Visited and Travel by Interview Participant

Participant	Super C	Reason	Metro	Reason	Depanneur	Other Stores	Travel Outside Neighbourhood	Reason for Travel
1	yes	less expensive	no	too expensive	yes	yes	no	to far
2	no	bulk is too much	yes	close	N/A	yes	no	no money
3	yes	specials	yes	specials	N/A	yes	no	cost of travel
4	no	same company	yes	quality	N/A	yes	no	localized
5	yes	less expensive	yes	specials	yes	yes	yes	better prices
6	yes	less expensive	yes	specials	N/A	yes	yes	for specials
7	yes	specials/specific foods	yes	specials/specific foods	N/A	yes	yes	specials and prices
8	yes	specials/specific foods	yes	specials/specific foods	N/A	yes	no	cost of travel
9	yes	prices	yes	specials	yes	yes	yes	to maxi
10	yes	specials	yes	close/specials	no	rare	no	mobility problems
11	yes	specials	yes	specials	yes	yes	no	no reason
12	yes	specials	yes	N/A	yes	N/A	N/A	N/A
13	no	does not like it	yes	delivery/specials	yes	no	no	N/A
14	no	does not like it	yes	layout	yes	yes	no	N/A
15	yes	specials	yes	specials	N/A	yes	yes	to save money
16	yes	specials	yes	specials	N/A	yes	no	localized
17	yes	prices	yes	specials	no	yes	yes	specific items
18	yes	close/least expensive	no	too expensive	yes	yes	no	no reason
19	yes	prices	yes	always gone there	no	no	no	no reason
20	no	does not like it	yes	always gone there	N/A	yes	no	N/A
21	yes	specials	yes	specials	no	yes	yes	specials and prices
22	yes	N/A	yes	close/quebec company	no	yes	no	N/A
23	yes	specials prices	no	too expensive	no	yes	yes	N/A
24	no	does not like it	yes	change his checks	yes	no	no	N/A
25	yes	specials	yes	specials	no	yes	yes	specials
26	yes	specials	yes	close/specials	N/A	N/A	no	N/A
27	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	yes	N/A	N/A

Table 22. Participants' use of Circulars, Food Assistance, Rain Checks, and Perceptions of Price

Participant	Specials in Inventory	Rain Checks	Accessible Prices	Circular	Check Week Specials	Check Week Food Price	Buys Specials	Food Assistance
1	runs out quick	yes	not always	yes	no specials	more expensive	yes	yes
2	always there	no	yes	no	no specials	normal	no	N/A
3	always there	no	not always	yes	no specials	more expensive	yes	yes
4	always there	no	yes	yes	no specials	N/A	yes	N/A
5	always there	no	yes	yes	no specials	more expensive	yes	yes
6	mostly there	yes	yes	yes	rare	N/A	yes	N/A
7	specials out	yes	not always	yes	rare	more expensive	yes	yes
8	depends	N/A	yes	yes	does not notice	N/A	yes	yes
9	mostly there	yes	expensive	yes	no specials	more expensive	yes	yes
10	specials out	yes	not always	yes	no specials	more expensive	yes	yes
11	mostly there	yes	not always	yes	no specials	more expensive	yes	yes
12	N/A	N/A	N/A	yes	N/A	N/A	yes	yes
13	always there	yes	yes	yes	does not notice	normal	yes	yes
14	always there	no	yes	no	no specials	N/A	yes	yes
15	depends	yes	not always	yes	no specials	more expensive	yes	yes
16	N/A	no	yes	no	no specials	more expensive	yes	yes
17	mostly there	yes	not always	N/A	no specials	N/A	yes	yes
18	N/A	no	yes	N/A	does not notice	N/A	yes	N/A
19	specials out	yes	not always	yes	depends	N/A	yes	yes
20	always there	no	expensive	N/A	no specials	N/A	yes	yes
21	depends	yes	not always	yes	no specials	N/A	yes	yes
22	always there	yes	yes	no	good specials	N/A	N/A	yes
23	mostly there	yes	yes	yes	no specials	N/A	yes	no
24	mostly there	no	yes	no	no specials	more expensive	yes	yes
25	mostly there	yes	yes	yes	no specials	more expensive	yes	yes
26	N/A	N/A	N/A	yes	no specials	more expensive	yes	N/A
27	mostly there	yes	yes	no	no specials	N/A	yes	yes

Interview Schedule: social assistance recipients

1. Where do you go grocery shopping? Why? Do you ever leave the neighborhood? Why or why not?
2. What time of day do you go grocery shopping, on average?
3. What products do you look for when you go grocery shopping?
4. Do the grocery stores in the neighborhood have the items you want at prices you can afford? Can you elaborate?
5. Does it happen often that the grocery stores do not have what you are looking for? Why might that be? Is there a particular time of the month when this is more likely to happen?
6. At what point in time do you spend the most money on groceries? Why?
7. When do you spend the least on food? Why?
8. When you spend the most money on groceries do you notice any changes in prices or products in the grocery stores?
9. Are you currently receiving social assistance? If so, do you notice any changes related to the release of the social assistance checks?

Interview Schedule: les bénéficiaires de l'aide sociale

1. Où allez-vous pour faire votre épicerie? Pourquoi? Est-ce que vous allez en dehors du quartier pour faire vos épiceries? Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas?
2. A quel moment de la journée est-ce que vous allez faire votre épicerie, en moyenne?
3. Quels produits recherchez-vous lorsque vous allez faire votre épicerie?
4. Est-ce que les épiceries dans le quartier offre les produits que vous voulez a des prix accessible? Pouvez-vous préciser?
5. Ça arrive souvent que les épiceries n'ont pas ce que vous recherchez? Pourquoi cela pourrait-il être? Y a-t-il un moment particulier du mois, lorsque cela est plus susceptible de se produire?
6. À quel point dans le temps passez-vous le plus d'argent à l'épicerie? Pourquoi?
7. Quand est-ce que vous pensez dépenser le moins sur la nourriture? Pourquoi? Le plus?
8. Lorsque vous passez le plus d'argent à l'épicerie est-ce que vous remarquez des changements de prix ou de produits dans les épiceries?

9. Recevez-vous actuellement de l'aide sociale? Si oui, avez-vous remarqué des changements liés à la dissémination des chèques d'aide sociale?

Opening statement of purpose of my research to social assistance recipients:

Hello,

My name is Jean-Sebastien Roussy and I am a Masters student at Concordia University in the Geography, Planning and Environment department. I am conducting research that will go towards the completion of my thesis. The purpose of my research is to establish an understanding of social assistance food shopping habits. And, to see how those food shopping habits are affected by grocery stores and government assistance check timing.

Discours d'ouverture de l'objectif de mes recherches aux bénéficiaires de l'aide sociale:

Bonjour,

Mon nom est Jean-Sébastien Roussy et je suis un étudiant à la maîtrise à l'Université Concordia dans le département de géographie, urbanisme et environnement. Je mène des recherches qui serviront à la réalisation de ma thèse. Le but de ma recherche est d'établir une compréhension des habitudes alimentaires des bénéficiaires de l'aide sociale. Et, pour voir comment les habitudes d'achat des produits alimentaires sont touchées par les épiceries et le calendrier vérification gouvernementale.

Departmental Ethics Committee (DEC) for Student Research with Human Subjects

Summary Protocol Form

For Student Research with Human Subjects

Important: Submit the completed form along with supporting documentation to the DEC c/o Dr. Kevin Gould or Dr. Ted Rutland.

Name of applicant: Jean-Sebastien Roussy_____	
E-mail address: j.s.roussy@gmail.com_____	
_____	_____
Applicant's Signature	Date
Name of supervisor: _Dr. Alan Nash_____	
_____	_____
Supervisor's Signature	Date
Name of course instructor (if applicable): _____	
_____	_____
Course Instructor's Signature	Date

Purpose of Research (Check Appropriate Box)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honours Essay | <input type="checkbox"/> Course work |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Graduate Thesis | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____ |

Approval by the Departmental Ethics Committee (DEC):
Name of DEC member: _____
Signature of DEC member: _____
Date: _____

All graduate theses, special graduate research projects and honours student theses involving the use of human subjects **must** be reviewed by the Departmental Ethics Committee (DEC). The following guidelines were created to clarify the primary information required by the Departmental Ethics Committee (DEC).

Summary Protocol Forms (SPF) **must** be completed and approved by the DEC prior to commencing any research with human subjects. When completing a SPF, please provide concise and specific answers for each item. It is important to answer **every** question (see reverse side of form also) to provide the DEC with the information necessary to render its decision.

PART ONE: BASIC INFORMATION

1. Names of Researchers:

Principal Investigator: Jean-Sebastien Roussy

Department/Program: Geography, Planning and Environment

Office address:

Telephone number: 514-973-5779

E-mail address: j.s.roussy@gmail.com

Names and details for all other researchers involved (co-investigators, collaborators, research associates, research assistants, supervisors):

2. Title (or working title) of Research Project:

- Food Access Stops Here: A look at the relationship between Social Assistance recipients and Grocery Stores.

3. Granting Agency or Contractor (if any):

- None

4. Brief Description of Research: *For funded research, please include one-page summary; otherwise, include a brief overall description. Include a statement of the benefits likely to be derived from project. You can address these questions by including the summary page from the grant proposal.*

- The purpose of my research is to identify and understand the relationship between the timing of the social assistance check and grocery store prices and specials. And, to understand how said relationship affects food access for social assistance recipients. In other words, how do grocery store specials and prices affect the ability of social assistance recipients to access food, and why. The general benefits of this line of research are (1) to demonstrate that grocery stores are not neutral actors, (2) that more grocery stores are not necessarily a good solution for increasing food access, and (3) to show how politics can influence food (in)access.

5. Scholarly Review of Proposed Research: *Complete the Scholarly Review Form (SRF) if you are conducting non-funded or contract bio-medical research or any other non-funded or contract research involving more than minimal levels of risk.*

- The project is no more than minimal risk.

PART TWO: RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

1. Sample of Persons to be Studied:

*Provide basic information regarding all categories of participants. Highlight and describe any special adult populations such as those who are institutionalized or under special care. Researchers must abide by special regulations when children or youths **under 14 years old** are involved; informed consent to participate must be obtained from the children **and** their parents or guardians.*

- I will be interviewing competent adults who receive or have received social assistance checks.
- And, I will also be interviewing managers of grocery stores.

2. Method of Recruitment of Participants:

Describe the methods by which you intend to recruit participants, including methods of persuasion and/or incentive. The general guiding principle for recruitment must be that the process itself can in no way endanger the physical or psychological well-being of the participants. For example, the simple act of recruiting from an abuse centre, a social agency, or a prison may endanger the physical or psychological welfare of the individual (e.g., an abusive spouse finds out the individual is participating, and “retaliates”). Another example would be contacting a person whose personal safety may be compromised by their location being made known.

- Participants will be recruited at a few locations. Social assistance recipients will be recruited at CAP St-Barnabe and Le Chic Resto Pop, in the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve area. Participants from these two places will not be compensated for their participation. The method of recruitment is volunteering i.e. if an individual is willing to participate then we shall go ahead with the interview.
- I will recruit managers in the same manner as mentioned above; there will also be no compensation. Participants will be recruited at grocery stores in the area e.g., Metro, Super C, Marche Richelieu.

3. Treatment of Participants in the Course of the Research: *A brief summary of procedure, as well an account of the training of researchers/assistants. The following questions should be addressed, where relevant:*

Procedure:

1. I will approach potential participants and ask them if they would like to take part in an interview.
2. If they say yes I will read to them the consent form:
 - a. Starting with the purpose of my research, duration of the interview, and potential for psychological harm (doubtful there will be any given my line of questioning).
 - b. I will allow them to go over the consent form and ask me any questions about it.
 - c. I will make sure to inform them that they are encouraged to ask me questions during the interview.
 - d. They can withdraw at any time and their participation is completely voluntary.
 - e. For those that do participate I will inform them that their identities will remain anonymous i.e. I will change their names.

- f. As well, the interviews will be recorded; however, the recordings will remain confidential.
 - g. And, finally they must sign the consent form.
3. If they say no I will thank them and go to the next potential participant.
 4. At the end of the interview with the social assistance recipients in particular, I will ask them if they would like to participate in another aspect of the research.
 - a.
 - i. *How invasive or intrusive is the research activity? You should forewarn participants of what is expected of them in terms of time and effort.*
 - ii. *You should indicate the steps you will take to respect cultural differences, where relevant.*
 - iii. *If participants supply private and confidential information, you need to indicate how this information will be protected.*

PART THREE: ETHICAL CONCERNS

Indicate briefly how research plan deals with the following potential ethical concerns:

1. Informed Consent: *A written consent form must be attached for all research involving human subjects, with the exception of written questionnaires and surveys (see sample confidential and non-confidential consent forms at the end of this form). When research procedures involve a written questionnaire or survey a copy of the verbal instructions to be given to subjects should be attached.*

- Informed consent will be obtained by first asking potential participants if they would like to hear about the interviews I will be conducting. If they say yes, I will go on to explain the purpose of my research and then I will ask them if they would like to go further and participate. If they say yes, I will read out loud the consent form; ask them to read it; then ask them to sign it.

2. Deception: *The researcher must both describe the nature of any deception and provide a rationale regarding why it must be used to address the research question – i.e., is it absolutely necessary for the design? Deception may include the following: deliberate presentation of false information; suppression of material information; selection of information designed to mislead; and selective disclosure.*

- I will require some deception when I present my research to store managers. I do not want them to become defensive if I present my research as: looking at how grocery stores take advantage of social assistance recipients; rather, I would present my research as: looking at how grocery stores market their products to low-income populations. So, I will withhold a certain amount of information and present it in a friendlier manner. For the exact statement of purpose used, see the: presentation of research to store managers.

3. Freedom to Discontinue: *Participants must be informed either in written or verbal form that they can discontinue at any time during the research. It is the researcher's responsibility to terminate participation if they judge any risk of a physical and/or psychological nature. Remuneration cannot be used as a means of persuasion or threat to continue a session that puts subjects at risk.*

- It will be explained to all participants that they can discontinue from the interview whenever they want and for any reason they may have. No coercive tactics will be used to retain their participation; participants will not be remunerated.

4. Assessment of Risks to Subjects' Physical Wellbeing, Psychological Welfare, and/or

Reputation: *This includes low-level risk or any form of discomfort resulting from the research procedure and how it will be dealt with. When it is called for, you should indicate arrangements that have been made to ascertain that subjects are in "healthy" enough condition to undergo the intended research procedures. You should be able to indicate clearly the kinds of risks that may be involved and the action to be taken if someone is unexpectedly put at risk as part of the research efforts.*

- With the help of the organizations' coordinators we will select potential participants that are capable of participating in the interviews. The questions I ask should not elicit any emotional or otherwise unhealthy responses, but if they do I will stop the interview immediately and inform the coordinators.

5. Protecting and/or Addressing Participant "At Risk" Situations:

- This will not be an issue given the nature of my study.

6. Post-Research Explanation and/or Debriefing:

- This will be done with the organizations themselves.

7. Confidentiality of Results: *The terms "confidential" and "anonymous" are often erroneously used interchangeably. "Confidential" is to be used when the researcher knows the identity of the subject, but will not disclose his/her identity. The consent form should inform the participant regarding how confidentiality or non-confidentiality is handled.*

- All participants will remain anonymous i.e. I will change their names when using direct quotes; if and only if they allow me to use them. The recordings themselves will be kept confidential i.e. locked away in a password protected folder. If more particular forms of protection are required please inform me of them.

8. Other Ethical Concerns: *Bearing in mind the ethical guidelines of your academic and/or professional association, please comment on any other ethical concerns which may arise in the course of this research (e.g., responsibility to subjects beyond the purposes of this study).*

- I will ask them if they would like the results of my study and give them my contact information.

9. Please Comment on Expected Benefits to be Derived from this Research:

- I can foresee the possibility that my research crosses over into the non-academic world and leads to more politically driven studies to ascertain/substantiate to what level grocery stores affect food access for low-income individuals/social assistance recipients. Then of course possible solution building/ public policy to remediate the food access issue. However, that would only be the case if I were to send out my research to groups willing to go further.
- Otherwise, I see my research being beneficial to the academic community in that it could lead to different ways of seeing the food access issue, and more specifically in Quebec.

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

This is to state that I agree to participate in a program of research being conducted by Jean-Sebastien Roussy of the Department of Geography, Planning and Environment of Concordia University.

A. PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is _____

B. PROCEDURES

- I understand that I will be interviewed at C.A.P. St-Bernabe.
- I understand that my participation in the study will last approximately a half an hour (30min).
- If permission is granted the interviews will be recorded. I understand that no one will have access to the recordings other than _____ Jean-Sebastien Roussy.
- I understand that my participation will bring only minimal risk or harms.
- I understand that there is no obligation for participants to answer any question that they feel is invasive, offensive or inappropriate.
- I understand that I may ask questions of the researchers at any point during the research process.

C. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time without negative consequences.
- I understand that my participation in this study is **confidential** (i.e., my identity will be changed in study results).
- I understand that the data from this study may be published.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT.
I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

If you have questions about the study itself, please contact Jean-Sebastien Roussy: j.s.roussy@gmail.com or Dr. Alan Nash: alan.nash@concordia.ca

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact a member of the Departmental Ethics Committee at the Department of Geography, Planning and Environment, Concordia University, at (514) 848-2424, ext. 2050 or by e-mail at geogprog@alcor.concordia.ca.

FORMULAIRE DE CONSENTEMENT À PARTICIPER À LA RECHERCHE

C'est à dire que je suis d'accord pour participer à un programme de recherche mené par Jean-Sébastien Roussy du Département de géographie, urbanisme et environnement de l'Université Concordia.

A. BUT

J'ai été informé que le but de la recherche est _____

B. PROCÉDURES

- Je comprends que je vais être interviewé à la CAP St-Barnabé.
- Je comprends que ma participation à l'étude durera environ une heure.
- Si la permission est accordée les entrevues seront enregistrées. Je comprends que personne n'aura accès aux enregistrements autres que _____ & Jean-Sébastien Roussy
- Je comprends que ma participation apportera seulement un risque minimal ou les préjudices causés.
- Je comprends qu'il n'y a aucune obligation pour les participants de répondre à toute question qu'ils se sentent est invasive, offensant ou inapproprié.
- Je comprends que je peux poser des questions aux chercheurs en tout point au cours du processus de recherche.

C. CONDITIONS DE PARTICIPATION

- Je comprends que je suis libre de retirer mon consentement et interrompre ma participation à tout moment et sans conséquences négatives.
- Je comprends que ma participation à cette étude est confidentielle (c.-à-mon identité sera changé dans les résultats de l'étude).
- Je comprends que les données de cette étude peuvent être publiées.

J'ai étudié attentivement le CI-DESSUS ET COMPRENDRE LE PRÉSENT CONTRAT.
Je consens librement ET VOLONTAIREMENT À PARTICIPER À CETTE ÉTUDE.

NOM (s'il vous plaît imprimer) _____

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

Si vous avez des questions concernant l'étude elle-même, s'il vous plaît communiquer avec Jean-Sébastien Roussy: j.s.roussy@gmail.com ou le Dr Alan Nash: alan.nash@concordia.ca

Si à tout moment vous avez des questions au sujet de vos droits en tant que participant à la recherche, s'il vous plaît contacter un membre du Comité Départemental d'éthique au Département de géographie, urbanisme et environnement, Université Concordia, au (514) 848-2424, ext. 2050 ou par e-mail à geogprog@alcor.concordia.ca