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Immigration, Work and Family Life: Exploring the Settlement Experiences of Skilled Immigrants and Their Families

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Immigration, Work and Family Life: Exploring the Settlement Experiences of Skilled
Immigrants and Their Families

by

Jeanna Parsons Leigh

A THESIS

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Abstract

International migration holds important consequences for the social organization of work and family life in the post-migration context. Yet, previous research suggests that more information is needed about the kinds of households that skilled immigrants form upon arriving in Canada and the ways in which pre-migration experiences affect the reconstitution of family life. This dissertation seeks to better understand the work and family circumstances of skilled immigrants and their families through open-ended qualitative interviews with 30 skilled immigrants residing in Calgary, Alberta. Specifically, it explores participants' attempts to maintain a certain quality of family life in the face of various pressures and changes associated with settlement, and how the process of coming to Canada has affected preferred versions of parenting, family practices, and values.

Findings suggest that paid work and family relations are strongly interconnected in the post-migration experiences of participants, with strained economic and social resources often limiting available options around the implementation of preferred parenting practices and values. However, this dissertation also shows that socioeconomic decline is not the sole aspect affecting the organization of post-migration family relations. Rather, a constellation of factors contribute to the reconstitution of family life for skilled immigrants, including paid work but also additional aspects such as flexibility in gender ideologies, accessible frameworks, strategies and coping mechanisms, cultural values, and available support networks. This dissertation thus demonstrates the great versatility of immigrant families and offers suggestions on how skilled immigrants might be better supported in their efforts to integrate into social and economic life.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Topic of Inquiry

When re-establishing their lives in Canada, international migrants regularly encounter dramatically different conditions in their family life including the context in which they parent, situations of paid and unpaid labour, and the school systems in which their children are educated. These conditions are often negotiated with different degrees of frustration and delight. For instance, while extreme changes in social and cultural location can lead to countless opportunities for discovering new ways to be a family, newcomers are sometimes hesitant to alter pre-established roles and practices in their family lives. In such cases, immigrants may resist opportunities for change, or, alternatively, the changes they do make may largely be compromises brought about by things like increased demands on financial resources or limitations on the time they have available for their children. In other cases, however, the changes new immigrants make are ones that their families are happy to have made, or may even have longed for prior to immigrating.

Studies of modern families—where the focus is on change and discovering new or unconventional ways to be together as a family—have offered insight into the enjoyment and opportunities that can come from a flexible understanding of family roles and responsibilities, particularly in regards to mothering and fathering identities (e.g. Ranson 2010; Doucet, 2006, 2004; Deutsch, 1999). Indeed, such studies have highlighted how an acceptance of change and constantly evolving understandings of mothering and fathering are important for supporting more egalitarian patterns in couple's daily lives (see Chapter 2 for further discussion of this topic). As described above, the novel conditions that new immigrants to Canada encounter may provide fertile ground for reinventing ways of being together as a family, especially as family members learn how to navigate new social, institutional and cultural contexts. Along these lines,

the high level of change new immigrants experience can lead to numerous possibilities for reconfiguring family relations.

It is worth noting, however, that the changed conditions newcomers encounter are often first negotiated in the earliest stages of settlement when social capital, support networks and cultural knowledge are most limited – a reality that can lead to feelings of stress and isolation and that may impact both familial and social interactions (George & Chaze, 2009; Aycan & Berry, 1996). In line with Canada's official policy of multiculturalism, which (among other things) affirms the value and dignity of all Canadian residents regardless of their racial or ethnic origins, language or religious affiliation (Government of Canada, 2014a), the issues and tensions that newcomers to Canada experience upon arrival have been worked up at both community and policy levels as a social problem. Moreover, the attention that has been given to anti-discrimination policies, pledges of financial support to assist immigrant settlement, and citizenship and human rights guarantees in this country, have helped to produce an image of Canada as one of the most immigrant-friendly nations in our globalized era (Reitz, 2012).

Yet, meaningful disparities persist for new immigrants to this country, with racial inequalities (e.g. lower relative household incomes and higher poverty rates), labour market discrimination (e.g. the discounting of immigrant skills), and the non-recognition of immigrant qualifications being among the most prominent (Reitz & Banerjee, 2007). In light of the obstacles that Canadian newcomers continue to face when attempting to integrate themselves and their families into their new economic and social life, contemporary researchers have argued that more information is needed regarding how immigrant families are managing changed conditions during settlement (and the stresses and strains associated with this), and whether and how immigrant parenting strategies offset the effects of downward mobility post-migration

(Shan, 2014). In particular, existing research has emphasized that future studies should more closely consider the kinds of households that skilled immigrants form upon arriving in Canada (Creese, Dyck & McLaren, 2008), since not enough attention has been given to exploring the family dynamics of this particular group.

In an attempt to address these questions, my dissertation research explores the work and family lives of skilled immigrants living in Calgary, Alberta, in 2011-2012. Broadly, this research considers the ways in which skilled immigrants and their families are negotiating Canadian cultural norms and personal understandings and practices of gender, work, and parenting throughout the first six years of settlement. Moreover, because this research is set in the context of the period of settlement that immediately follows migration to Canada, it offers the unique opportunity to explore immigrants' negotiations of new material and social conditions—and the pressures, preferences and decisions associated with this—during a time of great transition for their families. In so doing, many of the fundamental issues skilled immigrants struggle to overcome during settlement are highlighted, as are the numerous joys participants are experiencing in their new Canadian home, and the hopes they have for their family's future. Thus, this study has dual relevance in that it speaks to the intricacies and importance of immigrant settlement, and to the broader topic of family, gender roles and change.

Largely due to high levels of education and professional work experience, all of the participants in this study were living some variation of a professional middle-class life in their country of origin. This research thus explores their experiences of re-establishing work and family life in a new country where many of the trappings associated with their previous class status and privilege have been (at least temporarily) stripped away. What emerged from the interviews were evocative accounts of the ways in which participants traversed a new social,

cultural and institutional location in the context of familial downward mobility. From participants' experiences of navigating a new school culture with limited resources, to the varied strategies they employed in attempts to safe-guard their children from situations of transient poverty, the topics developed in this dissertation offer the reader an in-depth look into the ways in which skilled immigrants organize their lives in the post-migration context, and the many ups and downs for family life that are associated with this.

1.2 Canadian Immigration Programs

The contemporary system of immigration to Canada is organized into three main streams: refugees/humanitarian, family reunification, and economic class. The economic class—which is the largest category of immigration to Canada¹—involves the quantified assessment of human capital through a point system that has been designed to select immigrants based on predetermined qualities deemed to be predictive markers of employment and integration success (e.g. education, professional work experience and knowledge of one of Canada's two official languages). Immigration scholars have shown that the intended purpose of this system is to ensure that the majority of immigrants to Canada possess a minimum standard of qualification that will allow them to both enter and “excel” in the modern economy (Li, 2008; Reitz, 2004) – a notion that largely fuels the dominant understanding that immigration contributes positively to the economic state of the nation and therefore is beneficial to the Canadian population (Reitz, 2012).

While the Canadian government grants permanent residence visas to immigrants through both the family reunification and economic class of immigration, the former is largely a system of sponsorship in which a citizen or permanent resident of Canada fills out an application of

¹ The most recent statistics suggest that 64% (N = 148, 037) of immigrants to Canada came as economic migrants during 2013 compared to 36% (N = 79, 586) in the family class (Citizenship and Immigration, 2013).

support to sponsor a family member who is not yet a permanent resident. In most cases, the family member intended for sponsorship still resides abroad when the application is filed, although this is not necessarily true of all cases (Canadian Visa, 2014). Family members eligible for this type of sponsorship include a spouse, parent or grandparent and dependent children.

Sponsorship applicants must meet certain requirements in order to be considered for immigration to Canada (e.g. the absence of a criminal record and passing a health examination); however, educational attainment, occupational experience and knowledge of French or English are not assessed and awarded points in this category of immigration. Similarly, the family member who is hoping to become the sponsor must comply with a number of preset obligations in order to be seen as an eligible candidate.² However, even in cases where all of the requirements for sponsorship are met, there is no guarantee that the application will be approved. In fact, during the period when this research was completed (2011-2012), a temporary hold was placed on all applications within the family class category as a strategy for managing extensive wait times that were exceeding seven years on average (Elayadathusseril, 2011).

In line with the above, there has been a significant push in Canadian immigration policy and practice toward expanding the economic class of immigration to Canada, which is largely composed of business, health care and other professionals and people in skilled trades. In addition, there are opportunities to apply to the federal skilled worker program (FSWP) or the provincial nominee program (PNP) under the umbrella of the economic class,³ with each stream

² For those individuals hoping to become sponsors, the following four broad requirements must be met: 1) the sponsor is a Canadian citizen or permanent resident; 2) the sponsor is in a position to financially provide for the essential needs of the person they intend to sponsor and their dependents (if applicable); 3) the sponsor must have either a physical residency in Canada or a demonstrated intention to reside in Canada by the time the sponsored family member lands; 4) the sponsor must be at least 18 years old, and not in prison, bankrupt, under a removal order or charged with a criminal offence (Canadian Visa, 2014)

³ Quebec has slightly different requirements than the other provinces. To view them visit: <http://www.immigration.ca/index.php/en/canada-immigration/quebec-immigration>

of the skilled worker program making use of a points system to assess candidates against various factors intended to indicate the likelihood that they will successfully settle in Canada and take part in the economy (see below for further detail).

Each of the 30 participants included in this study either applied to come to Canada through the FSWP or PNP, or came with a spouse or partner who had applied under one of these programs.⁴ Unlike immigrants accepted under the family class, skilled workers are largely assessed for their education, skills and work experience. The specific rules to apply as a skilled worker in either stream of the Canadian program are often tweaked and can change without notice. As it currently stands, basic eligibility to the FSWP requires applicants to either have at least one year of continuous full-time or equivalent paid work experience in the past 10 years in one of 50 eligible occupations,⁵ possess a full-time permanent job offer from a Canadian employer, or have completed at least two years of study towards a PhD in Canada at a recognized post-secondary institution. In addition, the Government of Canada website claims that eligibility to apply will not be granted if an applicant cannot pass a minimum threshold of language ability examination for one of Canada's two official languages (English/French) (Government of Canada, 2014b).

Once a prospective immigrant can successfully demonstrate that they meet the above basic eligibility requirements, their application is processed based on the assessment of six additional requirements via a 100-point grid in which the current “pass” mark is 67 points.⁶ As

⁴ In such cases, participants were not sponsored through the family class, but rather, applied for immigration with their partner as the principal applicant. Under these circumstances, accompanying spouses and children are all counted as members of the economic class, and the characteristics of the accompanying spouse can count toward the total points awarded the principal applicant (although this may not be deemed necessary if the applicant spouse can earn sufficient points on his/her own).

⁵ See <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/skilled/apply-who-instructions.asp?expand=jobs#jobs> for a list of eligible occupations.

⁶ Acquiring 67 points on the FSW application does not guarantee an applicant acceptance into the program. For example, there is a cap of approximately 25,500 for new federal skilled worker applications per year which

outlined by CIC,⁷ the six additional selection factors are as follows: 1) skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing English and/or French (maximum of 28 points); 2) education in the form of a Canadian diploma or certificate, or proof that a foreign education credential has been assessed by an agency approved by CIC (maximum of 25 points); 3) level of full-time work experience in one of 50 classified occupations (maximum of 15 points for six or more years of experience); 4) age (where being between 18-35 years of age earns a maximum of 12 points and being under 18 or over 47 years of age earns you 0 points); 5) having a full-time job offer in a classified occupation arranged before you apply to come to Canada (maximum of 10 points); 6) the perceived level of “adaptability” of an applicant or their spouse or partner, including assessment of language level, past study or work experience in Canada, arranged employment, and relatives living in Canada (maximum of 10 points with no category being counted for any person more than once).

In cases where both members of a married or common-law couple possess skills and credentials that may render them admissible to Canada within the FSWP, it is up to the couple to decide which person will be the “main” or principal applicant on the application for immigration. Prospective immigrants can do this by entering each person’s information into an online form to see who is given a higher score.⁸ Moreover, while the person who does not apply as the principal applicant will be counted as a “dependent” on the immigration application, as noted above, a number of their attributes can also be counted towards the overall application score, which could understandably make non-principal applicant spouses feel like part of a

includes a cap of 500 applications from PhD students. There are also sub-caps of 1,000 for each of the 50 eligible occupations, and applicants are not given any indication of where their application sits in the queue (Government of Canada, 2014).

⁷ <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/skilled/apply-who.asp>

⁸ See <http://onlineservices-servicesenligne.cic.gc.ca/eapp/eapp.do;jsessionid=31E9744E324F820FE4538A8167F7A593> for the online questionnaire.

successful team—rather than a tolerated “add-on” to the application—given that both members of the couple were recognized and accepted for their achievements and potential contributions.

Participants in this study who did not come to Canada by means of the FSWP immigrated with their families through the Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program (AINP), which is a province-specific program of immigration geared towards skilled professionals. One of the main differences between the FSWP and AINP is that AINP has multiple streams for prospective immigrants to choose from. For instance, there are a number of “Strategic Recruitment” streams for those who have specific type of previous work experience in Alberta (e.g. temporary foreign workers with a valid trade or engineering certificate) and for individuals who have graduated from a recognized post-secondary institution in the province and now possess a post-graduate work permit. There is also an “Employer Driven Stream” for individuals who have been offered a full-time job in Alberta, and a “Self-Employed Farmer” stream for those who have a certain level of financial resources and farm management experience (Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program, 2014).

These programs are specifically designed to support the economic growth of the province of Alberta and therefore highly favour individuals with skills and experience in specific sectors of the labour market such as oil and gas, engineering, and certain trades that are associated with these industries (e.g. gasfitter, welder, ironworker). Each province and territory participating in the PNP has its own nomination guidelines that reflect the specific needs and labour market demands of that area. It is thus up to prospective applicants to research the guidelines for each province and territory to determine where their skills and experience might best be utilized.

After determining that they meet the eligibility criteria and will be applying to one of the streams of the AINP,⁹ each applicant to this program must submit an “expression of interest.” This application is then processed and assessed at the provincial level based on two broad criteria: 1) the immigration needs of the province and how the applicant’s skills and qualifications fit with this; 2) whether an applicant really plans to live in the province to which they are applying (Government of Canada, 2014c).¹⁰ If accepted, the applicant must then apply for a permanent residence visa through CIC as a nominee of the province of Alberta. Ultimately, no matter whether an application to come to Canada as a skilled worker is submitted to a federal or a provincial program, CIC makes the final decision on all permanent resident applications.

Given that all 30 of the participants in this study came to Canada as economic class migrants, it is not surprising that strong commonalities exist across participants in terms of their level of education, types of work experience, self-identification of pre-migratory class status, and the ways in which they organized daily life and labour prior to immigrating (e.g. there are a high number of previously dual income families that relied heavily on paid help and extended kin for domestic work). More detail regarding similarities and differences among participants will be provided in later chapters. However, at this point it is worth noting that each of the participants in this study came to Canada via an extremely competitive immigration system that has been engineered to accept only the “best and the brightest” (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003); this has implications for the “type” of work and family lives participants led prior to immigrating as well as the process of negotiating preferred ways of being in the post-migration context.

⁹ See <http://www.albertacanada.com/opportunity/immigrating/ainp.aspx> for a detailed depiction of the current standards for each stream of AINP.

¹⁰ Little information is given regarding how this is assessed or enforced.

1.3 The Study

This research is a qualitative interview-based study with thirty skilled immigrants who shared their experiences regarding work and family life in two countries—both pre-and post-migration. As will be more thoroughly explained in Chapter 3, interviews were semi-structured, with each participant receiving a set of “interview prompts” via email prior to their interview in an attempt to familiarize them with the types of questions that would be asked when we met. This was a decision that was made prior to the start of interviewing in large part because I anticipated that English would not be the primary language for the majority of participants and I wanted to do what I could to facilitate their familiarity (and perhaps level of comfort) with potential interview topics.

Decisions about who to include in the research were finalized after the completion of the first four interviews. In the initial stages of this research project, I had thought that I would include immigrants who had been in Canada for a wide range of time periods (e.g. 1-5, 5-10 and 10-20 years). However, after completing and transcribing the first few interviews—which all happened to be with immigrants who had recently landed in Calgary—I began to see the richness in their accounts of re-establishing family life in the context of settling. I decided at this early point in the research process to limit my sample to include participants who had been in Canada for six years or less because this allowed me to focus on the early years of settlement and to maximize the range of experiences and stories pertaining to this period. The only other inclusion criteria were that participants had to have come to Canada as independent migrants via either the federal or provincial skilled worker program, and that they had at least one dependent child living with them in Canada at the time of interviewing.

My approach to the data is centred on highlighting the unique experiences of male and female immigrants both pre-and post-migration as well as the joys, struggles and changes participants experienced in their family lives after arriving in Canada. In addition, I considered the data with a keen interest toward unearthing how social positionings and practices related to gender, race and class were connected to the ways that participants organized their family lives both pre-and post-migration, and the implications this had for things like their standard of living, interpersonal relationships, parenting practices, and value orientations. In other words, throughout the interviews, I attempted to draw out participants' understandings of how different aspects of gender, race and class were operating in their lives and the lives of their family members, and in the analysis phase of the research, I explored connections in their talk between aspects of social positioning and orientation to identity and daily practice.

Immigrant family life in the context of drastic change—and the various ways in which skilled immigrants are adapting to and negotiating these changes—is an important focus for contemporary research. While issues pertaining to professional reaccreditation and the labour market struggles of new immigrants have been well documented (e.g. Shan 2014, 2009; Takouda, Robichaud & Haq, 2013; 2009; Somerville & Walsworth, 2010; Grant & Nadin, 2007; McCoy & Masuch, 2007), researchers have highlighted a gap in the literature regarding the family dynamics of these individuals (Creese, Dyck, & McLaren; 2008; Suarez-Orozco & Carhill, 2008). A partial explanation for this gap is that much of the existing literature on immigration focuses on the individual as the unit of analysis (as opposed to the family unit) (VanderPlaat, 2007).

This is not surprising given that dominant immigration discourse, in conjunction with our national policies of immigration, has long idealized the notion of the “autonomous” (i.e.,

unattached) migrant by “[defining] family reunification as a problem for several reasons including assumptions that ‘dependent’ family members lack skills and are unproductive” (Creese, Dyck & McLaren, 2008: 270). However, select scholars in the field of family and immigration are working to demystify the notion of the “flexible” immigrant by demonstrating the centrality of families to the successful economic and social integration of skilled immigrants into Canadian society (e.g. Creese, Dyck & McLaren 2008, 2009).

My dissertation research builds on the efforts of this body of scholarly work by describing the multiple dimensions of participant households, particularly in regard to how they develop and evolve during the settlement process. Moreover, it works to unpack the efforts immigrant family members make (both locally and trans-locally) to procure a certain quality of life for themselves and their families. As such, three broad and overlapping areas of interest are explored: 1) How skilled immigrants and their families are negotiating Canadian cultural norms and personal understandings and practices of gender, work, and parenting throughout the settlement process; 2) The roles played by the settlement sector, social services and the educational system in shaping the ways immigrant parents care for their families; 3) How “class travels” (Barber-Gardiner & Lem, 2012) and what this means for family life (i.e., how do skilled immigrants respond when they are thrust into an entirely different economic and professional context?).

1.4 The Argument

Based on the experiences of the participants introduced in the chapters to follow, the broad argument I will make in this dissertation is that immigration has multifaceted implications for the social organization of skilled immigrants’ work and family lives during settlement, and that the ways in which these implications materialize in lives of new immigrants has much to do

with how (and with what level of support) they negotiate the changed conditions of family life in this country. In this way, I will demonstrate that what immigration means for the reconstitution of immigrant family life and post-migration experience varies quite significantly both within families and between households – a level of variability that often persists regardless of similar levels of education and previous work experiences.

The constellation of factors that contribute to the social organization of immigrant family life and experience during the settlement process—which includes employment but also additional factors such as parental gender ideologies, children’s schooling, strategies and coping mechanisms, cultural values, and available support networks—creates the major themes introduced in the chapters to come. The overall goal of this dissertation is to explore and link these emerging themes in meaningful ways, such that the chapters come together to construct an accessible narrative of immigrant family life.

More specifically, this narrative will provide the reader with an introduction to the ways in which family members are negotiating (and renegotiating) competing demands and changed conditions in their daily lives during settlement. It will also explore the choices and trade-offs parents make to establish a certain quality of life for their families in the context of new social, cultural, and financial milieux. Finally, this dissertation describes the versatility and extreme flexibility that many immigrant families display as they reorient to their new social and cultural surroundings. In so doing, I argue the importance of providing accessible cultural and professional frameworks for immigrants who are working to reconceptualise their preferred versions of parenting, family practices, and values in ways that fit with their shifting circumstances.

1.5 Chapter Content

The chapters that follow introduce the reader to the work, efforts and experiences of the participants and their families and the ways these come together to contribute to the social organization of immigrant family life during settlement. They also examine the ways in which the changed conditions of family life participants encounter in Canada have affected preferred versions of parenting, family practices, and values. Chapter 2 begins this work by familiarizing the reader with the social and political context that gives rise to the current immigration system in Canada. It then shifts to consider topics related to immigrants raising families in this context, and links this to existing literature on work and parenting in the Canadian context. This chapter then concludes with an overview of current issues related to the dissertation topic, particularly in regard to what has not yet been studied and therefore, what this dissertation adds.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the research process. It begins with a broad explanation of the theoretical and analytical approach I have taken, and then shifts to offer a description of recruitment strategies and participant characteristics. This is followed by a section on the particularities of the interview process and a summary of how I engaged with the data. Following Chapter 3 are four data chapters which consider different but related themes that come together to construct a fairly chronologically oriented narrative of the social organization of participants' work and family lives, and key contextual factors.

Chapter 4 explores the family life and work situations participants experienced in their country of origin prior to immigrating. The sections of this chapter revolve around participants' decisions to apply for immigration, with four major themes regarding immigration decisions being explored via the detailed description of a participant who best represents each theme. This chapter is important to the overall dissertation because it establishes the context within which

participants led their lives prior to immigrating, and provides details regarding the organization of their daily lives at that time (e.g. the ways they divided work and family responsibilities, the parenting strategies that were important to them, and the relative level of affluence they enjoyed). In other words, this chapter offers the reader a story of the contextual nature of participants' work and family lives prior to arriving in Canada.

Chapter 5 shifts to investigate the period that occurs for immigrant families directly after immigrating. In so doing, it comprehensively explores the financial and emotional costs of early settlement, as well as the strategies participants employed in an effort to cope with their new socio-economic position. Specifically, it considers issues related to familial support networks, financial trade-offs, the negotiation and reconstitution of familial expectations, and understandings and interpretations of the category of "skilled worker".

Chapter 6 describes the complex process of familial reorganization that unfolded for participant families during settlement. In this chapter, participants' experiences of familial gender relations, parenting practices, and general family dynamics are the main research focus. The chapter is largely divided into two sections which are linked to how participants responded to the stresses and strains of settlement. For example, the first major section of this chapter considers the accounts of participants who have mostly struggled with re-establishing family life in Calgary, while the second section explores the experiences of participants for whom immigration has had predominantly positive family outcomes. The various experiences of participants are then compared and contrasted, and the tools that eased the burdens of settlement for some are explored.

Chapter 7 delves deeper into how participants in this study make decisions about their children's daily lives, and considers the role such decisions play in the post-migration

integration of children and teenagers. To achieve this aim, the chapter begins with an exploration of parents' accounts of the differences between children's pre-and post-migration experiences in education, and then moves to consider various themes related to children's development in the post-migration context, including school choice and integration, health issues and treatment, and the stresses and strains associated with parenting in the context of heightened financial and time constraints.

Finally, the concluding chapter of this dissertation (Chapter 8) begins by highlighting the major findings of each chapter and then shifts to synthesize the overall research contribution that this dissertation has made. This chapter is then brought to a close with a proposal of how others with interests in topics related to family and immigration might activate this dissertation as a meaningful starting place for the generation of future research questions.

Chapter 2: Research Context

2.1 Introduction

International migration is a transnational phenomenon that is reshaping societies, politics and families around the globe. In today's immigration era, most countries experience both emigration and immigration, although one or the other usually predominates (Castles & Miller, 2009). Classical countries of immigration—or those countries with long histories of mass immigration flow and contemporary populations that reflect it—include Canada, USA, Australia, New Zealand and Argentina. However, in recent decades a number of other countries (including many European states) have also seen an influx of migrants seeking new labour opportunities (Castles & Miller, 2009).

Globalization plays a significant part in the mass movement of people around the world. While international immigration existed long before the rise of globalization, this worldwide phenomenon has seen the speed, scope, complexity and sheer volume of migration expand at an unprecedented rate (Li, 2008). Put simply, globalization denotes a form of international integration that is characterized by the open exchange of national and cultural resources worldwide (Castles & Miller, 2009). As a result of the opening up of economic and political channels, as well as the development of new transport and communication strategies, the mobility of people has become much easier and in most cases, widely accepted (Castles & Miller, 2009).

As Li (2008) sees it, it is the deep-seated economic relations of globalization—or what he terms “economic globalization”—that have had the greatest effect on the shifting trends of contemporary international migration. For Li, these include: 1) the growth of digitalized technology and communication (which hold significant meaning for all aspects of the production and distribution of goods worldwide and facilitate the global expansion of corporations); 2) the

rapid growth of the market economy and world trade (which has promoted the expansion of international trading zones); 3) the integration of the world economy (which has facilitated the flow of capital, goods, services, raw materials and people across national boundaries); 4) shifts in the world economy—often termed the “new economy”—which refer to the expansion of economic trends on a global scale and the part that the sharing of information and technology plays in economic growth and wealth accumulation (p. 2-4).

Such economic trends have helped to change the face of international migration largely because they play a part in shifting *why* the movement of people is deemed necessary and important in many countries. For example, where once immigration to Canada was sought as a primary measure to expand the population and develop mainly rural societies (e.g. “unskilled” labourers destined for farm work), today the immigration system in this country is shaped by an increasing demand for highly-trained human capital to help advance economic growth on a global scale (which has greatly contributed to urban rather than primarily rural development) (Reitz, 2004). A number of other countries have followed a similar trajectory, such that immigration systems around the world are being reorganized as a tool for better equipping nations to compete globally at both the economic and intellectual levels. This is especially true amongst the most advanced developed countries with long histories of immigration (such as Canada, the USA and Australia), whose contemporary immigration systems now recruit (and compete for) highly-skilled workers in the world labour pool (Li, 2008).

The present study offers a research focus on the social organization of immigrant family life in Calgary, Alberta, in the context of our now globalized era in which the increasing movement of commodities and capital around the world has given rise to heightened levels of cultural interchange. Specifically, this dissertation begins from the standpoint of immigrant

family members in their pre-migration lives, and then shifts to explore the structural and ideological forces that have a hand in coordinating their immigration and post-migration experiences. Topics of interest include an exploration of the strategies that skilled immigrants draw on to (re)constitute work and family life, their navigation of personal and cultural norms, and the negotiation of preferred parenting practices and children's education in two countries.

In an effort to provide both context and purpose for this research, the following chapter offers important background knowledge on the structure of the contemporary immigration system in Canada, as well as the social, economic and political climate in which this system currently plays out. It then shifts to consider what the immigration, family and parenting literatures have told us about the ways in which both native-born and immigrant parents are going about working and raising families in the outlined context. Finally, it concludes with a snapshot of what has not yet been studied in the literature, and presents a description of what this dissertation will add.

2.2 Contemporary Immigration to Canada

Canada is now widely referred to as a “nation of immigrants,” and has instituted what is claimed to be a “non-discriminatory” immigration policy that admits immigrants in three main categories – economic/independent (including skilled workers, entrepreneurs and investors), family reunification, and refugees (Reitz, 2004).¹¹ Compared to the United States—a nation with a similar three-tier immigration system—Canadian policy makers have constructed immigration as playing a key role in national development strategy. As such, relative to the existing

¹¹ For a detailed outline of each category of immigration see: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/research-stats/facts2012.pdf>

population, the flow of immigrants into Canada is substantially larger than that of the US,¹² and immigration is generally more positively perceived within the population (Reitz, 2004). In fact, it has been argued that the most significant and distinctive feature of Canada's approach to immigration is the large-scale acceptance of mass immigration as a positive opportunity to build both economy and country (Reitz, 2012). This is reflected in Canada's approach to multiculturalism and ethnic diversity which will be discussed in more detail below.

There is a general consensus within the immigration literature that Canada's contemporary immigration policy model has three distinctive features: 1) policies for the selection of skilled immigrants (most notably the use of a "points system"); 2) policies that support the integration of immigrants into the labour market and society in general (e.g. the policy of multiculturalism which has legally established that all Canadians are guaranteed equality before the law and equality of opportunity regardless of their origins (Government of Canada, 2014a); 3) the degree of provincial autonomy in the administration of immigration (Reitz, 2012: 520). While the skill-based selection of new immigrants is the feature in this policy model that garners the most attention on an international stage, each of the three prongs has played a significant role in helping the system grow in both size and reputation (Beach, Green & Reitz, 2003).

The selection of highly-skilled workers via a point system was first introduced in Canada in 1967 – the same time at which official race and national origin restrictions for entry to Canada were removed (Albanese, 2009). Like many institutionally administered protocols, the Canadian points system is constantly being tweaked and reorganized to reflect shifting needs and patterns. For example, in recent years, one main change has been a shift towards recruiting individuals in

¹² For most of the last two decades, the intake of new immigrants to Canada has been 200-250, 000 annually which represents approximately 0.8 percent of the population. Per capita, this is nearly twice the size of American immigration (Reitz, 2012).

targeted occupations (e.g. those occupations deemed “in demand”). This is not the first time the points system has been altered to reflect the opening up of immigration for those with specific skill sets. In fact, policy makers in this country have a history of struggling with whether or not the system should seek individuals with specific skills (knowing that demand and gaps in the labour market can change rapidly), or, continue to seek those with high levels of education in general (but accept that immigrants may struggle to re-establish professional careers in areas where demand is low) (Reitz, 2012).

While highly regarded by countries seeking to increase their immigration flow and economic benefit (e.g. Canadian immigration policies have influenced the development of Australian policies and vice versa), the Canadian points system has come up against serious criticism in some areas of contemporary research. For instance, research that links family and immigration has shown that the Canadian model of immigration (and the points system in particular) increases the tendency to problematize family members who accompany the economic immigrant, as well as those who are later sponsored in the family reunification program (Creese, Dyck, & McLaren, 2008).

This criticism is offered in the literature on the premise that policies with a focus on recruiting only the highest level economic immigrants tend also to give rise to stereotypes that construct family members as “unchosen” or “self selected” (Li, 2004, 2003). Such stereotypes provide fertile ground for the emergence of a rationale that positions family members who accompany the “chosen” skilled worker applicant as “dependents who contribute very little to the immigration process” (Creese, Dyck & McLaren, 2008: 271).¹³ In addition, accompanying

¹³ Similarly, Li (2004) suggests that how new immigrants are received in Canada largely depends on the “representational frame with which those who see themselves as old-timers evaluate newcomers at the border” (p. 24). Such frames are informed by widely held understandings of “desirable” and “undesirable” immigrants

family members may be viewed as limiting the ability of economic immigrants to “hit the ground running and adapt flexibly to the labour market” (Li, 2003 in Creese, Dyck, & McLaren; 2008: 270), since the time and energy it takes to see one’s family settled may ultimately detract from labour market competition.

Select scholars have begun to connect this problematization of immigrant families to the utilitarian discourse of “human capital” that they suggest underpins contemporary immigration policy and social attitudes toward immigration throughout North America (Abu-Laban, 1998; Li, 2003; Creese, Dyck, & McLaren, 2008; Creese 2010). This discourse, which stresses the economic self-sufficiency of new immigrants based on education credentials and perceived possibilities for labour market participation, offers legitimacy to the idea that certain “types” of immigrants are a “social/welfare/economic cost to Canadians and Canadian society” (Li, 2003: 43). Moreover, when immigration policy is focused on recruiting only “the best and the brightest” and continually raising the standards for admission, the needs of family reunification and refugee resettlement are often pushed aside or constructed as a social and economic burden (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003).

This approach to immigration is one that was exacerbated by the recent global financial crisis (2007-2009) which created multiple economic challenges that affected individuals around the world (Rugaber & Kravitz 2012; Grusky, Western & Wimer, 2011). As in many countries, the latest recession held serious consequences for the Canadian labour market including a higher rate of insecure employment (and unemployment), an increasing fear of job loss, and uncertainty around retirement funds (McDaniel et al, 2013). Moreover, existing research has shown that in times of economic turmoil, the positive public perception of immigrants and immigration in

shaped by ideas, concepts, and norms which members of the resident population develop in their understanding of “others.”

Canada can be weakened as individuals search for ways to effectively navigate a harsh economic climate and the fear of job loss/lack of “good” jobs increases (Gilkinson & Sauve, 2012).

Li (2004) suggests that while the outcome of immigration is very much contingent upon the self-effort of immigrants in overcoming the geographical, social, and economic hardships of boundary crossing, “it also depends on how much the resident population is prepared to open the door to welcome the outsiders at the gate” (2004: 24). Put differently, it can be argued that the “warmth of welcome” immigrants receive in a nation depends on the institutional features of the receiving society, which include factors such educational opportunities, welfare accessibility, and labour market arrangements (Li, 2004; Reitz, 1998).

To address growing competition and rapid change in the economy, employers worldwide have sought greater flexibility by adapting their workforces. On the positive side, this shift has resulted in some employers creating more highly-skilled jobs and enhancing employees’ “functional flexibility” (e.g. their ability to perform a variety of jobs) (Smith, 1997 in Kalleberg, 2011). However, in North America, employers have also shifted toward altering the size of their workforce through temporary and contract employment and outsourcing (Arthurs, 2006), which has generally decreased employment stability for workers (Hollister, 2011).

The notion of “precarious work” describes the eroding quality of employment resulting from current economic, social, and political shifts, denoting employment that is uncertain, unpredictable and risky (Kalleberg, 2011). For instance, this type of work includes jobs with low earnings, job insecurity, atypical employment contracts, limited or no employment benefits, and poor or risky working conditions (Kalleberg, 2011; Arthurs 2006; Cranford et al., 2003). Moreover, immigrants and visible minorities remain concentrated in the most precarious jobs (Connell, 2010; Omidvar & Richmond, 2003).

However, while public opinion concerning immigration may fluctuate during times of economic turmoil, Canada's social policies aimed at supporting the integration of immigrants into economic and social life have remained intact. For example, this country's official policy of multiculturalism was first introduced in 1971, added to the constitution in 1982, and further expanded in 1988.¹⁴ What's more, Canada is known worldwide for supporting the integration of new immigrants through language training, fast-track citizenship, and a collection of human rights and equality guarantees (Reitz, 2012, 2004).

Such guarantees of equality for new immigrants are essential to the distance Canadian policy makers have set out to construct between this nation and pro-assimilation countries (e.g. France) that openly support the ideal of sustaining a certain level of ethnic homogeneity within the population—a policy which denotes the importance of citizens having common language, culture, traditions, and history as a basis for forming the nation-state (Castles & Miller, 2009). Canada has long been a state that readily grants citizenship to immigrants without requiring common ethnicity and cultural assimilation. As such, it has been argued that Canada is much better equipped to deal with issues of ethnic diversity than other countries (see Bloemraad, 2006; Kymlicka; 1995).

However, while it is commonly accepted that Canada has one of the world's most inclusive policies of citizenship acquisition, researchers have also argued that the extent to which Canadian multicultural policies actually affect the integration of immigrants is not well understood (Bissoondath, 2002). In addition, existing research has shown that contradictions exist between Canada's official policies and the reality of social exclusion that many of Canada's newcomers experience on multiple levels (Creese, 2011; Omidvar & Richmond,

¹⁴ See <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-18.7/page-1.html> for a complete overview of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act.

2003). For example, the persistence of high unemployment and underemployment rates for new immigrants has been well documented (Lo et al, 2000), and there continues to be an overrepresentation of racialized groups in lower paying jobs (Campaign, 2007 in Albanese, 2009: 144).What's more, studies have shown that on average, immigrants receive a lower amount in government transfer payments than native-born residents, including less employment insurance, social assistance, tax credits, and child benefits, which has been linked to immigrants' elevated association with unstable and insecure paid-employment (Albanese, 2009; Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2007).

Underlying such trends is the tension in Canada between two competing value systems: “the reality of pervasive racism and a commitment to the ideology of democratic liberalism” (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003: 12). Researchers in the area of race and ethnicity have argued that what emerges as a result of such tensions is the phenomenon of “democratic” or “implicit” racism—a particular form of racist exclusion of immigrants of colour that dismisses the reality of racism and immigrant experience while fundamentally maintaining Canada as a tolerant society (Henry & Tator, 2009). In addition, it is argued that democratic racism is often realized through the process of “racialization,” or the process by which we assign meaning to phenotypic features or other social signifiers of race to categorize a person in a specific racial category (e.g. “othering” based on perceived differences) (Kwan-Lafond, 2012).

Existing research has shown that in the case of skilled immigrants to Canada, the widely accepted employer expectation that “work-ready” immigrants will have previously acquired Canadian work experience (and the underlying understanding that much other experience and training is therefore inferior) is a prominent example of how democratic racism plays out in contemporary institutions (Bhuyan, Sakamoto & Ku, 2014). Although not all immigrants

experience the effects of racialization in the same way or to the same degree, all immigrants in Canada live in relation to the official discourse of multiculturalism and the patterns of racialization that are constructed by others as counter discourses to this official policy. And it is within this discursive space that newcomers negotiate and experience Canadian economic and social life.

Quite notable, however, is the fact that because contemporary immigration protocols (e.g. point system of entry) aim to bring immigrants with high levels of skill and qualification to Canada, it is largely assumed at a policy level that their transition into economic life (and the levelling of racial incongruities) will occur (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003). Yet, there has been an increasing lack of settlement success—including a substantial decline in average levels of overall well-being—for new immigrants in this country, a trend that is highest for non-European immigrants and visible minorities (Liu & Kerr, 2003). As such, contemporary researchers have argued that increasing levels of difficulty for new immigrants are less explainable by presumed inherent properties of immigrants (e.g. not enough education) and more by structural conditions such as systemic racism which can set immigrants on paths toward poverty and struggle (Tyyska, 2007).

The final pillar of Canada's immigration policy model, the degree of provincial autonomy in the administration of immigration, has arisen out of the effort to make immigration serve local needs. For over a decade, most of the Canadian provinces have negotiated Provincial Nominee Programs (PNPs) (outlined in Chapter 1) with the federal government, with the goal of boosting the economy and industrial growth in ways that address the specific requirements of each province (Reitz, 2012). The provinces also share the costs of settlement programs with the federal government. However, largely because they are decentralized, settlement programs are

rarely extensively evaluated and services offered by different community organizations can overlap in arguably ineffective ways (Reitz, 2012).

In terms of immigration to the provinces, Alberta is an interesting case because its connection to the production of fossil fuel energy since the 1940s has created a unique industrial and economic context in this province. For instance, revenue from oil and natural gas extraction has caused a series of economic booms in Alberta which have greatly affected the involvement of immigrants in the labour market. In times of economic boom, jobs are plentiful and well paying. However, in times of economic recession, such as that of 2008-09, immigrants are more vulnerable to job loss and demotion than their Canadian born counterparts in part due to discrimination (Gilmore, 2008; Ambert, 2006) and possibly because in many cases they are more recent hires.

In a post-recession Alberta, competition in the labour market remains high. However, Alberta continues to have the highest labour force participation rate among the provinces¹⁵, and this is a reality that continues to draw many skilled immigrants to this province. For instance, in 2012, approximately twenty-two thousand economic class immigrants immigrated to Alberta (Citizenship and Immigration, 2012). Overall, about 20% of the province's working age population is immigrants (bearing in mind that some of those counted have resided in Canada for many years), with the majority of these people residing in either Calgary or Edmonton (Citizenship and Immigration, 2012).

Yet, a large proportion of the high-wage work in Alberta is currently clustered in the more northerly located oil sands industry, a geographic location that sees far fewer immigrants of any class than bigger centres such as Calgary, Edmonton and Red Deer. The unsettling and dangerous nature of work in the oil sands, combined with the perceived lack of cultural and

¹⁵ <http://albertacanada.com/business/overview/employment.aspx>

ethnic diversity in this part of the province, has been cited as a potential deterrent for new immigrants (Penty, 2012). However, existing research has also shown that a number of economic class immigrants land in Calgary or Edmonton and then migrate to centres such as Fort McMurray to escape “survival jobs” (Major & Winters, 2013)—e.g. the jobs highly educated immigrants in Canada take when they can’t find work in their professional occupations, often including low-paying jobs in the service, retail, manufacturing or construction sectors. Taken together, skilled immigrants who choose to land in Alberta because of the higher rate of employment associated with the oil industry, may arrive in Calgary with the hope of acquiring a job relatively quickly, only to find that the more corporate concentration of oil work that happens in this city is less conducive to the hiring of newcomers than they originally anticipated.

2.3 Neoliberal Political Climate and Immigrant Integration

It is worthy of note that the reconstitution of immigrants’ work and family lives post-migration plays out in the context of a neoliberal political climate that operates under the forces of market logic (Brown 2006; 2003). Broadly put, neoliberalism denotes a transnational political, economic and cultural rationality that aims to remake the nexus of market, state and citizenship (Wacquant, 2010). For example, in both Canada and the United States, the economic ideology of neoliberalism emphasizes free markets, deregulation, privatization, and individualism, and supports a cultural logic that expects individuals to be both self-reliant and self-disciplining (Lavrence & Lozanski, 2014). Indeed, it is the “responsibilized” self that is at the core of contemporary neoliberal societies (Lavrence & Lozanski, 2014).

What’s more, in countries such as Canada with a well established history of welfare state policy provisions, it is the acceptance of the tenets of neoliberalism—and the willingness of the general population to absorb the extra work and financial costs associated with this—that makes

the large-scale implementation of neoliberal policies possible (Luxton, 2010). While Canada was not a major international player in the development of neoliberal policy like the United States and Great Britain, the entrance of the Harper government in 2006 saw a refocusing of national policy towards deregulation and the privatization of services (Bezanson, 2010). Since this time, social spending in Canada has largely been pulled back, regionalized and privatized – a reality that fits with the immigration policy agenda to maximize the representation of economic immigrants to Canada while simultaneously limiting the numbers of family class and other noneconomic categories, since the belief is that the flow of immigrants should meet the needs of the Canadian economy (Reitz, 2004).

Important here is the notion that for all people living in Canada, the ways in which neoliberal practices are “lived” limit people’s options (Bezanson, 2010: 92). For example, with the push towards the privatization of responsibility comes the privatization of work, the “support” of individual rights (such as the right to participate in the free market), and the relative exclusion of collective rights (Armstrong, 2010). Such reforms have worked to intensify class divisions and facilitate labour exploitation through the production of a “low wage racialized labour force” (Connell, 2010: 87). Immigrant and ethnic minority families are thus especially vulnerable, raising questions at both policy and community levels regarding the success of the contemporary immigration program.

The aforementioned trend regarding the downward mobility of immigrant and ethnic minority workers in the Canadian labour market has been considered in the immigration literature in the context of larger institutional changes in Canada (e.g. Hawthorne, 2008), such as Canada’s approach to postsecondary education (Reitz, 2004). For instance, following from Borjas (1990), Reitz (2004) suggests that the Canadian postsecondary education system has

experienced rapid expansion to the point that a university education is now largely expected in most sectors of the labour market. As such, he argues that an increasingly aggressive atmosphere for immigrants in search of paid employment has materialized, since immigrant education is only meaningful in relation to native-born competition (p. 114). Thus, while immigrant educational levels continue to exceed those of Canadian-born citizens, the gap is now much smaller, and immigrant families are experiencing increased levels of downward mobility as a result of deskilling in the post-migration context (Reitz, 1998; Reitz, 2004).

A lack of available resources caused by unstable/irregular employment and economic strain—a reality which many new immigrants face during the settlement process regardless of the receiving country’s economic climate—may limit the extent to which mothers and fathers are able to implement the parenting practices they deem best for their families (Lareau, 2003). Furthermore, strained economic and social resources (e.g. fragile social ties) can have implications for multiple dimensions of post-migration family life including parenting strategies (Seongeun et al., 2006; Grahame, 2003; Glenn, 1996), and gender relations (Creese et al., 2009; Boyd & Grieco, 2003; Ataca & Berry, 2002). As such, parents who do not have the time, economic resources or social supports required to practice their preferred versions of parenting—or the versions of parenting that “made sense” in their pre-migration lives—are faced with the task of renegotiating the organization of family life in ways that “fit” with changed socioeconomic and cultural conditions.

2.4 Immigration and the Reconstitution of Family Life

The focus of this dissertation is on the topic of immigrants raising families in the social, economic, political and policy context I have just described. Like all native-born families, immigrant families are shaped by government policies, dominant discourses and broader social

and economic processes. Thus, this dissertation explores the ways in which immigrant families' views on the organization of family life—including understandings and practices of parenting and gender relations within the family—have been constructed/deconstructed/reconstructed in response to their new physical location. Of particular interest to this research are the ways in which immigrant families are altering predetermined patterns of doing day-to-day life since coming to Canada, and the circumstances and reasoning behind their “choices” to do so.

In western culture, dominant understandings regarding the institution of the family have long been linked to biological reproduction. For instance, the heterosexual nuclear-family—consisting of a man, woman, and their children—is still widely understood as the chief family model throughout North America.¹⁶ The dominance of such understandings is visible both in their connection to powerful social norms (e.g. conventional divisions of work and responsibility within families), and social policies regarding family rights, benefits, and obligations (e.g. federal child care benefits that are addressed solely to mothers) (Luxton & Fox, 2009). Drawing on the work of other feminist thinkers (e.g. Cheal, 1991; Mandell & Duffy, 1988; Eichler, 1983; Oakley, 1974),¹⁷ Luxton & Fox (2009) contend that a rethinking of formal definitions of the family is urgently needed. According to these authors and many others, it is imperative on multiple levels that we begin to see family and kinship as socially constructed relations rather than products of biology, since how we conceptualize family has deep-seated implications for the legislation, policies, and practices that govern our lives.

¹⁶ Meanings attached to the concept of nuclear family differ across cultures. For instance, in the west, this term is used to denote the autonomy and self-reliance of parents and their children (as well as the importance of the parent-child bond), whereas, in a country such as China, this term is regularly associated with extended kinship relations and the two-way commitment of respect amongst family members (e.g. filial piety) (Da, 2003).

¹⁷ The work of these authors represents only a small portion of the vast array of feminist scholarly work that has contributed to an extensive literature on gender “roles”—within families and elsewhere—as socially constructed.

As a cultural process, immigration unsettles and changes family relations (Creese, Dyck & McLaren, 1999). Moreover, the structure of immigrant families is often deeply affected by prevailing assumptions regarding the nuclear family unit in Canada, and the ways in which this concept is invoked by policy makers (Luxton & Fox, 2009). Indeed, the circumstances and organization of our society, including the policies and procedures that govern the institution of immigration, hold significant consequences for who is/is not permitted to enter this country together as a “family.” Consequently, immigrant parents and their children can lose vital support networks (e.g. extended kin), for indefinite periods of time – a reality that has been shown to have significant consequences for the reconstitution of family life in this country (Creese et al., 2008; Damaris et al., 1998).¹⁸

For instance, the elimination of paid domestic assistance and/or caregiving work by extended kin can cause heightened tensions around work-family role conflicts in immigrant families (Salaf & Greve, 2011). As a result, alterations in the organization of post-migration family life are often required on multiple levels (see below) (Albanese, 2009). Yet, prevailing ideas about family in Canada have also been affected by the presence of immigrants who arrive with new ways of thinking about families (e.g. regarding marriage partners, the roles and responsibilities of grandparents). In this way, immigrants have helped to broaden entrenched understandings about family relations and structure in Canada.

Following from Lawson (1998), Creese, Dyck and McLaren (2009) suggest that we need to shift our thinking from seeing immigrant families as static or unidirectional entities, to those that are fluid and constantly being negotiated. This is largely because immigrant families consist

¹⁸ Sponsoring additional family members to join one’s conjugal family in Canada has become increasingly difficult in recent years. As policy makers shift their focus toward increasing the number of “economic” immigrants in this country, other categories of immigration such as the “family class” are clawed back (Creese, Dyck and McLaren, 2008; Omidvar & Richmond, 2003).

of a set of complex social relations that are constituted and reconstituted in the midst of shifting circumstances brought about by their new spatiotemporal and cultural location. What's more, in today's era of globalization, immigrant family relations regularly play out in a transnational context, where family networks are transformed by the multi-local organization of families that includes periods of separation and reunification (Bernhard, Goldring & Landolt, 2005). For example, an increasing number of families are making the strategic decision to separate in the hopes of advancing overall welfare and educational opportunities abroad, while also benefitting from superior economic livelihood prospects in their country of origin (Kobayashi & Preston, 2007). As a result, policy researchers have argued that the boundaries of citizenship need to be revisited, in part to facilitate the parenting goals of those families with members living and working in different transnational social fields (Orellana et al., 2001).

As noted above, existing research on immigration and family life has demonstrated that immigration can disrupt various dimensions of family dynamics (Albanese, 2009), including gender relations, intergenerational relations, family structure, and socioeconomic status (Tyyska, 2007). In terms of gender relations, the elimination of family support networks is just one of the major factors that contribute to shifts or reversals in gender dynamics post-migration. Alterations in paid employment and socioeconomic status are also important contributing factors. For example, researchers have shown that post-migration changes to conventional caregiving and breadwinning roles brought about by shifts in couples' labour market involvement have quite varied outcomes for both individual family members and levels of family well-being (Ali & Kilbride, 2004; Gamburd, 2003; Grahame, 2003).

Taken further, while studies have demonstrated that more egalitarian family arrangements may be established when immigrant women acquire paid work more quickly upon

arrival than their male partners (Grewal, Bottroff & Hilton, 2005; Ali & Kilbride, 2004; Creese et al., 1999) this is not always the case. Important research has demonstrated that the positive effects of immigrant women's paid employment post-migration are often mediated by ideological and emotional factors (e.g. their husband's feelings, beliefs, and willingness to change previous patterns and/or ways of thinking) (Seongeun et al., 2006; Moon, 2003). Furthermore, when immigrant women are able to acquire high level employment post-migration, it can lead to increased levels of conflict with their spouse, especially when husbands do not/cannot keep up career-wise (Moon, 2003).

In addition, existing research has demonstrated the ways in which institutional processes—embedded in organizations such as government, law, education, and professional systems (e.g. a decentralized accreditation system, the non-recognition of foreign credentials and work experience by employers and regulatory professional bodies)—can restrict immigrant women's opportunities for employment and augment their level of domestic and childcare work in Canada (Man, 2009). Furthermore, Man (2009) emphasizes the interconnected nature of institutional and organizational processes in society and the effects this can have for immigrant women in Canada. For example, in a country where domestic and childcare work is constructed as a private burden to be negotiated within the family, post-migration changes in social organization such as the high cost of living, sprawling cities with poor transportation systems and daycares without extended hours, can significantly increase the daily demands immigrant families must negotiate – especially when support networks are lacking.

Furthermore, because women are commonly the spousal partner whose career is placed second when dual earner couples migrate (Salaf & Greve, 2011; Creese, Dyck, & McLaren, 2009; Seongeun et al., 2006), their careers often suffer to a greater extent than their

husbands/partners. What's more, unless language is a significant issue, women are commonly tasked with the extra work of bridging societal and family systems post-migration (Salaf & Greve, 2011). Unlike many of the source countries of Canada's immigrant population (e.g. Philippines, India, China), child rearing in Canada is not regularly constructed as a responsibility in need of extensive institutional or intergenerational support. Thus, female immigrants frequently go from situations in which they held lucrative professional positions and had extensive support networks that included both paid and familial assistance, to largely isolated ways of life in which levels of domestic burden are dramatically increased (Albanese, 2009).

Consequently, a Statistics Canada report on demographic trends in Canada showed that fertility rates among immigrant women decline soon after their arrival to this country—with Koreans, Chinese, and Japanese women having lower fertility rates than other visible minority groups (Statistics Canada, 2002 in Albanese, 2009). In line with this, Salaf and Greve (2011) found that when Chinese participants from previously dual-earner couples had a second child after living in Canada, the majority of the women did not seek to re-establish their professional careers. The authors conclude that in these families, normalized gender rules (e.g. caregiver mother/breadwinner father) became more entrenched when family support was absent and increased domestic work was required.

It has also been demonstrated in the immigration literature that men who experience a loss of privilege post-migration may seek reaffirmation of masculine identities through idealized notions of husbands and fathers (Creese, 2012; Gamburd, 2003). Furthermore, such conceptions of masculinity can be connected to traditional family systems of an immigrant's home country (Creese, 2012; Guruge et al., 2011). As such, immigrant men may cling to familiar understandings (e.g. the unquestioned authority of men within the household) when their

masculinity is undermined via processes such as deskilling and a loss of social standing in the wider post-migration society (Creese, 2012).

However, other research has shown that men with an interest in increasing their level of involvement with their children in the post-migration context may be impeded to a certain extent by the changed conditions of work and family life. For example, in their study of twenty Sudanese fathers residing in Calgary, Alberta, Este and Tachble (2009) demonstrate that while all of their study participants were committed to being actively involved in the lives of their children, a number also described their frustration with the lack of time they had available to spend with their families – a reality that was largely determined by challenges associated with underemployment and unemployment, and the requirement that some had to work multiple jobs to make ends meet (p. 465). Yet, despite the difficult conditions new immigrants often face in obtaining high level employment in the Canadian labour market, Roer-Stier et al., (2005) argue that immigration is not necessarily a “risk factor” for fatherhood. Indeed, through their research on immigrant fathers from six cultures, these authors found that participants were able to stay positively engaged and involved with their children even as they struggled with issues around adaptation, language acquisition and employment (p. 325).

How men cope with the changed conditions of work and family life post-migration has been shown to impact the experiences of their female partners in quite significant ways. For instance, Moon (2003) showed that when men from a traditionally patriarchal society struggled to meet the demands of hegemonic masculinity in the post-migration context, female partners were more likely to “retreat” into the family unit than they were to assert power as a result of a new-found position of economic independence (i.e., by relinquishing power and/or paycheques to male partners rather than claiming the position of “family head”). However, Moon also

explained that the women in her study responded in this way not because they were “weak” or “helpless,” but rather because in times of struggle, they too were more likely to revert to traditional patterns of “doing gender”¹⁹ (West & Zimmerman, 1987) by accepting it as a woman’s job to keep the family unit strong and together.

Yet, despite Moon’s finding, there is also reason to believe that gender can be “undone” (Deutsch, 2007), not only in theory but in practice, and this may be especially true during times of change and uncertainty. For instance, times of significant change provide fertile ground for studying gender instability or “undoing,” because they are precisely the kinds of occasions that have the potential to disrupt the largely invisible doings of gender.²⁰ During “settled times” gender relations are well established and naturalized (Legerski & Cornwall, 2010; Swidler, 2001, 1986), but during times of uncertainty, gender dynamics are not only more visible but are often open to explicit negotiation (Legerski & Cornwall, 2010; Arendell, 1997; Connell, 1995).

As such, situations arise that interfere with regular activities and interactions, and it is precisely in these moments—when customary social relations are disrupted (such as in the transitional post-migration period)—that the relational performance of gender may require extra effort. All of this may make it difficult, impossible, or even undesirable for individuals to draw on their customary practices for accomplishing gender. What’s more, for new immigrants, predetermined strategies for navigating gender relations within the family may become ineffective or impossible in their new social and economic location. Thus, the fundamental changes that skilled immigrants and their families experience post-migration can provide important opportunities for change in the transformation of familial gender relations (Anisef et

¹⁹ Coined by West and Zimmerman (1987), the concept of “doing” gender refers to the theoretical understanding that gender is often—but not always— “taken for granted” and “routine” in our day-to-day interactions.

²⁰ Precisely because it is habitual, much of the work of “doing gender” is taken for granted and hence is imperceptible (Pullen and Knights 2007; Martin, 2001), yet it is actively policed.

al., 2001; Jain & Belsky, 1997). This dissertation offers a research focus on such opportunities by exploring the interplay between the everyday production of gender in immigrant family life, and the post-migration social structure, which currently includes re-entry into the labour market at a time of heightened economic uncertainty.

2.5 Parenting and Work in the Canadian Context

There is a general consensus in the parenting literature that work in the “new” economy (outlined above) transforms relationships in families (Pupo & Thomas, 2010). Recent studies also demonstrate that shifts in the economy and the labour market influence parenting. For example, drawing on the work of Baxter and Montgomery (1996), Johnston and Swanson (2006) show that contemporary mothers commonly “reframe” understandings of “good” mothering to fit with shifting realities in their own lives (e.g. financial and time constraints). Thus, while “good” mothering in North America has a history of being equated with the ideology of “intensive mothering”—a gendered model of parenting in which mothering is constructed as a child-centered process that is expensive, emotionally, financially, and labor intensive (Hays, 1996)—today, this ideology is regularly altered by mothers to fit with shifting priorities (e.g. the necessity for two family incomes) (Parsons Leigh et al., 2011; Johnston & Swanson, 2006).

Similarly, in the literature on fathering, Thebaud and Cha (2009) find that fathers’ approach to breadwinning is affected by the rigidity and flexibility of labour markets, and Chesley (2011) and Yoshida (2012) argue that men’s increasing involvement in family life is shaped, in part, by declining economic conditions that make breadwinning difficult. However, sociological research has not yet fully explored the link between these new labour market, economic, and workplace realities and “package deal” fatherhood—a conception of fatherhood that includes marriage, a steady job, and owning a home (Townsend, 2002)—which remains

stubbornly at the ideological core of western understandings of fathering (Ranson, 2010; Beaujot, Haddad et al., 2000).

Taken together, while prevailing ideas about the family in North America are regularly being altered by families to fit with shifting structural circumstances, cultural beliefs about parents have not changed fast enough (Ranson, 2010). For instance, it is argued that the mother is still often considered to be the “main” parent (Nentwich, 2008), or the parent chiefly responsible for taking care of the children and the home. Moreover, “package deal” fatherhood, and by extension breadwinning, also continues to distinguish “good” from “bad” fathers (Yarwood, 2011; Roy, 2004) in many social and interpersonal situations, and for many fathers, is part and parcel of appropriate and desirable masculinity (Ranson, 2010).

Important to this dissertation research is the reality that such idealized conceptions of motherhood and fatherhood are not simply western ideals. For instance, in terms of mothering, Javed (2009) suggests that irrespective of cultural background, dominant conceptions of “good” mothering generally involve women being the main nurturers of their children, whether they are involved in the labour market or not. Moreover, research on transnational mothering has shown that mothers' relationships with their children are often highly dependent on demonstrating emotional intimacy from a distance, whereas transnational fathering remains more solidly tied to provision (Dreby, 2006). Furthermore, it is not uncommon for mothers to feel as though they have to justify their reasons for leaving their children behind in order to maintain their status as a “good” mother (Dreby, 2006; Gamburd, 2003).

While prevailing ideas regarding the specific characteristics of “good” parenting shift according to cultural and social ideals and a country’s specific economic context, it is also true that some characteristics (especially those that grow out of interconnections between class status

and parenting (e.g. the ability to provide one's children with the "best" opportunities) can and do transcend spatiotemporal boundaries. One reason offered in the literature regarding why "universal" norms around families and parenting may be on the rise, suggests that the widespread dispersion of western ideals is intrinsically linked to the effects of globalization and the increased reproduction of ideas via media, telecommunications, and the mass movement of people on a global scale (e.g. see Fernandes, 2000) (Castles & Miller, 2009).

What's more, existing research has shown that after migrating to western countries, many immigrants eventually come to invoke a monolithic image of the "normal" North American family as an interpretive framework for giving meaning to their own family lives (e.g. Grahame, 2003; Pyke, 2000). However, other important scholarly work has indicated that Canadian families are increasingly defying normative conceptions about how women and men should act—both in their relationships and in their daily practices of parenting—and that this may have meaningful effects in the direction of egalitarian change.

For instance, while much existing research on parenting and families has focused on how traditional ideologies of mothering and fathering are persistent, ground level egalitarian change within families is indeed taking place (Ranson, 2010). For example, drawing on Canadian time-use data, Marshall (2006) shows that gender differences are steadily diminishing in Canadian families. Moreover, Marshall projects that "women's increasing hours in paid labour (and thus income), combined with 'normative changes in the direction of equality and sharing' (Beaujot 2006, p. 24) is likely to further reduce gender differences in the division of labour in the future" (p. 16).

The normative changes that Beaujot (2006) and Marshall (2006) are referring to involve contemporary couples' increased tendency to engage family models based on equality and

sharing rather than the division of earning and caring along gender lines. Supporting such normative changes in Canadian households are trends in women's rising income (and share of the family income), later marriages with longer periods of cohabitation, and remarriages that support a rethinking of familial divisions of labour (Coltrane, 1998 in Beaujot, 2006: 25). Along these lines, Beaujot (2006) contends that "by now, young men know that they need to share the burden if they want to enter a relationship, and it is not uncommon for women to abandon relationships that are not based on a sense of fairness in the division of work" (p. 25). However, Beaujot also cautions that much still needs to be done to support parenting in families, since parenthood continues to bring differentiation in the division of work.

As a second example that change is occurring in the gendered division of caregiving labour in Canadian families, in her study of 118 Canadian primary caregiving fathers, Doucet (2006) demonstrates how Canadian men are reconfiguring fathering and masculinities through their daily practices and orientations to caregiving. As Doucet puts it, "men are radically revisioning caring work, masculine conceptions of care, and ultimately our understandings of masculinities" (p. 238). In short, Doucet shows that fathers can and do enact parental responsibilities in personalized ways that do not fit neatly with prevailing assumptions about gender or masculinity, and as such, she calls for a wider acceptance of change for evolving conceptions of mothering and fathering.

Finally, in her book *Against the Grain: Couples, Gender, and the Reframing of Parenting*, Ranson (2010) outlines a number of important empirical studies that have considered how Canadian families are actively contravening traditional expectations of mothering and fathering in their family lives (e.g. Doucet, 2006, 2004, 2000; Fox & Fumia, 2001; Dinehart, 1998; Nelson, 1996 in Ranson, 2010: 24). Contributing to this body of scholarly work is

Ranson's own study of 32 Canadian families who are opting for less traditional divisions of labour within their households (discussed in more detail in Chapter 6). Each of these studies provides a unique example of change that is occurring on the ground level within individual families. Moreover, they support the notion that gender differences in Canadian family relationships may be further reduced in the future since, as Ranson puts it, "... expectations may change over time (and institutions, as well) as the practices of individuals change" (p.25).

As new immigrants work to reconstitute their family lives in Canada, they are faced with negotiating cultural expectations and understandings about how parenting is done in two countries. This study thus provides insight into immigrant parents' perceptions of Canadian parenting (and how these are shaped), and offers the unique opportunity to explore the ways in which their parenting practices are informed by both their perceptions of parenting and the changed conditions of family life in this country.

In addition to normative changes in the direction of equality and sharing, as noted above heightened levels of financial strain may also impact how new immigrants organize their family lives in Canada. There is a particularly large void in the western parenting literature on the implications of the "new" economy for middle-class parenting—a group who are assumed to have the necessary resources and desire to put idealized versions of parenting into practice. What we do know is that more and more Canadian families in the middle of the income bracket are struggling to make ends meet (Heisz, 2007), and that this will inevitably affect couples' ability to parent in specific ways (Bartholomae & Fox, 2010). Moreover, as the precariousness of native-born families' financial situations increases, arriving immigrants will encounter heightened levels of difficulty in procuring high-level employment in their professional fields of interest (Reitz, 2004), making it equally if not more difficult for them to enact the ideals of

middle-class parenting. An important piece of this dissertation research is to add to the literature on middle-class values and family life, by exploring how skilled immigrants—the majority of whom come from a place of relative affluence in their pre-migration societies due to high levels of education and professional status—negotiate the downward mobility associated with immigration within their family lives.

2.6 Contributions to the Literature

Whereas much of the research on skilled immigrants to Canada has focused on experiences of post-migration employment and deskilling (e.g. Shan 2014, 2009; Takouda, Robichaud & Haq, 2013; Somerville & Walsworth, 2010; Grant & Nadin, 2007), this dissertation explores the interconnectedness of skilled immigrants' work and family lives – an area of research that, to date, has been somewhat understudied (Creese, Dyck, & McLaren; 2008). Furthermore, outside of the contributions of a key group of Canadian scholars (e.g. Creese, 2012, 2011; Creese, Dyck & McLaren, 2008), research in this country has largely neglected to examine the family context of members who accompany skilled workers in their entry to Canada (Creese, Dyck, & McLaren; 2008).

It has been argued that additional resources must be directed towards deepening our understanding of immigrant family life (Suarez-Orozco & Carhill, 2008). This dissertation takes up this call by exploring the family dynamics of skilled immigrants in the context of the “new”—and increasingly insecure—economy. What’s more, this research plays out in the uniquely Canadian context. This is an important detail because the experiences of immigrants in Canada and the United States—the country with which Canadian relations and social dynamics are most often compared/equated—have been shown to be markedly different both in terms of the immigration system and in societal and cultural dynamics (Reitz, 2004). Moreover, this

research is anchored in participants' pre-migration experiences of work and family life, which is noteworthy given that immigrant parenting studies have rarely addressed the pre-migration experiences of immigrants or their particular migration experiences (Shan, 2014).

What's more, little empirical work has explored the extent to which fathers' everyday doing of gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987) is disrupted, or even undone (Deutsch, 2007), in light of shifting socioeconomic factors. Yoshida (2012) speculates that as the sole-provider role becomes increasingly unachievable, fathers who are in economically disadvantaged positions might take a more involved role in childcare and derive their masculine identity from it (e.g. possibly rejecting hegemonic masculinity or undoing gender). Moreover, Yoshida advocates future research that investigates how social class and changing economic conditions are implicated in this process.

Similarly, Shan (2014) argues that studies of immigrant parenting have been traditionally interested in mothering and that a focus on fathering practices in different ethnic groups has been a relatively recent development in the literature (e.g. Costigan & Su, 2008; Kim & Wong, 2002). As such, Shan suggests that additional work is needed to understand how immigrant fathers perceive their roles as parents in the post-migration context—a research question that is explored in Chapters 5 and 6 of this dissertation. Furthermore, this dissertation examines interrelations between fathering and mothering within immigrant families—both in the pre-and post-migration context—and in Chapters 4 and 7, seeks to further sociological understanding of the interconnectedness between parental role perception and children's academic and cultural experiences.

Finally, immigrant parents' socioeconomic status has been shown to mediate parenting practices and outcomes (Roche & Engsminger, 2007; Pong, Hao & Gardner, 2005). Yet, further

exploration of the effects of declining socioeconomic status on the post-migration experiences of professional immigrants and their families is needed, since economic status is not the sole indicator of immigrant parents' class status post-migration (Shan, 2014). As such, this dissertation explores an array of factors that contribute to how immigrant children are being brought up in Canada, including the trade-offs parents make to provide their children with certain material objects and experiences, and various other ways parents work to shield their children from the effects of transient poverty during the settlement period.

Chapter 3: Data and Methods

3.1. Theoretical and Analytical Approach

The data for this research were compiled from qualitative interviews that explored new immigrants' experiences and practices of re-establishing work and family life during the period of settlement that follows international migration. Broadly, participants and I engaged in semi-structured interviews that fostered discussion about how they and their family members negotiated changed conditions in the early post-migration context. In this way, the present research brings into view participants' negotiations of labour market involvement, parenting ideologies and practices, and the accomplishment of gender at a time when economic and social resources are often limited.

From the outset of this research process, my intent was to explore, analyze and describe the specific experiences of skilled immigrants – a task for which qualitative research is well suited (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008). Therefore, the goal of this dissertation is not to draw broad conclusions that are generalizable to the larger population of immigrants, but rather, to aim for what Mason (1996) calls “theoretical generalizability,” which seeks to illuminate “processes or issues that are central to some wider body of explanation or knowledge” (p. 154). In this project, I work to develop descriptions that extend theoretical understandings of the persistence and fluidity of skilled immigrants' orientations to work and family life during a time of great change. Participants' motivation for seeking immigration and their perceptions of life in their home country were also examined given that this is thought to play an important role in how migrants organize their lives in a new country (Da, 2003).

It has been well established by feminist scholars that migration is a highly gendered process with frequently unequal implications for women and men living in the same household (Creese, Dyck & McLaren, 2008: 271). My perception of the importance of this research,

combined with my interest in exploring interconnections between immigration and family life, led me to approach the interviews with an eye towards drawing out the unique experiences of male and female participants. One strategy that helped me to acquire this type of data in the interviews was by following more general interview questions with probes that encouraged participants to clarify and elaborate on their unique experiences as they related to gender, parenting practices and social positioning – a research practice that was refined on an ongoing basis throughout the interviewing process.

For example, my interview guide was originally constructed to ask questions about how participants were negotiating work/family balance in the post-migration context, specifically in terms of what their daily lives looked like (how they were spending their time), whether (and how) this was different from their pre-migration lives, and how changed conditions were (or were not) affecting the way they raised their children and contribution to domestic work. I also set questions up to ask about participants' perceptions of their spouse's experiences in this regard. However, while these types of questions proved useful in acquiring in-depth information about the flow of participants' day-to-day lives, I quickly realized that the concept of "work/family balance" was not one that held significant meaning for some of my participants.

Furthermore, after reviewing the first three interview transcripts, it became apparent that if I wanted to garner a comprehensive understanding of how the changed conditions families were encountering were opening up possibilities for reconfiguring parenting roles and practices (and I did), then I would have to be more careful about engaging participants in a dialogue that related to *their* understanding of the physical and emotional involvement they had in their children's lives, how *they* perceived their role as a parent both pre-and post-migration, and the ways in which *they* connected this to their parenting in practice. Put differently, during the data

collection phase of this research, I was reminded to refrain from imposing sweeping terms and generalizations on my conversations with participants. Along these lines, after reading through the first few interview transcripts, I altered my approach somewhat to better ensure that the questions I posed allowed participants to both draw from and teach me about their own unique and cultural experiences. This proved crucial since I often did not have the knowledge to anticipate or ask about these specifically. The types of follow-up questions that allowed me to achieve this were often unique to each participant and dependent on things like their facility with English, my impression of their level of comfort during the interview, and most importantly, the examples and accounts they had already offered in our conversation. Moreover, shifting my line of questioning in this way was crucial in my ability to acquire rich data— a richness that would have been lost had I been closed to the idea of allowing interview questions and techniques to evolve from interview to interview.

In line with the above, participants' lived experiences helped to define and organize the direction of this research, which is also informed by the understanding that an individual's account of everyday life is located within (and influenced by) broader relations and distributions of power that play out within the particularities of time and place (e.g. the social, economic, and institutional relations of a society). For example, the lives of new immigrants to Canada necessarily play out in the context of a neoliberal political climate that promotes the reduction of labour protection, the closing of public institutions and the clawing back of social supports (Armstrong, 2010). My sense of this context regularly informed the follow-up questions I asked participants during interviewing. Moreover, I found it crucial to consider such contextual factors when analyzing participants' accounts of the opportunities they had (or had not) been granted

since arriving in Canada, and the supports that were made available to them as they worked to integrate their families into social and economic life.

In addition, this study was broadly contextualized in larger economic and institutional contexts. Specifically, things like labour market restructuring, the growing requirement for (and cost of) post-secondary education, and the development of globalization were considered in terms of their implications for the work, family lives and social positioning of study participants both in their country of origin and in Canada. In recent years, a number of prominent feminist scholars have recognized the significance of gender, race and class for the kinds of paid work people are able to obtain, and the impact this has on living standards, personal relationships and family life (Baker, 2010:29). The current study adds to this corpus of scholarly work by illuminating some of the ways in which the structure of current economic, political and institutional relations in Canada advances life chances based on the perceived characteristics of an immigrant (e.g. Canadian work experience, the country in which they obtained their post-secondary education, practices of racialized labelling, and so on), and the impact this has on the organization of immigrant family life.

Constructionist analytics (Holstein & Gubrium, 2008) were also used during analysis as a method of exploring the ways in which preset practical conditions for talk and interaction play out in participants' constructions of post-migration life. For instance, in the pursuit of illuminating the specific discursive contexts that shape prevailing meanings around immigrant integration in Canada (Schrover & Schinkel, 2013), I consider the discursive construction of various topics at the "macro-level" (Cheek, 2004) (e.g. migrant status, multiculturalism, etc.), and then explore how prevailing meanings associated with these constructs play out in the lives

of participants (e.g. in their talk, via their level of inclusion/exclusion at the social, economic and cultural levels).

Policy level discourse on citizenship is particularly important to this analysis as this interpretive schema has largely operationalized ideas around perceptions of “good” and “bad” immigrants in this country (e.g. those that contribute to the economic prosperity of Canada and those that do not/cannot) (Schrover & Schinkel, 2013; Li, 2003). Thus, I develop a research focus that both describes such dominant ways of knowing at the policy level and examines how these discursive elements create meaning in the lives of Canadian newcomers. For example, I consider the emphasis this nation’s policies place on admitting certain “types” of immigrants (e.g. economic immigrants), and then describe the implications this has had for the lived actualities of participants attempting to reconstitute family life (e.g. without support from extended kin).

Prevailing ideas around mothering and fathering—both as participants understand these to exist in their country of origin, but also in Canada—and the implications this had for the ways participants negotiated the changed conditions for family life in this country, are also central to this dissertation. Therefore, in this research I consider discursive elements present in participants’ talk—and the ways in which their lived experiences can be linked to large-scale discourses (e.g. “human capital discourse” (Creese et al., 2008))—as a way of examining the broader interpretive resources that are implicated in their understandings and practices. For instance, one participant talked about her understanding of what it means to be a “Canadian mother” and linked this to certain changes she had made to her mothering practice since arriving in Canada. Another participant talked openly about what it meant to be a strong man in his country of origin, and connected this perception to changes he was unwilling to make in his

work and fathering practices in Canada. These are just two examples of instances where participants emphasized drawing on prevailing ideas to inform their daily practices. Other examples are more subtle, and during analysis I worked to identify and deconstruct such moments as they occurred in participants' talk.

It is important to note that during their interviews, participants in this study negotiated multiple dimensions of identity shaping that informed their pre-and post-migration experiences. Existing research has shown that the construction of identities is an “interactive dynamic process” (Erez et al., 2008), in which negotiations exist along multiple lines (e.g. race, gender, sexual orientation, and class). In line with Erez, Adelman and Gregory (2008), I engaged this research project from the viewpoint that immigration is a distinct part of the grounds that inform participants' experiences, as opposed to a static variable that exists within another category such as race (p.33). In this study I demonstrate a variety of commonalities in participants' experiences of re-establishing work and family life in Calgary, despite their diverse backgrounds and countries of origin. In this way, I engage “immigrant” as one aspect of a participant's multiply-inscribed post-migration identity, an aspect that oftentimes differentiates their lived experiences from that of native-born citizens (Erez et al., 2008).

3.2 The Research Process: Origin of the Research Problematic

The idea for this research grew out of my participation in a larger mixed-method, cross-national research project, “Families in the Middle” (FIM).²¹ Broadly, the focus of FIM is to uncover the daily realities of Canadian and American families living with a “middle” income.²² More specifically, this project considers middle income families' experiences of financial strain

²¹ The principal investigators of this project were Dr. Anne Gauthier (Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute), Dr. Frank Furstenburg (University of Pennsylvania) and Dr. Shelley Pacholok (University of British Columbia-Okanagan).

²² “Middle income” was defined as an annual before-tax family income that falls within 75-125% of the national median.

and the various ways in which this connects with parenting practices and the social organization of family life. Ethics approval for my dissertation research was obtained from the Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (CFREB) at the University of Calgary by means of an amendment filed in conjunction with the FIM project to add new participants to their Calgary site.

In the original ethics certificate, the use of three instruments was approved: a short online survey, a second longer online survey, and an in-depth interview. With my dissertation research, I streamlined this process to one in-depth interview, which was generally informed by the original FIM interview guide in terms of its focus on participants' family lives and practices and how they were coping with increased financial and time constraints. Basic demographic information was also collected on an information sheet at the end of each interview (see Appendix A). Furthermore, participants were emailed a list of possible interview topics and questions prior to our meeting (see Appendix B). Each of these documents was approved by the CFREB and is discussed in more detail below.

It is important to note that while my dissertation research connects generally to the FIM study, my exploration of immigrant family life and settlement is very much an exploratory project that followed its own trajectory. For instance, the topics proposed above (see Appendix B) were compiled as a way to help participants—for almost all of whom English is a second language—become familiar with the kinds of topics that would be touched on in the interview. Furthermore, while an interview guide was used to steer the conversation around key topics of interest (see Appendix C), the development of each interview was also informed by the individualized interests, concerns, and experiences of each participant (e.g. the “news” they wished to share). Furthermore, the research process was developed based on the direction in

which specific interviews unfolded. For example, after each interview, I reviewed the audio files in their entirety and noted emerging themes and significant points of interest. I then posed questions around emergent topics in subsequent interviews in an attempt to identify and flesh out the common experiences of participants.

3.3 Guiding Questions in the Analytical Process

As previously indicated, this dissertation research considers how the social organization of skilled immigrants' work and family lives is affected by the larger social, cultural and economic environment in which they now live. Specifically, this research problematic developed out of my keen interest to further understand how immigrants with high levels of education and professional work experience—and the established ways of organizing family life, values and practices that went with this—negotiated the reconstitution of work and family life in the post-migration context. In the initial stages of this research project, a number of key analytical questions guided my thinking:

- How are skilled immigrants and their families living in Calgary, Alberta, negotiating Canadian cultural norms and personal understandings of gender, work, and parenting throughout the settlement process?
- In what ways are structural and ideological factors enabling or constraining skilled immigrants from caring for their families in the ways they deem best?

More specifically:

- How are immigrant families' views on parenting and familial gender relations affected by their new social/economic/institutional location?
- In what ways are participants actively attempting to parent differently or the same since coming to Canada?
- How is paid work affecting the reorganization of family life in the Canadian context?
- How has the integration of children into the school system and community played out for participant families? What do parents think about their children's new school system? How do they make schooling choices?

Beginning with these analytical questions in mind was extremely useful in that they both focused my thinking on the developing research problematic and acted as a starting place for the extensive research process that developed. While the interviews incorporated a broad range of topics associated with everyday work and family life, including neighbourhood and community; household labour and daily routines; parental employment; parenting strategies, goals and challenges; health; family finances; and government support (see below for more detail), I returned to these initial lines of inquiry often when reviewing interview transcripts, creating research memos and field notes, and revising interview questions in ways that would encourage participants to provide detailed narratives in connection to underlying topics of interest.

3.4 Recruitment Strategies, Study Instruments and Transcription

Participants for this research study were largely recruited directly from immigrant-serving agencies in the city of Calgary. Upon gaining clearance from program administrators, I gave a brief talk about the research project in settlement sector classes geared towards skilled immigrants (e.g. corporate bridging programs) (see Appendix D). This presentation included a brief description of the “type” of participant I was seeking for the study as a way of screening audience members. Specifically, men and women who came to Canada as economic or “independent class” immigrants in the last six years were recruited. Further, all participants had at least one child living with them in Canada. The specific parent in each household that was interviewed varied according to availability of participants (e.g. in a small number of cases someone who attended my talk told their spouse/partner about the research and it was this person who participated further). Participants in these classes who fit these criteria and were interested in participating in the research were asked to provide their email address in order to confirm a future appointment for a 60-90 minute interview at a location of their choosing.

Two secondary methods of participant recruitment were also used. First, I created a text-based recruitment advertisement which I posted in common areas around local university and college campuses as well as community and recreation centres (see Appendix E). Second, administrators of relevant settlement programs who felt comfortable doing so sent a recruitment email to previous participants of their programs (see Appendix F). The latter method of recruitment proved essential to acquiring participants who had been in Calgary for 3-6 years. Much of the funding for settlement programs is targeted at assisting those immigrants who have resided in Canada three years or less, and it was mostly this demographic that was present at the research talks. In both of these cases, interested parties were asked to contact me via email or telephone to discuss the research and set up an interview appointment. All prospective participants were also made aware that they would receive a twenty-dollar honorarium at the conclusion of their interview as a small token of appreciation for the time they would be giving to the study.

As previously mentioned, prior to each interview the participant was sent a list of very broad questions related to topics that might be explored in the interview (see Appendix B) (i.e. family life, children's schooling and activities, parents' employment, and so on). Participants were clearly advised that they were not required (nor expected) to answer these questions in writing or prepare a formal response of any kind prior to interviewing. Moreover, each participant was told about my interest in discussing their work and family lives in open dialogue, and in our pre-interview communications, I encouraged participants to take the lead in the conversation as they felt comfortable.

At the beginning of each interview, participants were asked to read and sign a consent form which was approved by the CFREB (see Appendix G). Among other things, this consent

form confirmed that each participant was willing to be audio recorded – a practice with which no participant expressed concern. Moreover, as already mentioned, following each interview participants were asked to fill out a very brief questionnaire, the purpose of which was to ensure that appropriate demographic information was accurately collected (see Appendix A). As with all of the information provided throughout the interview, participants were clearly advised that their responses to questions would be kept confidential, and that they could refrain from answering any question(s) they did not feel comfortable with. Furthermore, at the beginning of each interview, participants were given the opportunity to pick their own pseudonym; the majority did so with enthusiasm.

Recruitment of participants was ongoing until the target number of thirty participants was reached. Data collection began in September, 2011 and ended in March, 2012. The specific site of each interview varied according to participants' preference. All of the interviews took place in relatively quiet public settings including public and campus libraries, coffee shops, and open areas at participants' place of work. Most interviews lasted around 90 minutes, and each interview was transcribed in full shortly after it occurred, which gave me the opportunity to review interview data on an ongoing basis throughout the data collection period.

I transcribed the first seven interviews myself, while the remaining files were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. Audio files were shared with the transcriptionist who transcribed the interview and then deleted the recording upon completion. Every attempt was made to do verbatim transcription. Working with the transcripts involved two distinct stages. Once the transcripts were returned to me, I ensured transcription accuracy by reviewing each transcript in its entirety while listening to the audio file. I also carefully removed proper names (family members, employers, and so on) and replaced these with pseudonyms or some other

indicator. Following this initial stage, after selecting particular passages to use in my dissertation, I did some additional editing. For example, I added more punctuation to help with sense and coherency, and in some places, restarts and hesitation sounds were also omitted (ellipses points were used to indicate these deletions). Moreover, in a very small number of cases, I added a word or two in square brackets to assist understanding. However, after reviewing the audio recordings and written transcripts, I felt that what participants were saying in their interviews was generally quite clear and required little help or adjustment from me. Transcripts were uploaded into the qualitative research software Hyper Research for data analysis.

3.5 Sample Characteristics

As part of this research process, thirty skilled immigrants were interviewed. This sample was limited to more recent immigrant families (six years in Canada or less), in order to best explore the interplay between cultural and parental views garnered in families' country of origin and the changed conditions they encountered in Calgary. As indicated in Chapter 1, almost all of the participants included in this study came to Canada as independent migrants under either the federal skilled-worker or Alberta provincial nomination program. One couple did come to Canada as temporary foreign workers and then applied for residency after working here for one year. Another participant and her partner immigrated to the United States on a student visa and from there, applied for immigration to Canada. Two others went through the UK and Australia before arriving in Canada. None of the participants in this study was sponsored under the family reunification program.

The sample of participants (N = 30) includes nine men and 21 females. Of those that were interviewed, 22 were the principal applicant on their family's immigration application. Of

the eight participants that I interviewed who came to Canada with their partner/spouse as the principal applicant on the application for immigration, all had some type of post-secondary education credentials and work experience. Likely because the majority of participants came from dual-earner households prior to immigrating, a common story amongst interview participants was that they used what information they could find either online or at local immigration agencies to assess which person in their family was more likely to get accepted under a federal or provincial immigration program the fastest. In some cases, the partner with the highest level of English was automatically the one who applied as the principal applicant. However, in the majority of cases, participants reported that their level of English was similar to that of their partner/spouse.

It is worth noting that when I first began the interview process, I invited coupled participants to have their partner contact me if they were also interested in participating in the research. However, at no point did a partner of any participant follow up with me. For these individuals, family obligations were high and work schedules were varied and often sporadic. It was not uncommon for interviews to be cancelled, postponed, and rescheduled in accordance with participants' shifting priorities and obligations.

While interviewing both members of each couple would likely have allowed for the generation of a more comprehensive understanding of participants' work and family lives (e.g. information might have been collected about how each person in the pair understood the same event), I would argue that not acquiring this type of data did not significantly detract from my research findings. All interview accounts exist as a narrative form of storytelling that is both value-laden and shaped by interpretation (Dyck & McLaren, 2004). Thus, while I was unable to give a direct voice to each member of a participant couple, the stories that participants told about

their partners' unique experiences offer a window into this person's lived actualities as they are understood by their partner. Moreover, such stories proved critical to opening up topics of discussion in participant interviews, with participants speaking freely about their partners and relationships in ways that they may not have felt comfortable with had they anticipated I would also be speaking with their partner.

In terms of participants' average level of education, the majority of participants (N=17) reported having either a Masters or "advanced" degree (e.g. physician or pharmacist without masters). The breakdown of participants' level of education is as follows: five participants reported having an advanced degree; 12 reported having a Masters; 10 reported having a Bachelors degree; two reported having a college diploma; one reported having a high school diploma. Examples of the occupations in this group of participants before migrating include physician, pharmacist, engineer, manager in the social service industry, accountant and university instructor. Of the 10 participants who held Bachelor's degrees at the time of immigration, four of these were trained engineers.

The majority of the participants in this study were married (N = 25), while the remainder consisted of two cohabitating and three single participants. All of the participants in this sample had at least one dependent child living with them in Canada. Of those who were partnered, all but one female participant—whose husband was an at-home father in China—came from dual income households prior to migration. While sexual orientation was not asked about specifically, all participants gave examples of being in heterosexual relationships.

Finally, participants came to Canada from 15 countries spanning four continents. The majority (N=13) came from Asia (China = 6; Nepal= 1; Philippines = 5; Pakistan = 1), while the remainder of participants included: 6 from Africa (Nigeria = 4; Kenya = 2); 4 from the Middle

East (Lebanon = 1, Iran = 2, Syria = 1); 4 from South America (Venezuela = 2; Brazil = 1; Peru = 1); and 3 from Europe (Britain = 1; Moldova = 1; Poland = 1). Furthermore, the majority of participants (N = 18) had been in Canada for three years or less at the time of the interview (6 for 1 year or less, 7 for 2 years, and 5 for 3 years). The remaining participants (N = 12) had lived in Canada from between 4 and 6 years at the time of interviewing (6 for 4 years, and 5 from between 5 and 6 years).

The following table provides an overview of the participant information and characteristics outlined above:

TABLE 1 – PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

Pseudonym	Research ID	Country of Origin	Marital Status	Children	Length of time Canada	Education	Employment (Pre-Migration)	Employment (Interview)
Sophia	IFCA001	Lebanon	Married		5 years	College Diploma	Administration	Unemployed
Maria	IFCA002	Venezuela	Married		6 years	Bachelors	Engineer	Retail (Walmart)
Sumit	IFCA003	Nepal	Married	2	2 years	Masters	Chartered Accountant	Service Ind. Tim Hortons
Daren	IFCA004	Nigeria	Married	3	9 mos.	Masters	NGO Manager	NGO (Entry level)
Tobi	IFCA005	Nigeria	Married	4	2 years	Poly-Tech Diploma	Oil and Gas Manager	Unemployed (CRPT)
John	IFCA006	Nigeria	Married	4	9 mos.	Masters	Engineer	Unemployed (CRPT)
Becca	IFCA007	Nigeria	Married	1	2 years	Masters	Production Supervisor	Unemployed (CRPT)
Megan	IFCA008	South Africa	Married	2	1 year	Advanced	Chartered accountant	At-home caregiver
Vivian	IFCA009	China	Divorced/ Cohabiting	2	5 years	Advanced	Engineer	Controller

Pseudonym	Research ID	Country of Origin	Marital Status	Children	Length of time Canada	Education	Employment (Pre-Migration)	Employment (Interview)
Geoff	IFCA010	UK	Married	2	6 years	Bachelors	Investment Banker	Manager – Soccer club
Claudia	IFCA011	Brazil	Married	6	2.5 years	College Diploma	Banking	At-home caregiver
Anna	IFCA012	Philippines	Married	3	2 years	Advanced	Medical Doctor	Training – Office Administration
Gabrielle	IFCA013	Philippines	Divorced	2	4 years	Masters	University Instructor	Research Analyst
Isabel	IFCA014	Philippines	Married	2	4 years	Bachelors	Banking Manager	Cashier/ School aid
Lidia	IFCA015	Poland	Common law	1	7 mos	Bachelors	English Language Instructor (University)	Retail / Training - Office Administration
Rosa	IFCA016	Philippines	Married	2	4 years	Bachelors	Business Owner/Operator	Administrative Assistant
Wanda	IFCA017	China	Married	2	5 years	Masters	Manager	Career Assistant
Cindy	IFCA018	China	Married		1 year	Masters	Power Engineer	Unemployed

Pseudonym	Research ID	Country of Origin	Marital Status	Children	Length of time Canada	Education	Employment (Pre-Migration)	Employment (Interview)
Hana	IFCA021	Iran	Married		5 years	Advanced	Medical Doctor	At-home Caregiver
Lian	IFCA022	China	Single/ Divorced	1	2 years	Bachelors	Licensed Practical Nurse	Health Care Aide (Chinese Senior Centre)
Danny	IFCA023	South Korea	Married	2	1 year	Masters	Pharmacist	Unemployed
Tira	IFCA024	Syria	Married		4 years	Masters	Pharmacist	
Katarina	IFCA025	Moldova	Married	1	4 years	Masters	University Instructor	ESL Instructor
Jay	IFCA026	Philippines	Married		4 years	Masters	Human Resources Director	Group Home Manager
Renato	IFCA027	Venezuela	Married	3	2 years	Bachelors	Electrical Engineer	Reliability Specialist
Kevin	IFCA028	China	Married	1	3 years	Bachelors	Senior Agricultural Researcher	Laboratory Technician
Jana	IFCA029	Kenya	Married	3	3 years	Masters	Accounting Manager (NGO)	Unemployed
Lucia	IFCA030	Peru	Single	1	3 years	Bachelors	ESL Instructor (College Level)	Career Counsellor

The majority of the participants in this study described their families as “being in transition,” and discussed what this had meant for their work and family lives and the goals that they had for the future. Furthermore, all of the participants discussed experiencing a period of underemployment post-migration, and many were faced with negotiating lowered levels of socioeconomic status and the loss of their professional identity while attempting to settle their family in Canada. While every participant in this study described being part of the middle or upper class prior to immigrating, the majority of participants now saw themselves as part of the lower class, and many were struggling to adjust their frame of mind and daily practices to fit with their new socioeconomic realities. However, for the most part, participants in this study were remarkably enthusiastic about what a future in Canada would mean for their families, and many were extremely eager to discuss their future plans and anticipated quality of family life.

3.6 Particularities of the Interview Process

When exploring participants’ accounts of lived actualities, researchers should consider their own place in the meaning-making process of the interview, which is both a social and a political event (Dyck & McLaren, 2004). When completing this research, I employed a reflexive approach²³ to reflect upon my role in the research process (Bryman, Becker, & Sempik, 2008), particularly in terms of how and what stories were told. One way I attempted to achieve this was by viewing each participant as the “expert practitioner” of their everyday world, about which I was being taught (Smith, 2005). In so doing, I relied heavily on participants’ talk in my analysis and writing, privileging their verbatim accounts over my interpretation of meaning. I also paid particular attention to my own lines of questioning and interaction with each participant, the language used, and their interpretations of what I was asking (more on this below). Finally, I

²³ “Reflection is a process of interrogating intellectual ideas with personal experience. Rooted in critical and feminist perspectives on oppression, it is a postpositivist strategy that values both subjectivity and science, reconnecting the emotional and the rational as tools for generating contextualized knowledge” (Allen, 2000: 10).

aimed to create strong links between participants' talk and the pre-existing literature in order to increase the analytic depth of the research (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008).

Throughout this research process, and in line with the above, I viewed participants' talk as representing accounts of "situated knowledge" that are produced within the specific conditions of the interview (Dyck & McLaren, 2004). Discourse analysts argue that all talk is "interested," and therefore, we regularly construct a preferred version of the world and our place in it when we talk or write (Miller & Penz, 1991). It has been argued that the "relational experience" of an interview can intensify this inclination as participants work to describe the details of their experiences in ways that both carry their message and that they are willing to share in an interview setting (Aune, 2012). Along these same lines, Dyck and McLaren (2004) suggest viewing research interviewing as a form of "identity performance" in which links between "subjective" experience and "relations of power" come into view (p. 516).

Included in these relations of power are the attributes a participant attaches to the embodiment of the researcher, which can be both similar (e.g. mothering work) and quite different (e.g. class status and privilege) in comparison to their own identity characteristics. For example, it was important for me to consider how things like my gender, level of education, family status, and fluency in English may have shaped the interview process since such perceptions of embodiment may have implications for how participants chose to construct their accounts in the interview setting (Dyck & McLaren, 2004).

On one occasion, for instance, a female participant remarked that I would understand the point she was trying to make about her husband because like her, I was a woman. This participant thus assumed that we shared knowledge and understanding about the way men act. Moreover, this particular participant went on to provide an extremely in-depth account of the

struggles her husband has faced since arriving in Canada and talked openly about his abusive tendencies toward her. Would she have shared such intimate details about her personal life had I been a male researcher? Or, alternatively, if she hadn't felt that I could understand or relate to her story? While it's impossible to answer such questions with certainty, I feel strongly that my positioning as a married woman shaped this particular interview in meaningful ways.

In other instances, however, my personal attributes created challenges during interviewing. For instance, a female participant who was describing the stresses involved in raising children looked at my obviously pregnant midsection and asked, "Is this your first?" When I replied that yes, it was my first child, she remarked that I wouldn't really be able to understand her struggles as a mother for some time yet. When reviewing the transcript of her interview, I noticed that our conversation of parenting challenges fell somewhat flat at this point in the conversation. However, the participant continued to be quite expressive about her husband's struggles to complete his PhD and find an adequate job in the Canadian labour market – things that perhaps she felt I would be in a better position to relate to because of my own status as a PhD student.

In addition, there were other instances when it seemed as though male participants were particularly hesitant or uncomfortable about sharing the details of their family lives with me, and I remember feeling as though my positioning as a white female researcher was likely impeding the openness of our communication. One example that stands out occurred when a participant casually mentioned his disappointment in not being able to "beat" his children in Canada. It then seemed as though he became extremely worried about how I might perceive this statement²⁴ because he rushed to explain that he didn't mean "beat" as in "using [his] fists," but rather, to

²⁴ It is possible that he may have been responding to a change in my facial expression although I cannot say with certainty that this was the case.

“beat with a belt for discipline” (IFCA005). He also mentioned twice after this that he would never beat his wife even though this was a practice that (according to him) was not uncommon in his African country of origin. This participant noticeably favoured employment over family talk throughout the remainder of the interview.

In addition, participants in this study regularly looked to me for information about possible employment connections and voiced their concerns about the immigration process and the hardships of settlement in the hopes that I might be in a position to provoke action at the government or policy level. I often felt that this was one of the main reasons why participants initially became interested in participating in the research. Moreover, although I described myself as a sociology student in both recruitment emails and talks to potential participants, it came out during a number of interviews that participants thought I was a social worker and that they were curious about how I might be able to assist them with post-migration struggles. Despite my lack of social work skills, I answered participants’ queries to the best of my ability and directed them to programs, services and websites that I thought might be of use. There is a long tradition in feminist research of breaking down the usual one-way street of flows of information in research (e.g. Stanley & Wise, 1990; Oakley, 1981) and it was along these lines that I felt this was both an appropriate and important practice for me to engage in as a researcher. While in some cases these conversations happened during the course of the interview, in a number of others I spoke with participants after the interview had concluded while I was packing up my materials or as I walked with them to the train station.

A number of participants also explained that they had decided to volunteer to be interviewed because they felt they had an important story to tell, while others mentioned that they saw it as an opportunity to practice their English in conversation. One participant who

stands out in this respect was a trained pharmacist in the process of studying for a reaccreditation exam that tested (among other things) competency in oral communication using English.

Following the interview, this participant asked me a number of questions pertaining to English and expressed how nervous he was about his upcoming exam – he hadn't had an opportunity to really practice his English with a native speaker up until this point.

Because I anticipated that English would not be the primary language for the majority of my participants, I chose to conduct the interviews in a semi-structured conversational manner and did my best to allow participants to shift and direct the conversation around topics that were important to them. The thought that I (a unilingual English speaker) might have difficulty communicating with participants at the level I wanted to was a real concern at the outset of this study. However, I found that my heightened awareness of potential communication issues pushed me to be more attentive to participants' use of language and their intended meanings. For instance, I often paraphrased back what I thought a person was saying for confirmation, and I noticed that participants would regularly do the same of the questions I was asking. In addition, many participants used hand gestures when emphasizing a particular point, and I did my best to do the same once I noticed that this was an effective way of bridging potential losses in meaning. Finally, I regularly re-cast questions during interviewing to include examples from something a participant had said previously and that I knew made sense to them.

When reflecting on the interviews, I feel that very little was taken for granted or glossed over in my conversations with participants. In retrospect, it often seemed that there was a shared awareness that meaning-making would have to be a joint effort – each of us had a part to play in facilitating the other's level of understanding. Furthermore, when participants were given the opportunity to speak freely about issues that were important to them, I found that we were able

to use these important moments as a starting place to consider additional topics of interest. In this way, I attempted to engage participants in what Holstein and Gubrium (1995) call an “active” interview, or an interview that is interactional, constructive and a meaning-making venture. My goal was thus to maintain an awareness of the general research aims, while also allowing individual interviews to gain momentum around topics that were important to each participant. This orientation to interviewing enabled me to be conscious of both the interactional context of the interview and the ways in which I was an active participant in the co-construction of data.

3.7 Analytical Engagement with Interview Data

Given my intention to learn about the specific (and multifaceted) actualities of participants’ lives, I approached the research interviews without predetermined assumptions regarding what I was going to find and felt it crucial to engage the data in ways that would allow layers of experience to become visible. As such, my analytical approach to sorting the data involved applying “codes”²⁵ to concepts and themes that emerged out of the data as significant events of interest in need of further exploration (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Specifically, when coding the interviews I combined aspects of the largely inductive methods of constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000) and thematic narrative analysis²⁶ (Riessman, 2008). Although differing in origin, these approaches have tended towards convergence in recent years²⁷ (Netting, 2010), making a methodological “bricolage” (Denzin &

²⁵ I use the word “code” here to describe the process I went through when cataloguing the data; however, “label” or “sign” are equally sufficient terms for describing what I did. In actuality, I used “codes” to signal a topic of interest that I would later return to for further analysis.

²⁶ All narrative inquiry is concerned with “what is said, written, or visually shown—but in thematic analysis, content is the exclusive focus” (Riessman, 2008: 53) and the underlying aim is to keep a participant’s story “intact” by theorizing from the case (Riessman, 2008).

²⁷ Both of these methods emphasize the power of individuals to make meanings and the influence of historical and social circumstances on these meanings (Netting, 2010).

Lincoln, 2000) possible. The interviews were thus read both literally (i.e. for participants' descriptions of "reality") and with an eye towards how such descriptions are constructed (e.g. Ranson, 2010), with the overall goal of preserving the story of each participant in its entirety (including pre-migration life, the migration process, and post-migration experiences).

The most important aspect of grounded theory that I employed in this research pertained to categorizing the data. Specifically, codes were both created and applied as I read through the transcripts, with patterns, themes, and categories of analysis emerging out of the data rather than being imposed from the outset (Charmaz, 2000). Furthermore, while I did not engage in line by line coding of the data, two phases of coding—initial coding for indexing purposes followed by a more focused level of coding for emerging themes and events of interest—were used to make sense of the data. Common themes/features (as I saw them) were also noted across interviews via the construction of detailed memos (Hesse-Biber Leavy et al, 2004). Similar to the analytical process described by Netting (2010), after each interview I made notes on basic themes and points of interest, reviewed previous transcripts, and contemplated the adaptation of questions for future interviews (whether in regard to phrasing or entirely new subject areas that were brought up by the previous participant - see below for further discussion of this).

I engaged sensitizing concepts²⁸ (Charmaz, 2004) from the immigration and family literatures and from my own experiences (e.g. "downward mobility") at the initial stages of this research process as a starting point from which to begin thinking about the research problematic. In other words, I contemplated such constructs as a way of "sensitizing" myself to possible lines of inquiry. At no time were coded terms of interest perceived to indicate equivalency in meaning across interviews. Rather, in the initial stages of coding, various

²⁸ Charmaz (2003) refers to sensitizing concepts as "those background ideas that inform the overall research problem ... they provide starting points for building analysis, not ending points for evading it. We may use sensitizing concepts only as points of departure from which to study the data" (p. 259).

accounts were gathered together under the same code or sorting category (e.g. good parenting), and then I would return to each account separately to examine what specifically each participant understood as good parenting. Furthermore, the research process was entirely open to (and guided by) points of interest that emerged from the data. While I made use of my interview guide often and as a way of ensuring that certain topics and questions were not missed, participants were also encouraged to expand their responses to interview questions into detailed personal narratives of pre-and post-migration life. Indeed, such constructivist grounded theory strategies are consistent with thematic narrative analysis, where investigators search for themes across cases while simultaneously honouring each participant's individual narrative (Riessman, 2008).

In sum, the data for this dissertation were compiled from semi-structured qualitative interviews that explored new immigrants' experiences and practices of re-establishing their work and family lives in Canada. Participants' lived experiences helped to define and organize the direction of the research, and every effort was given to provide participants with the opportunity to speak openly about the joys and struggles of their daily lives. The data chapters that follow explore major themes that were present in participants' talk and broadly provide insight into both their pre-migration lives and their negotiations of changed conditions in the Canadian context.

Chapter 4: Family life in the Pre-Migration Context

4.1 Introduction

As described in the previous chapter, participants in this study had relatively high levels of education and professional work experience before coming to Canada. To reiterate, 57% (N=17) of participants held either a masters or an advanced degree prior to migration, 33 % (N=10) had an undergraduate degree and 10% (N=3) had a college diploma. Not surprising given these statistics, prior to immigrating, all of the participants identified as either middle or upper class and the large majority (N= 28) had careers that were directly related to their education credentials. Furthermore, 77% (N= 23) of the participants came from dual earner couples prior to migration and the majority relied on paid help and/or extended kin to help in the work of the home and the care of the children on a regular basis.

Yet, despite the above mentioned similarities, much diversity existed in terms of the “type” of family life and work situations participants described experiencing prior to immigrating. Moreover, their understandings of terms like “financial security” and “class status” were often influenced by the larger social, economic and political context from which they came. One example of this exists in the account of Renato, a participant who described his family situation as middle class before immigrating to Canada from Venezuela. During his interview, some of the signs Renato emphasized as indicative of his class status were that he had bars on the windows of his home to prevent intruders, a garage in which to safely park his car and the ability to always put food on the table. Renato’s understanding of what it means to be middle class is thus somewhat different from participants who equated their own middle class status with owning multiple homes or having the financial freedom to take their families on lavish trips abroad.

For Renato and a number of other participants in this study, it was structural factors such as a poor economy, political corruption and systemic violence that had a hand in shaping pre-migration understandings of family life, and in many cases, influenced immigration decisions. As a way of exploring such intricacies of daily life for participants prior to migration, this chapter is built around a discussion of the social and institutional factors and understandings that had a hand in shaping participants' decisions to seek emigration. Specifically, the accounts of four participants who best represent a spectrum of themes regarding major emigration decisions present in the data are explored. Moreover, the voices and experiences of additional participants are interspersed with these main examples as a way of further elucidating the pre-migratory piece of this research. Overall, this chapter lays the foundation for understanding both the flow of daily life for participants prior to migration, and the ways in which participants "made sense" of their impending relocation to Canada.

4.2. Family life, Work and Emigration

Relative to their peers, participants in this study experienced a certain level of privilege prior to migration that was directly related to both their educational attainments and professional status. For example, many of the participants offered accounts of pre-migration daily life that included financing children's private schooling, hiring full-time domestic helpers to undertake the work of the home and the care of the children, and financially assisting others in their communities who were less fortunate than themselves. Yet, while such signs of prestige may appear to suggest that the quality of participants' pre-migration lives was not overly disadvantaged, common amongst all of the participants in this study was the "choice" to leave their home country and established family life to begin anew in Canada, and the reasons and experiences underlying these decisions are both interesting and important.

The stories participants offered during their interviews regarding their decision to move from their home country vary significantly. However, four overarching themes emerge in their accounts. First, many participants had very strong feelings about the quality of education and career opportunities their children would experience were they to remain in their country of origin. In such cases, participants discussed how the decision to emigrate was based on what they believed to be best for their children academically and often socially as well. In these families, children's futures were given top priority in parents' decisions to immigrate to Canada.

Second, a number of participants pursued immigration to escape situations of systemic and erupting violence, political corruption, and a dismal economy. Common among participants who cited factors such as these as their motivation for leaving was a concern for the overall safety of their families, fluctuating and unregulated costs (with no change in salary), and what they considered to be fraudulent authorities.

A third major theme in the data regarding why participants pursued emigration is related to the pressures of overtaxing work many were being faced with in their pre-migration lives. Common amongst the accounts of these participants were discussions of a destructive culture of work, long and unreasonable "international hours" (e.g. when working in China for a company that is owned and operated in Europe), and the ways in which the global recession was negatively affecting their work schedules and responsibilities.

Lastly, for a small number of the participants, immigration occurred because their partner was offered the opportunity to work or study abroad. In these cases, the majority of participants reported agreeing to move their children to Canada in an effort to keep their families together. However, this decision came at great personal and professional costs for some of the

accommodating partners. I now turn to the data in an effort to elucidate these four overarching themes.

4.3 Emigration for Children's Education and Career Opportunities

LUCIA

I was a single parent in Peru with a Bachelor of Education and a diploma in English Language Instruction. I was a teacher and I knew that my daughter was not getting the quality of education she needed or deserved. Sure there were private schools that could offer this to her, but there was no way I could afford that type of schooling. So, we existed in this way for some time, my daughter receiving a subpar education and me spending the majority of my time teaching people other than my daughter. Finally I decided enough is enough. I started to research where we might go, a place where I could afford to give my daughter the education she deserves (Lucia, Interview IFCA030).

Before immigrating to Canada, Lucia lived in Lima, the capital and largest city in Peru and worked full-time at a local college where she specialized in teaching English and French to Spanish speaking students. Lucia has a Bachelor of Education degree from a well known university in Peru and a diploma of ESL training from a university in the United Kingdom where she studied for one year. Moreover, Lucia has one daughter (age 8 at the time of migration). Notice how, in the above quotation, Lucia makes a point to emphasize the importance of her role in her daughter's education. In the quotation that follows, we are introduced to Lucia's status as a single mother, a fact which offers insight into the importance she places on her mothering work in this regard. An important piece of contextual information worth adding is that Lucia's ex-husband has been completely absent from their daughter's life for over five years. To help make ends meet while living in Peru, Lucia and her daughter shared a home with Lucia's father and her brother. Of family life prior to migration, Lucia explained:

Lucia: I was living as a single mom in Peru and this was a place that I had hoped to never be. Leaving my husband was the best thing though, the best

decision for me and also for my daughter so that's what I did. I lived with my dad in the capital city [Lima] and we shared also this place with my brother, who's single. My daughter had very few, very little contact with her dad. But I mean, I was more concerned when I decided to separate. So I was there and that was my family life.

Jeanna: Was it helpful to have your father and your brother in the same household?

Lucia: Well, you see, my Dad could offer some emotional support but financially it was not possible for him to help too much. We lived in the house that I grew up in, which is his, and that helped a lot. We also split what costs we could and then I would often cover the difference for things like groceries and other daily expenses. The one good thing is that in my country I could pay for a nanny. That's totally different. The system works in different ways. Unlike in Canada, you don't have to be able to afford private school in Peru to be able to afford a nanny! [chuckles] (Interview IFCA030)

Lucia went on to depict life in Peru as “not overly demanding” largely because she always had someone (family or paid help) to assist her with household and childcare work. Furthermore, Lucia described the emotional support offered by her father as a “significant pillar” in her life. Lucia's mother died when she was quite young, and it was her father who taught her that she would need to have a plan, be detail oriented, and very organized if she was going to be successful in life. When I asked Lucia about whether the values her father had passed down to her had always been important to him, she offered a very eloquent response that linked her father's principles to cultural values and Peruvian history:

Lucia: I don't know how much information you have about the history of my country, but I should tell you that it is filled with separations both geographic and cultural. My father grew up on a farm in the mountains. It is a very different life than growing up in the city. People have much less and they must work harder and be more together to create the best life possible. Historically we call this *ayllu*. When my father decided to move to the city with my mother before I was born, of course he took these values with him and it helped him to make city life work for them at that time (Interview IFCA030).

The geographic separation that Lucia is referring to in the above quotation is the natural divide between the mountainous (and more rural) regions of Peru that spread across the Andes Mountains, and the coastal regions that overlook the Pacific Ocean (where Lima is located). Throughout Peru, there is also an uneven distribution of services including health, education and police coverage, with the bulk of such services being offered centrally in the city of Lima. This marked divergence in service provision has largely meant that Peruvians living and working in mountainous regions are faced with greater systemic struggles (e.g. poverty, lack of water and disease) than those in the more urban/coastal regions. Lucia directly related her father's personal values to his rural upbringing and references *ayllu*—a term dating back to the ancient Inca times that denotes a family structure with the focus and organization of sharing work—as a value system that has influenced him throughout his lifetime.

Lucia shares many of her father's values when it comes to parenting her own daughter (a link that is explored in more detail below). Furthermore, she gets a great deal of emotional support and guidance from him and she described this as having a very positive effect on her life in Peru. Along similar lines, Lucia also emphasized being quite satisfied with her job at the local college in Lima, depicting the position in her interview as both “rewarding” and “uplifting.” Yet, living and working in Peru was not without its challenges. Lucia explained that she had little time to focus on herself and rarely if ever thought about her own wants and needs – a reality she described as largely a response to her cultural environment:

Lucia: In Peru it's just different than here [Canada]. It simply wasn't possible to spend time focusing on my own needs or what I might want for my own person. The society is much louder there, it's busy and loud and in many ways it's not stable or as smoothly run as it is here and you have to create your own bubble. This isn't to say that it's bad there, it's just different, a different culture.

Jeanna: Can you give me an example?

Lucia: Sure. My daughter's health would be the main one. She was diagnosed with Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis when she was not yet three years old. In Peru I spent so much time focusing on her illness, managing it, researching it because, I mean, I was literally controlling my daughter's illness with a website from the US. In my kind, I mean, my country, things will, research will come years later after it has been done in first, first developed countries. So that is one example of something that took up so much of my time there, just trying to make sure that I was on top of the latest treatment, things that I could do at home, environment things, whatever I could do for her (Interview IFCA030).

The time that Lucia spent managing her daughter's illness in Peru is a testament to the importance she places on her role as a mother and the principles she holds when it comes to parenting. Of all of the participants that were interviewed for this study, Lucia stands out as being one of the most prepared for Canadian life prior to arriving, an approach she links to ensuring the smooth transition of her daughter in this country. For example, Lucia recalled spending countless hours preparing her young daughter for their impending migration, which included taking her to the British library in an attempt to garner a sense of the "essence of Canada, conducting online research regarding the various school options that are available in Calgary, allowing her daughter to have a say in the type of school she would attend, and finally, searching rental websites for apartments close to this school and securing a rental prior to their departure.

In the quotation that follows, Lucia relates the approach she takes to organizing her daily life prior to migration to values passed down to her by her father as well as to her status as a single mother:

Lucia: I've always spent a lot of my time making sure that things run smoothly in our home whether it's meals, activities, or education, I have always worked hard to make sure we are prepared. These are values that I have taken from my father, that he exemplified in his life with us kids, in his work, and just in everything he did and does to this day. So I knew already, I knew I needed to

prepare my daughter thoroughly for her first year in Canada so there wouldn't be too much of a clash for her. I knew that this would make things easier for her but also for me because as a single parent here, I mean, I needed to minimize the variables we were going to be dealing with.

Jeanna: Right.

Lucia: Yeah. Because I knew that if I wanted to move into my professional life, to focus on that, then I would have to prepare us both with the information we needed. So yeah, I start looking for information. I read Calgary Herald. I knew about all the agencies, I started my accreditation as an ESL instructor from my country. So I even rented my place. I checked CBE, Calgary Board of Education. I checked. I had the results of each school so we chose the one she is attending now together. As a parent I have always thought it was important to include her in decisions that affect her. I am the mom, yes, but we are also a family so the decisions around immigration were no different (IFCA030).

The approach to parenting and daily life that Lucia offers above is one that she described during her interview as serving her well on two fronts. First, Lucia explained that taking the steps to prioritize preparedness allowed her to minimize disruptions that might otherwise come from not having a partner to share in the responsibilities of daily life and parenting. Second, it helped to counter the effects of a society that Lucia deemed “busy” and “loud” by insuring that her family was as ready as possible for whatever challenges may come their way.

In addition, the amount of time and level of attention Lucia placed on making sure that her daughter was organized and prepared was partially what fueled her desire to emigrate from Peru. As shown in the quotation that follows, Lucia was willing to give up many of the things she loved (e.g. her job, food, family and friends) to ensure, as she saw it, that her daughter would have an opportunity for the best possible education and future career path.

Lucia: In one way, I was very happy in Peru because I mean, yeah, in my country, we have really good things. But I mean, after being, after having lived in two different English-speaking countries [UK and the US each for one year] where things are organized, things work well, things are different. I thought that, it was more important that the education of my daughter would be, I

mean, would be strong so that she could do whatever she wants or desires in her life and career. And I also knew that if I didn't have to worry about her being equipped with what she needed for her future, I could move forward too. So I knew I would miss food from my country and also friends and of course my family, but there is something you have to, I mean, nothing is perfect. There is always something you have to sacrifice. So that's the sacrifice I decided to make for my daughter. (IFCA030)

For Lucia, putting her daughter's education first is one of the most important sacrifices she can make as a mother, specifically because it will help to produce a more secure future for her daughter. Furthermore, even though it was the most expensive school she could afford, Lucia felt quite strongly that her daughter's school in Lima was failing her on a number of levels, thus increasing her desire to relocate as soon as possible.

Jeanna: Would you say that your daughter's schooling was the major reason why you decided to leave Peru?

Lucia: Yes, absolutely yes. Her illness is one thing but we were managing that OK on our own at the time, or at least I thought we were. But the school, the education of my daughter was something that always picked, pick, pick, picked away at me. She attended a school close by so that was convenient for us, but I was not, I was never happy with the education that she was getting there, so I did my best to offset this. It isn't as though she was attending the lowest tier of school or anything, I mean, she was at a private school not a public school, but it was a lower grade private school, much less expensive than the best schools.

Jeanna: Could you provide an example about something you were unhappy with at her school?

Lucia: Sure. You know there were many things. I was spending what was a lot of money for me at the time, yet my daughter would come home with just books and materials that I knew they would not be using in English-speaking countries because they were not so new. Also, the facility, the building in which she went to school was not that great, and in my opinion the teacher methods were not always, were not very good. I am a teacher and I always try to build my students, to encourage them. My daughter would sometimes come home so sad because of the harsh words of her teacher. Of course you cannot say anything to that teacher though because they think those students are just

too lucky to be there, right, because there is a lesser, a worse option out there that they could end up in (IFCA030).

Informed by her experiences of living abroad and the reading she had done on the Canadian school system, Lucia decided that the best decision was to move with her daughter to Canada – a place where (as she tells it) the public system would offer her daughter a strong education and future career options.

Similar to Lucia, Cindy—a mother of one and power engineer from China who immigrated to Canada in 2011—also suggested that she and her husband moved their daughter to Canada because they wanted to provide her with the best conditions for education. However, the circumstances surrounding each woman’s immigration story are markedly different. For Cindy, it was the hierarchical structure of the education system in China—and the extremely competitive environment this creates for students—that pushed her to consider emigration.

Cindy: The, actually, I, I start my immigrant procedure because my daughter. You know, I only have one daughter, and I want to give her the best condition for education, just try my best. Maybe something not perfect but I’m trying my best. You know, China has a kind of exam that we call Gao Kao. This kind of exam is the entrance exam for university that all students must take and the process is a very stressful. We also have an ID, not like here, just maybe just one ID you can go all over Canada. But in China, we have a kind of ID by hometown, for this kind of ID, my and my husband's ID are in my home town, in my home city. So my daughter hometown, after I, my daughter was born, she also belong to my home town. So if she want to go to university, she must attend the exam in the province, the province which my home town belong, but this province is much different than Beijing where we were living. Yeah. In Beijing, you know, there are many, lots of universities, but in my home province, not so many, just few. You can also, you can also apply, the university, in Beijing, which I did, but you must get a very high mark. Yeah. So it’s, it’s really important for me that my daughter gets education primarily, middle school, high school education, in Beijing, but then she will have to go back to my home town to attend the exam. And different course in Beijing and in my hometown so it is possible that this will impact her exam in negative way and also cause much more stress for her too. So it’s difficult. Then I

decide, I can't send my daughter back to my hometown to write this exam and maybe have to, to go to a very, how to say, lower level university. So we decide it best to leave (IFCA018).

While Cindy was one of a very select number of high school graduates to be granted the privilege of attending university outside of her home province because of her high score on *Gao Kao*, she goes on to explain that she is hesitant to have her daughter travel down a similar path.

Cindy: When I write exam [Gao Ka], I get very excellent, very high mark. I get to go anywhere to study, maybe thirty, thirty students in my province get to do this. So I study engineering in top, top university in Beijing, but I always know that if I don't get the high mark to stay there, I will have to return to my, my home town. This caused much worry for me and I would not want my daughter to have this same worry. Worrying all the time, no fun, no leisure. Just always worry and study. Study too [chuckles]. No, I would not want that for her. (Interview IFCA018)

Largely because she worried that her daughter would inevitably face high levels of stress related to her education in China, Cindy reported that she and her husband decided that the best option for their family was to leave China for a new life in Canada. It is noteworthy that at the time of their emigration, Cindy left behind a career at a highly regarded German engineering company in China where she was gaining responsibility in management. Her husband, an aspiring artist, had left his job a year earlier to care for their daughter while Cindy focused on her work. Yet, when asked if it was a difficult decision for her family to leave China when their immigration papers finally came through, Cindy explained that their minds were set on relocating because they felt that this would offer their daughter a less stressful environment to complete her education.

Cindy: In the time that we were waiting to get confirmation of immigration, I get more and more responsibility at work and I start to be in charge of many projects too.

Jeanna: Did that make the decision to leave more difficult for you?

Cindy: No. Really, no, because I know that I can do similar job in Canada. We just focus on our daughter and what we want for her. I have some friend here that told me her education will be less stressful and that the system here, the school system have more, more equality. So, yeah, my husband and I focus on that (Interview IFCA018).

When asked about how she parented in the pre-migration context, Cindy offered a detailed account of how she and her husband worked hard to teach their daughter the importance of protecting time for leisure in a culture that rarely emphasizes its importance. For example, Cindy explained that while living in China, her daughter would often become overwhelmed because of the amount of school work she was assigned. In response to this, Cindy created a daily schedule for her daughter that included specified times for homework but also for relaxing, eating, and extracurricular activities like drawing and music. In her interview, Cindy suggested that her family's decision to leave China was influenced by her fear of no longer being able to safeguard their daughter from the pressures of a rigid and hierarchical education system.

Not unlike Cindy, Tobi—a manager in oil and gas and a father of four from Nigeria—described his decision to leave Africa as based on his wanting a “better” education for his children. However, in stark contrast to Cindy, Tobi discussed his search for a more “intense” education system that exudes “structure” and “efficiency.”

Jeanna: Let's talk about what prompted your decision to emigrate.

Tobi: Looking at it back in my home country, I was doing pretty good in my job. But for me, I think life is a lot more than just uh getting your, uh, maybe your professional life, uh, good and, is always, I always thinking ahead, let the kids get a better life, the idea of this better life is actually what brought me here, my kids.

Jeanna: Is there a specific moment or event that you can pinpoint? Perhaps a moment where you decided that a specific factor may not be the best for your kids?

Tobi: Yeah, sure, absolutely. You see, like education is the, uh, the main thing, you know, uh, wanting a better education for my, my kids. My country where I come from is still a developing, a developing country, you know, compared to Canada. Canada has quite an intense educational structure and a way of doing things that is regulated by the government and we wanted this for them [kids]. Back in Africa generally the government is, uh, different than here in that you cannot really trust that things will be the same day after day. And also there is not a lot of, uh, money to go into the system. So I really want my kids to be exposed to an education system that is efficient, that has a regulated and, a, uh, reliable structure where things are progressive and the curriculum is new and they have access to good materials. Also, the structure should be demanding of them, to, uh, set them on a path toward whatever they want in life. But really I think that this can only happen, if the system is set up in a proper, proper way. (Interview IFCA005)

As Tobi described, much of his difficulty with the education system in Nigeria has to do with his belief that the public school system lacks the level of sound government support that is necessary to guarantee a quality education for students. When asked further questions about his beliefs regarding the shortcomings of the Nigerian government as they pertain to education, Tobi revealed that this wife, Nahla, has a Masters of Education and was a teacher in the public school system in Nigeria. Moreover, Tobi explained that Nahla was always putting “extra effort” into her work in the attempt to offset the detrimental effects of a broken system.

Tobi: The, yeah, she [Nahla] was always putting in extra effort because she knew things were not going the way they should be at the school. So she was personally supporting the students, you know, and trying to turn them around. Talking to them, telling them their life would be a lot better if they can go through school and do what they should do, you know, irrespective of uh, some things that may not be in place by the government, you know. That there are things they could do to support themselves to get through school successfully. Even if it meant reading, uh, the old books, or even, you know, not having flushing toilet at the school, or having to walk long distances to get there, she would tell them that all this was better than not coming at all. But after some time, seeing her efforts go unsupported with never, little ever any changes, she um, you know, she started to get disappoint, disillusioned with the process. (Interview IFCA005).

Tobi went on to explain that largely because of Nahla's experience of working in the public school system in Nigeria, when their oldest child started school, the couple decided to put him in a privately run system in the hopes that the extra cost would equate to a better experience and stronger education overall. However, with four children to support, Tobi worried about the financial burden associated with financing this private education. Furthermore, Tobi reported that their children's career prospects upon finishing school were also a point of concern.

Tobi: ...And it was really difficult for us because, you know, we had wanted this large family, our four children, but then we are left with thinking about how will it be possible to afford the education of them. The government system is broken and in my mind it was not an option. But also the private system has flaws, it was very expensive and privately educated students still have a very difficult time getting a career. The money you spend doesn't guarantee anything for them, not really. And it was, uh, it was around this time that we decided to try for the immigration (Interview IFCA005).

Similar to both Lucia and Cindy, during his interview, Tobi constructed education as one of the main reasons behind his family's decision to seek emigration. Given the time that has passed since immigrating (as well as their more recent experiences with education systems in Canada), the possibility exists that these are in fact post-migration constructions around how the desire to emigrate came about. This section of the chapter thus illustrates participants' recollections of making decisions around emigration in the context of their desire to procure a certain "type" of education for their children.

While the particularities of each participant's experience vary, a number of examples demonstrating how an education system can have an *organizing effect* on the actions of individuals are offered. For these participants, it is what they understand to be the shortcomings of the education system in their home countries (e.g. a stressful environment, lack of

support/funding, dated curriculum) that they recalled as propelling their families into the immigration process. In the section that follows, understandings around the effects of violence, corruption and a broken economy in participants' pre-migration family lives are considered.

4.4 Emigration and Escaping Situations of Violence and Corruption

SUMIT

I, I know that many people must tell you that they want their children's future to be bright and so they came here. Well I, I want that too but my kids were getting a good education in Nepal. And I should be very honest with you because I was not supposed to move this country. Because as you know, as you may have heard, there is a political unrest in Nepal and it's because of this violent, violent situation, political unrest it was affecting us as a family and me as a professional and as a citizen of Nepal too. That is why we come here.
(Sumit, Interview IFCA003)

Sumit was a chartered accountant and business owner who lived and worked in the capital city of Nepal, Kathmandu Metropolitan City, prior to immigrating. He has two young children—ages seven and eleven at the time of migration—with his wife, Ashmi, to whom he has been married for fifteen years. Ashmi was also an accountant and worked at a well established Swiss-owned non-governmental organization before her family moved to Canada. Both Sumit and Ashmi have Bachelor of Commerce degrees with additional training in accounting and both worked full-time while living in Nepal. As is customary with Nepalese families, prior to immigrating, Sumit, Ashmi and their children lived in the same household as Sumit's parents, brother and his family. Sumit described his family as "very well educated." His father, a professor of geography and head of department at a local university, is well known throughout the city. Sumit's mother has a high school diploma – an accomplishment which Sumit described as "very impressive" for a woman of her generation in Nepal.

Of his family life prior to migration, Sumit explained:

We were a happy, a very, very happy family. My kids were doing well in school and they have lots of friends and family to socialize with. My mother was the one to care for them after school as we were working during the day and often into the evening. She doesn't trust anyone with the care of the children so she took on that responsibility but we had helpers to help with the care of the home, the picking up of the grocery and all of the other work. I don't really know how to describe other than to say that, you know, life worked like a well oiled machine (Interview IFCA003).

Sumit went on to state that “everything was taken care of” for his family in Nepal and that “no one had to lift a finger” when it came to domestic work or other chores associated with running a household. This left a considerable amount of time for Sumit and his family to travel together on the weekends, something they tried to do as often as possible since they rarely saw each other during the week because of their busy schedules (Sumit reported that he might go from Monday until Friday without really seeing his children). However, Sumit also explained that the peace of mind that came from knowing that his children were being well cared for in his parents' home was enough to keep him and Ashmi from worrying to any great extent over their long working hours.

Sumit: In Nepal my wife and I would try to make sure that we always did special thing with our kids on the weekends because sometimes we did not see them during the week. My wife's company would work on international hours and I own my own business which meant that we would often leave early morning and not return again until after dark. My kids were well taken care of by my mother and so we managed in this way pretty well but we did experience some guilt from time to time (Interview IFCA003).

Sumit added that oftentimes “helpers” would accompany him and Ashmi on weekend holidays with their children which meant that they would still not be required to do any “difficult” labour (e.g. cooking, cleaning and the washing and folding of clothes) while they were away. However, this also meant that the couple was rarely if ever alone with their two

children—a flow of day-to-day life that Sumit realized would likely change post-migration as a result of class dislocation.

Sumit: I knew at that time when we were waiting, waiting, and we [Ashmi and Sumit] were thinking too about how different it would be with no one there to help us with the work of the home and the kids and also trying to start over in our profession at that time. Our family has travelled abroad enough for me to know that we would be going from, you know, the upper, upper-middle class to the lowest, the very low class. This was going to happen to us and we knew that (Interview IFCA003).

In the discussion that ensued, Sumit talked at length about his parenting values and practices while living in Nepal, including what he placed emphasis and importance on, and the worries he had prior to immigrating about whether it would be possible to realize similar values in the post-migration context. For example, Sumit was very direct in pointing out that in Nepal his role as a father was almost entirely based on provision. Moreover, he described his fathering work as being focused on making sure that his kids had the “best” care (provided by extended family and paid helpers), ample opportunities to travel, and the chance for a strong education.

Jeanna: Can you tell me about your parenting values at that time? What values guided you when it came to your children?

Sumit: Hm. You know, it is interesting that you ask that because it is very, quite different than here [post-migration]. In Nepal I would always focus on providing my kids with the most opportunity. I would think always about how I can make them into better Nepalese citizen with good job to help care for family too. My values then had a focus to providing at that time and we all came together as a family to provide my kids with these opportunity in education, in travel, in activity. This meant that I worked a lot! [chuckles] And my wife, she did the same. But we did it for them and they benefited too (Interview IFCA003).

Sumit went on to express that while living in Nepal, he was convinced in his belief that he and his family were doing a good job of providing his children with the tools needed to be successful. Furthermore, as demonstrated in the quote that began this section of the chapter,

Sumit was also adamant that life in Nepal was “a good life” and that he was never supposed to move to Canada. Unlike many of the other participants in this study who planned and saved for their journey to Canada years in advance, Sumit applied for immigration with the Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program (AINP) in 2008 under the direction of his father and was quickly accepted because of his education and work experience.

Jeanna: From your account of what life was like for you in Nepal, it sounds like things were going very well for you and your family. Why then did you decide to move your family to Canada?

Sumit: As you know, as you may have heard, there is a political unrest in Nepal and it’s because of this violent, violent situation, political unrest it was affecting us as a family and me as a professional and as a citizen of Nepal too. That is why we come here.

Jeanna: Can you provide some detail about how you were affected?

Sumit: Actually as a professional, as a business man, I always, I was donating, I was forced to donate, I was forced to pay some rebel group. At first it was only rarely but then it became almost a regular, monthly and sometime weekly thing. They always ask me for a donation but if you don’t give them the money, if you say you don’t have, they will come back the next week to collect or make threat. That’s the main reason we are not feeling secure over there. And that’s why we moved here. (Interview IFCA003)

The broader situation of “political unrest” in Nepal that Sumit is referring to in the above quotation is the Nepalese civil war that occurred between 1996 and 2006 in that country. The effects of the war were felt by many Nepalese citizens as the Communist Party of Nepal sought to overthrow the Nepalese monarchy. The formal end to the war came in 2006 when the Government of Nepal and the Unified Communist Party of Nepal signed the Comprehensive Peace Accord which allowed the Communist Party to take part in government proceedings. However, for Sumit and his family, the signing of this treaty did not put an end to the violence and fear brought to bear on them by “rebel groups.” As Sumit described it, the accord

legitimized the power of insurgents and made it easier for them to exploit the Nepalese people. It was largely the existence of this systemic political violence—and the understanding that the detrimental effects to his family were increasing—that led Sumit to seek immigration to Canada.

Similar to Sumit, other participants in this study chose to leave their countries of origin to escape situations of erupting violence, political corruption and the dismal economic climate that resulted. For instance, Tira—a mother of two and pharmacist who immigrated to Canada from Syria in 2007—discussed how the escalating situation between the government and those groups seeking to overthrow it was affecting citizens long before the official start of the Syrian civil war in 2011. While Tira explained that her family was not directly affected by the uprisings, she did describe the political situation as significantly influencing her family’s level of comfort in Syria.

Tira: And then like now I’m thinking, what’s made us like you know, remove from there, remove ourselves of Syrian society. We were good as a family, we were not harmed in any way at that time but the whole situation, like society, political, whichever, we were thinking of better futures for our kids. And we were all worried about how the situation would escalate. Even then, at that time we were worried. Some people thought it would not touch us in the city [Damascus] but I, we thought different. (Interview IFCA024).

Tira and her husband chose immigration to Canada as a viable option for their family amidst a situation of growing unrest in Syria. During her interview, Tira reflected on her family’s departure from Syria—and especially the event of leaving her extended family behind—with considerable anguish.

I never thought at the time when we were getting ready to leave our country, like when we were leaving our [extended] family members, our home and everything else, I never could have known the situation in my country would get this bad. So many innocent people are dying in my country and it just keeps getting worse. (Interview IFCA024)

While Tira went on to emphasize how grateful she is that her immediate family was able to get out of Syria when they did, immigration is a complex process and the effects on family members (both pre-and post-migration) are often multidimensional. For example, Tira was faced with negotiating feelings of both enthusiasm and regret prior to her family's departure. Moreover, after Tira and her family arrived in Canada, the war in Syria continued to exist as one of a combination of factors that came together to cause significant strain in their post-migration family life – an occurrence that will be considered in greater detail in Chapter 6.

However, it is not only violence or the fear of violence at the level of a large-scale conflict that participants made use of when constructing stories around why they left their home country. For some, it was the fear of more random criminal acts and general unease about familial safety that acted as a catalyst for immigration. For example, Anna—a mother of three and medical doctor from the Philippines—described the choice to leave her home country as one based on the belief that Canada would offer a safer environment for her family (e.g. where her kids could walk down the street without having to fear for their safety).

Jeanna: So just backtracking for a second, can you tell me about the main reason why you chose to leave the Philippines?

Anna: Yeah. It was actually for their safety, the safety of my kids. Because as you might know, in the Philippines you cannot just walk by yourself down the street, you cannot do this. Many people I know hide a knife in their purse in case someone will attack them. They clutch that purse so hard while riding the city bus because you just never know what will happen there. Especially I have three girls so the risks are higher because they are more likely to be attacked or raped just because they ride the bus then say a man would be. So here [Canada] oh, you, you have the police that are really visible and there's not much crime here but it is not so safe there as here. (IFCA012)

Similar to Anna, a number of other participants described allowing their children more liberties in Canada when it came to situations such as staying home alone, staying outside after dark, and

spending time with friends that parents do not know. In almost all instances in which such narratives occurred, participants described feeling that Canada offered a safer environment than their country of origin and therefore, increasing the amount of freedom children and teens were offered was justifiable.

As a final example of the part fear for one's safety and livelihood played in some participants' post-migration accounts of why they sought emigration, Laya—a mother of one and manager at a telecommunications company in Iran—described how political corruption and violence led her family to look abroad for better opportunities

Jeanna: Tell me about the decision to come to Canada.

Laya: Yeah. Oh, how can I tell you? Everything was fine [laughter!] Yeah. Everything was fine for us and uh, I was satisfied with my job, yeah. But we had problem in the country. Um, I mean, not we, I think most of the people, majority of people have problem there. Because of the lifestyle and oh, we need to, I mean, change the lifestyle. Yeah. You don't feel confidence there, because you can't improve well at your job, your society. And I mean, uh, you can't reach everything you want. And uh, there's a restriction from the society to you, for you. In Iran most educated people immigrate to, I mean, developed countries.

Jeanna: Okay. Does the government put a lot of restrictions on what you can do in day-to-day life? Is that what you mean?

Laya: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. A lot, yeah. We can't reach any goals. You can't improve your, I mean, education because there are a lot of restriction there and they don't accept everybody. And another problem is for example, in your job, at your job. You can't reach, you can't improve very well. They should know you, you should have relation with them if you want to move upward in your work.

Jeanna: Is it different for women than it is for men?

Laya: Yeah. On women, on women, yeah. There are many more restrictions on what women can do. And when you're not satisfied with your life, then you think about it. And when you are educated people, it is hard to not think about how unsatisfied you are, because you know that life is not like this for

everyone, you are aware of it. And in our country, the main problem for men and women both is economic inflation, yeah. And for example, you're working and you earn exact money. Okay, exact money. But economy I, I mean, has inflation there. Okay? And everything changing. For example, when you buy, I mean, a packet of milk there, for example, for twenty dollars, then after one week, maybe it's becomes twenty-five dollars. Any change is possible, yeah.

Jeanna: Nothing's regulated.

Laya: Yeah. Yeah. And grow, always grow but the salary's the same. But some people that have relation with employer or with government and these people can save a lot of money, a lot of money. If you have the right, if you know the right people you know to buy this today because tomorrow it will, the price will change.

Jeanna: They have inside information.

Laya: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And you can't do that. Or we couldn't do that. You think it's better to change your condition. It's better to change, not only changing the city, because changing the city doesn't change anything for you, doesn't change the condition for you. You have to change the country because the government ruins every city, every town. The government corrupts employers and employers mistreat the people. It's in the system and we couldn't do it anymore. (IFCA019)

Laya and her husband both have engineering degrees from Iran – Laya a Bachelor of Computer Engineering and her husband a Bachelor of Civil Engineering. Laya suggested that both she and her husband had what would be considered “good” jobs by Iranian standards, but they felt as though the large companies they worked for had been co-opted by a corrupt government. As alluded to by Laya in the above quotation, she and her husband felt that the only way for them to “get ahead” in their careers in Iran would be to forfeit their better judgment and become pawns in the backdoor politics and inequitable dealings of their employers. As Laya described it, this was not a path that the couple wanted to go down, and so it was determined that immigration to Canada offered a viable option for them to get ahead in life and work without compromising their values.

Laya waited seven years for her immigration application to be accepted. After four years of waiting, she and her husband decided to have a baby. Laya had wanted to wait until she got to Canada to have her first child; however, the long wait made her feel as though the immigration was never going to happen. This period of waiting significantly affected Laya's pre-migration life. For example, she explained that she was "...always on edge wondering if this would be the day, the month, the year that it would happen" (Interview IFCA019).

Finally, Laya's application was accepted and she and her family began to prepare for their move to Canada. However, similar to many of the participants in this study, Laya was disheartened to find that after waiting for years to immigrate to Canada, changed immigration policies now made it next to impossible for her to sponsor her mother to join her family in Calgary. The stresses and strains associated with establishing family life pre-migration will be explored in the chapter that follows. However, at this point it is important to note that for many potential immigrants, waiting for an immigration application to be approved can considerably alter their pre-migration lives. For example, participants reported putting certain things on hold such as family trips, accepting promotions at work, spending money on "extras", and like Laya, having children.

4.5 Emigration and the Culture of Overtaxing Work

Danny

At the time before we immigrate I think I was not very happy because I'm very tired due to the long time, long hours of work and very busy days and nights as well. And at weekend, or Saturday and Sunday, I would need to sleep or rest instead of playing with my kids, so my kids also unhappy with the stress of life because they enter, they went into school at 8 am and they return home 7 pm, yeah, so they also, they suffer many stressful life. So I think this life [in Canada] is happier life (Interview IFCA023).

Danny is a pharmacist who came to Canada in 2011 with his wife Jin and their two children (ages 9 and 10 at the time of migration) from Seoul, South Korea. Both Danny and Jin have Masters Degrees – Danny’s in Pharmacy and Jin’s in Finance. Prior to immigrating to Canada, Danny worked full-time as a pharmacist and Jin worked full-time at a national bank. In the above quotation, Danny describes life in South Korea as both “busy” and “stressful” – a reality that he went on to attribute to the culture of work that exists in this country.

Danny: In South Korea the culture is that every worker have to work more than ten hours, maybe ten to twelve hours a day, and even sometime until midnight if the work need to get done or if the boss ask it of you. So I work and my wife work too, so we have, we need some help to care of my kids. My mother-in-law cared my kids and we also, my wife and I, entered work before 8 am and I returned 8 pm, my wife returned usually over 9 pm.

Jeanna: And this was a routine that happened regularly? To get home that late in the evening?

Danny: Oh yes, regular, yes. This happen almost every day and then sometime for my wife on weekend too (IFCA023).

In the conversation that ensued, Danny talked at length about what his family life was like prior to migration and consistently linked the organization of his day-to-day life back to the demanding work schedule that he and Jin were attempting to negotiate at the time. Unlike some of the other participants in this study, Danny and Jin could not afford to pay domestic and childcare helpers, largely, Danny suggested, because the cost of living in South Korea is quite high compared to the average salary.

Danny and Jin invited Jin’s mother to live with them so that someone would be at home to care for their children between the time when they got home from school and the time when their parents arrived home from work. Moreover, Danny explained that while it is customary in Korean families for the daughter-in-law to be more or less “adopted” into the family of her

husband, in their particular case, Jin's father had passed away and therefore it made more sense for Jin's mother to help with the children. While this arrangement sounds promising, it actually caused problems for Danny on a number of levels.

Danny: Before I came here I was just a money-maker, money-maker and a person sleeping on weekend. For example, in South Korea the, in South Korea any, any father don't go to their kids school because caring for kids is only mother's role or grandmother's role.

Jeanna: And were you okay with that? I mean, did you feel at that time that it was your wife's job and your mother-in-law's job to care for your kids?

Danny: Well really I have no, little choice because in South Korea every father have to work from early in the morning to late in the evening. I have exact finishing time most days at my job, but another worker don't have any regular finish time so they can't, if they have to work until midnight, then they never see their kid. So I would arrive home at 8pm and at least see my kids for some time before they go to sleep. Maybe one hour or two hour. But one thing is that men in South Korea no matter what time they get home they never really help in work for home or kids. Especially for me because I lived at the time, I lived with my mother-in-law, mother-in-law didn't want her son-in-law to work such a, do such a work, so sometimes I wanted to do things like cook, clean, help with the kids or whatever was to be do but I cannot, could not.

Jeanna: You wanted to do these things but you weren't able to because your mother-in-law didn't want you to be involved?

Danny: Yeah. She would not allow for this and I was very unhappy in this way, day in day out working many, many hours and no family time no time to be creative no time for anything other than money-making (IFCA023).

Danny went on to explain that these cultural ideas about gender are to some extent a generational phenomenon in South Korea, with the members of his mother-in-law's generation being the strongest proponents of ideas about the "proper" division of work between men and women. He also suggested that in his generation these ideas are slowly changing largely because women are working as many hours outside of the home as men are and it is therefore not possible for them to take on the level of domestic work they might once have been expected to.

For Danny, his lack of involvement with his children and the long hours he had to work outside of the home each week were very troubling. In fact, when I showed Danny around the University of Calgary's campus following our interview, he went so far as to say that in South Korea, he felt like his life was slipping away from him. Where some men might be comfortable with the status of "money-maker" in that it affords them a sense of power and can often absolve them from doing any significant level of work on the home front, Danny felt an increasing sense of sadness about the organization of his family life—a sadness that he described to me as coming from being "like a spectator" in his own life (i.e., watching his children grow and change without being involved in their lives in ways that were meaningful to him).

Furthermore, Danny explained that Jin was also becoming increasingly unhappy with her job before the two decided to immigrate to Canada. For Jin, a sudden elevation in the number of firings in the banking industry—largely a consequence of the economic recession that had taken hold globally during the period of 2008-2009—meant a significant increase in the workload of remaining employees.

Danny: At the time before we immigrate my wife was having very difficult time in bank, so yeah, it was very stressful for her because she have to deal with many various kind of work by herself, without any help. So she have to work from 8 am to midnight on many occasion for at least the last two years before we come to Canada.

Jeanna: That must have been very difficult for her.

Danny: Yes, very difficult. At that time the, every company need to reduce some income, so in these day make money by reducing some employees. Many worker at the time, many worker fired and some retired from her bank, so she have to do all of the work when the other workers leave, but no, no pay increase, the boss say that people left should just be happy to have a, her, to have a job at the time. So every day she wanted to retire from her bank. So at that time, I, I saw the program to immigrate to Canada, and we think that maybe this will help us to have a different life with less demanding, demand of time or demand in work because we know from talking to friend and also from

reading about Canada that these demands are not allowed or are to some extent not of legal form in that country and so I, I apply. And luckily the process, process happen very quickly. It take, it took a year, one year and two months. Very quickly, I think (IFCA023).

Danny and Jin constructed immigration to Canada as a viable option that would allow them to elude the long hours and demanding culture of work that was so prominent in South Korea in 2009. Although Danny was aware that the recession was happening worldwide, he and Jin were also under the impression (mostly from internet reading and discussions with friends) that life in Canada would introduce a higher level of balance to their lives because employers were not in a position to expect extremely long hours from their employees. For Danny, the prospect of immigrating to Canada also meant the added bonus of eliminating input from extended family members on how he and Jin ought to organize their conjugal family – a theme in Danny’s narrative that will be revisited at a later point in this dissertation.

When asked why he and Jin decided on Calgary as a point of destination, Danny disclosed that it was an immigration agent in South Korea that suggested the Alberta city as a “less stressful” alternative to the seemingly more natural choice of either Toronto or Vancouver. In the quotation that follows, Danny recalls this interaction and its connection to the hopes he had for his family life at this time.

Jeanna: How did you decide that Calgary would be your destination?

Danny: My immigration agent suggested Calgary. Because Toronto and Vancouver is most popular city in South Korea but she suggested in Calgary for my family. Because actually my son has ADHD, yeah, it a kind of mental disease. In South Korea, loser.

Jeanna: Pardon me?

Danny: Loser. Everyone don’t want to, him to play with them and they think he is a loser.

Jeanna: Oh, a loser...

Danny: Yeah. It's a kind of bullying that happens at the school, so yeah, so Calgary is more, less stressful for my kids than Vancouver and Toronto, so my immigration, she suggest Calgary. Yeah. So I satisfied.

Jeanna: Was your immigration agent Canadian or South Korean?

Danny: South Korean. But she also, my counselor also was immigrant in Canada. She lived in Toronto and Vancouver and Calgary but she say that Calgary is less stress for kids because there are less students to one teacher, so teacher cares more about each kid and is also able to more carefully consider their work and pro, progress. I know my son will need more care from school teachers, not like in South Korea where they want every kid, everyone to act the same, be the same. That so hard for him to manage. I just want my kid to be happy and have good not stress life. So would be easier for us to move to Vancouver with our friend but we say no, no, we will do for him to give him best chance for happy, happy life (IFCA023).

As a father in South Korea, Danny described feeling distanced from his struggling son on a number of levels. First, his mother-in-law attempted to minimize the amount of time Danny spent on homework and other activities with his children because she believed that Danny needed to use his “free” time to rest in preparation for his paid job. Second, the long working hours demanded of Danny combined with a culture of work that fundamentally erases fathers from the caregiving equation, made it doubly difficult for Danny to become more involved in his children's lives.

Finally, because uniformity, standardization and excellence have been constructed as the main pillars of the South Korean education system, a dominant institutional discourse promoting a “one size fits all” approach largely permeated student-teacher, parent-teacher, and student-student interactions within the system. This discourse worked to distance Danny from his son on an additional level, since any opportunity to advocate for his son with teachers and other

educational professionals was largely silenced by a system that would not bend. Thus, Danny's ability to improve his son's position in South Korea was starkly limited.

Not unlike the account of pre-migration family life offered by Danny, Geoff—an investment banker and father of two from the United Kingdom—described making the decision with his wife to move their family to Canada in 2006 because their priorities had become skewed more towards work than family. While both parents had extremely lucrative careers while living in the UK, Geoff explained that they gave up their lavish lifestyle to focus on their family life.

Geoff: Um, before I came here I was in investment banking in London. And my routine then was I was up at 6am, uh getting the train into London probably not getting back til 7:30, 8pm at night. So I was gone for over 12 hours a day, 5 days a week. And in fact, before we came out here, I was commuting to Switzerland on a weekly basis. So I wasn't seeing the kids grow up.

Jeanna: Mm-hmm.

Geoff: So we made a lifestyle change by coming to Canada. Um, and if you like, we gave up the money and the cars to have more of a family life
(Interview IFCA010)

For Geoff, the daily grind of working twelve-hour days, five days a week, combined with the fact that he felt he was missing out on his children's lives, was the motivation he and his wife needed to seek a drastic change for their family through immigration. Furthermore, Geoff suggested that he and his wife began to lose the appreciation they once had for money—a realization that was fueled in part by what Geoff described as a sort of joint "midlife crises."

Jeanna: So why move?

Geoff: It was a midlife crisis

Jeanna: Really? (Laughter)

Geoff: Um, pretty much we both hit 40 And we were both pretty successful at completely different careers to what we're doing here. But, we weren't getting the opportunity to spend family time. And as I said, I was out 12 hours a day. You come back and you've got a weekend and you're trying to sort of balance family life, but not seeing the kids to me was, was huge. No amount of money can compare to that. You know, I was coming home and they were in bed. I was gone before they're out of bed. And um, we sort of had an epiphany of "Well, is this what it's about?" And decided, "No, we would be better off if we did something else". And um, we had a complete change. People thought we were nuts. Because we came here, we had no house, no job, nothing. We'd been here for a holiday. And in fact, I'd only spent a day in Calgary. But we'd fallen in love with Calgary, driving from Kananaskis to Calgary airport on a holiday. My wife would come back in the October for a week, and we just sold up and came (IFCA010).

Geoff is by far not the only participant to suggest that visiting or seeing pictures of Canada propelled a decision to pursue this country as a point of destination. In fact, a number of the participants in this study stated that pictures and online advertisements showing Canada (and Calgary in particular) drew them to this country because the picturesque landscapes evoked a sense of calm and tranquility not readily available in their countries of origin. Cindy, from China (introduced above), is one such participant who compared the "concrete city" of Beijing to the snow capped mountains just a short distance from Calgary.

As in the case of Cindy, participants introduced in this section of the chapter constructed specific circumstances or occurrences in pre-migration life as catalysts that prompted them to consider emigration. In the section that follows, the focus is shifted somewhat to consider the experiences of participants who described coming to Canada as a method of keeping their families together when faced with spousal relocation. In such cases, the person who had been professionally relocated often had a very different experience of immigration and settlement than the person who followed. For instance, in situations where both members of a couple have experience and credentials that cause them to be considered at the institutional level of

immigration as “independent” migrants (i.e., neither is sponsored through the family reunification program), having a job lined up can significantly alter one partner’s experience of settlement since the often challenging work of finding employment in a preferred field has already taken place. The stories of the participants that follow are thus somewhat unique in that they did not come to Canada on the same professional footing as their partner, even though in the majority of cases levels of education and work experience were quite similar.

4.6 Emigration and Spousal Relocation

Rosa

We initially got an offer of work for, for my husband and this is why we came here. He was a direct hire from one of the oil and gas engineering firms, yeah. After only six months of him being offered a spot in the provincial, Alberta provincial nominee program, we were able to come to Canada. And about only one year after that we got into the permanent resident program. It all happened so quickly that I didn’t really have to, to put anything in place for myself. We just pick up and follow his, the work (Rosa, Interview IFCA016).

Rosa is a mother of two children (ages 6 and 7) from the Philippines who has a Bachelor of Human Resources Management and operated a spa in the capital city of Manila before migrating to Canada with her husband and children in 2007. Rosa’s husband, Felix, has a Bachelor of Civil Engineering from a well-known university in Manila and worked as a design consultant in the oil and gas industry for ten years before being offered the opportunity to work in the same industry in Alberta. Although Rosa ran a successful business in Manila, she began her interview by emphasizing her husband’s place as the breadwinner in their family.

Rosa: My, my husband has always been the breadwinner. I’m sure you hear that a lot from the Filipino women. My husband has been the breadwinner ever since we have been together, since graduating from university, even before we got married. This has always been his role in our household. So he’s been helping out his family, friends and people in the, in our community too. And I mean, we had a pretty good situation in that he did well with his job and I did well too. But you know then all of sudden it happens and oh he has been

offered a direct hire from one of the oil and gas engineering firms in Canada, Calgary. Yeah. (IFCA016)

Rosa's construction of the term "breadwinner" involves financial provision not only for conjugal family members but also for extended kin, friends, and sometimes community members in need. Moreover, Rosa explained at later point in the interview that the Filipino culture is quite "collectivist," wherein the social status of a conjugal family unit is derived from the actions and/or perceived value of all family members – including extended kin and god-parents. This is one of a number of reasons why it is considered important to financially support family in the Filipino culture. Other reasons include honour and pride being central to the Filipino family value system, and the importance placed in this society on respecting and caring for elders (Interview exchange, IFCA016 and IFCA014).

Rosa's family life necessarily played out in this context and the values around which she described parenting are reflective of this. For instance, Rosa explained that having her daughter be recognized by family, friends, and acquaintances as "respectful" (as opposed to "pretty" or "smart") is the best compliment either of them could receive. For Rosa, having a respectful child is a testament to "good" mothering, and she worked hard to raise both of her children in this way while living in the Philippines—an achievement that involved producing children that neither "talk back" nor "assert their opinion when being talked to by an elder" (Interview IFCA016).

Of pre-migration family life Rosa further explained:

Rosa: It was, um, it was good, I mean, like the Filipino way, I was, um, uh, how do I say this? I was involved with my kids but I also have some help, a helper, because I'm working full time. And, um, my family is very close and we were all together there. My husband worked full time too and then, um, it was normal. I mean, it was um, I guess, I guess um, happy and we're with my parents, my mom is there. Yeah. And I have relatives that I can turn to whenever there are conflicts in the family. So you have someone. You have support. And it's, if you need a hug, there's someone to hug you... [trails off]

Jeanna: So like most families there were some ups and downs

Rosa: Yes, oh yes, there were those. Actually, when my husband was offered the job to come here, one of the reasons why I say yes was because there was some problem in the family, I mean between, between me and him, in our relationship, and I thought that maybe coming here could be a fresh start for us. So, yeah, it was happy most times but not all the time (IFCA016).

Rosa refrained from going into detail about the specifics of her marital problems; however, she did tell me after the interview had concluded that being a woman in the Philippines means that you do not always have the right to voice your opinion or dissatisfaction to your husband because it is perceived as disrespectful. This is a sentiment that was echoed in the interviews of two other Filipino women in this study: Isabel and Gabrielle. Similar to Rosa, both of these women described the Philippines as a place where women are largely subordinate to their husbands within the family.

Over the last decade in particular, gender inequality in the Philippines has been worked up as a social problem in need of attention and the national response has been mostly positive. Specifically, initiatives such as the Plan for Gender-Responsive Development (PPGD), Framework Plan for Women (FPW), and the provision on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) have been enacted to chip away at discriminatory government and social policy and promote women's empowerment and gender equality (Philippine Commission on Women, 2009).²⁹ Yet, while change is occurring in some capacity at the structural level, as demonstrated in the accounts of Rosa, Isabel and Gabrielle, cultural beliefs and social interactions are not necessarily changing at the same rate, and thus inequalities persist at the level of family relations (Ranson 2010).

²⁹ See <http://pcw.gov.ph/pcw-thrusts-focus-areas>

While Rosa's marriage had some strain before immigrating to Canada, the support she garnered from her family and closest friends helped immensely to ease this, and she discussed at length during her interview how she had thought these relationships were something she would "...never be asked to live without" (IFCA016). Rosa maintained that the prospect of migrating had not been discussed in her family until her husband came home and told her that there was a job in Canada for him and that he intended to accept it. This is a unique situation in that as Rosa explained it, rather than applying to work abroad, her husband was approached about the opportunity through his employer which meant that the couple had not discussed the possibility of moving until some time after the existence of the job had been made known to him. After only six months, Rosa and her family were getting ready to leave their home in the Philippines, and as Rosa described it, this caused her a considerable amount of anguish and worry.

Rosa: Oh, I, I was not ready to leave oh not at all. I was so upset just crying and crying and even after we arrive here two months, three months and I still spend my time crying while my husband is at work. I had very little information about the city [before immigrating], about any of the specifics of what it would be like for us. Sure I could go online and read some information there, but every time I tried to do this I would just get so upset at the idea of leaving and so I just didn't look. I thought to myself this is something that will help my marriage, this is something that my husband wants for his work, and I mean, economically or financially, you know, we would be able to do more for our family. But the whole time this little voice inside me is saying "Don't do it! Don't do it!" And oh, it was just so much change with no one else to join us. And I thought of how I would miss my job and the people I work with there and also how will my kids adjust. (IFCA016)

Notice how Rosa emphasized the idea that immigrating to Canada might help to restore her troubled marriage, even though an inner voice kept telling her to stay in the Philippines.

Presumably Rosa's husband had reasons for applying to immigrate not unlike the reasons given by participants in the previous sections, yet these reasons do not figure into Rosa's account of

her family's immigration process, nor become her reasons for immigrating. Instead, Rosa emphasized a motive for immigration that made sense to her – the possibility of strengthening her marriage.

Not unlike Rosa, Isabel—a mother of two with a Bachelor of Computer Engineering from the Philippines—also offered a narrative of immigration that involved leaving her home country when her husband was offered a job in Calgary working as an engineer with an oil company. However, in this particular case, it was actually Isabel who orchestrated her family's move as a way to escape the overbearing reach of her mother-in-law and to avoid further separation from her husband.

Isabel: My husband had been working away for some years prior to us immigrating to Canada. He had worked in Saudi and then Singapore and China and all the while I was living in the Philippines with his parents, in their house. My mom is a single mom and she has to take care of my brother so before I have kids of my own I work to help provide for them. But when I have kids and my husband is working away, it is decided that I should quit my job and move to live with his parents. All the while I say to him, like I was always asking, can you bring me to Saudi? It's okay. It's a desert. As long as I'm with you. And you know, we're together, I'm with his family, it's different. His mom is always wanting to change how I am doing things with our children and she is quite critical of many things. But we never really had a clash because I make myself flexible. Whatever they want, okay, sure it's okay. So finally after our second child he take two weeks off and then decide he will take more time because he can afford it, but he doesn't have any plan. We don't have any plan of migrating to Canada. And I see this as the perfect opportunity to change our situation. I started to search internet. I tried to find him a job. Luckily I found an opening here in Calgary. I send, I emailed his resume. I did everything. I filled out the application online for him.

Jeanna: Did he know you were doing it?

Isabel: Um, kind of. Like, he was napping that time. I said, oh, I found a job opening and I'm going to send your resume and he said, okay. So I did everything. I filled up everything for him. And then a week after, they called. So they called, they did a full interview a um phone interview and then he got

the job. And it was like oh, my god, this is a dream come true for me (IFCA014).

Isabel's husband was offered a job in Calgary in 2006 when the economy was booming. For Isabel, the prospect of immigrating was a "dream come true" as it provided a seemingly stable alternative to her current situation of living in the home of her in-laws. At a later point in the interview, Isabel explained that her greatest priority had always been to have her family living permanently in one country and in a house that they do not share with any of their relatives (something that first happened in Calgary when their children were 8 and 4). Isabel also suggested that while her husband always held the decision making power in their relationship, she hoped that moving to Canada would help him to realize the importance of an equal partnership.

Isabel: My husband has always been the one to make the decision in our relationship whether it comes to money, where we live, you know, like the big decision, he has always been the one. For example when he got the job in Calgary, he had me and the kids wait for an entire year in the Philippines before joining him here because he wanted to make sure that he liked it ok here before we are to join him. And all the while he would say no, no, I do not like it I miss my home I love my home, but I would tell him the importance of the work for our family, the importance of the money, to try to make him think that it was his idea to stay there, like he will come to the realization that the money is important [laughter]. Anyway, after one year he finally says it is ok for us to join him and I am so excited! I keep thinking that if we can just make it there then everything will be different. We will be together and we will be in a society where equality is important, where the wives are not just automatically expected to do what the husband and the husband's family say to do. I've done so much research on Canada and I know that this is not the way it is here even before I came. I was so excited at this because it will be important for raising both my kids but my daughter especially (IFCA014).

Prior to immigrating, Isabel and Rosa shared the hope that moving to Canada would help to improve parts of their family life that they were unsatisfied with. For Isabel in particular, the hope that her husband would begin to see her as an equal in their relationship was important to

her on a personal level, but it was also important to her as a mother attempting to raise a strong and independent daughter. As explained by Isabel during her interview, largely because her children are still young and their father has always worked abroad, she felt that there was still time to create meaningful changes within her family – especially in terms of how her children will be raised.

As a final example, Aisha—a pediatrician and mother of two from Pakistan—also immigrated to Canada because her husband (a chemical engineer who had previously completed a post secondary training certificate in the US) was interested in bolstering his career by working abroad. While in some ways Aisha described being optimistic about the impending move to Canada, she also had considerable apprehensions.

Aisha: Pakistan is a very conservative society. I cannot run about like this, bareheaded. I have to cover my head. I have to even, in my home city, I have to even cover my face. It's, you can call it a male dominated society. There is no, there is very little liberty for females and women do not even recognize their, their basic rights over there. My family was different because my family's well educated in Pakistan, but even then, the males are given much preference as compared to females. So the idea of moving to Calgary, I knew from travelling with my parents who are also, they are also medical doctors, but I knew from travelling with them that Canadian society, it, is broader, it has good impact on the personality and I thought that perhaps my vision will be much broader once I move there. I knew at the time what are my basic rights and I know what, as a woman, I can do so I hoped the society in Canada would reinforce these ideas in me and I was excited for that. Also I looked forward to there being no discrimination between, the gender discrimination. Even the workplace, as I had heard from my other friends, gender discrimination is not tolerated. So I knew that and I looked forward to that.

Jeanna: Right so it sounds like you were excited for changes to societal norms, particularly as they pertain to gender and equality.

Aisha: Yeah, absolutely, yeah, I was. But in another sense, in a professional sense, I was so worried because the doctor in Pakistan, it is considered like a god. And it is given very, it is given profound respect and a lot of

opportunities, a lot of incentives and in return the doctor feels that he has, that all the burden is on him and he has to be more responsible and more productive to work for society and community. This is the exchange that happens, but in return, for me as a doctor in Pakistan, I was very highly regarded in my community. And I loved my job, the work, I loved it. I knew that it would be difficult to re-establish my professional career in Canada and I worried about that. But I thought that with the support of my parents, I can do this, I would do this for my husband (Interview IFCA020).

While Aisha explained that her job as a physician was much more highly regarded and difficult to attain in Pakistan than her husband's job as an engineer, this did not mean that she had a larger or even an equal share of power in their relationship during this time. The interactional dynamics within Aisha's family played out against a cultural backdrop that emphasized female subordination and compliance. This is evidenced by the fact that Aisha did not even tell her husband about her fears of interrupting her career until after they had arrived in Calgary and she began to struggle with the recertification process.

4.7 Summing up

Prior to immigrating to Canada, many of the participants in this study experienced family lives that were buffered in ways by aspects of their middle-class affluence (e.g. paid domestic help) and the proximity of extended kin networks to aid in the work of the home and the care of the children. This chapter also shows that while there is much diversity in terms of the particular experiences of participants in their pre-migration lives, external factors (whether institutional, social or familial) have an organizing effect on individual action. In other words, many participants emphasized that they were impelled to consider emigration—in some instances leaving behind a country, family members, or a professional occupation that was quite important to them—in order to improve another aspect of their lives or their children's lives. In many cases, participants' accounts of immigration decisions are constructed as interesting examples of

pre-migration “trade-offs,” and offer important insight into the values (both personal and professional) that they felt were important at this point in time.

The chapter that follows focuses on participants’ arrival in Canada and the transitional period that accompanies international immigration. In so doing, it opens a window onto the new social, economic, and institutional situations participants found themselves in during the first months of settlement, and explores the decisions they made in an attempt to establish a certain quality of life for their family during this time.

Chapter 5: Transition into Post-Migration Family Life

5.1 Introduction

Similar to the level of diversity shown in their pre-migration lives, participants in this study had quite varied experiences upon first arriving in Calgary. While in some cases the ease with which participants began their new life was directly related to the amount of research they had conducted on Canadian life prior to migration (e.g. see profile of Lucia in Ch. 4), in the majority of cases, it was existing links to family, friends and familial acquaintances already living in Calgary and surrounding areas that had the greatest impact on settlement experiences.

The importance of “weak ties” (e.g. those outside of a person’s immediate social circle, such as connections formed in the settlement sector) in providing instrumental and informational support to migrants during settlement has been well documented (Granovetter, 1973, 1983; Damaris et al., 1998; Pfeffer and Parra, 2009). However, less research has explored the ways in which local informal post-migration networks are created and accessed by new immigrants (Wierzbicki, 2004; Creese, Dyck and McLaren, 2008). The accounts of the participants in this study contribute to this gap in the literature by demonstrating the centrality of informal and kin-based social networks to the successful integration of immigrants in Calgary during the first months of settlement and beyond. In so doing, participants’ narratives offer a window on to how both previously existing and newly cultivated social networks were accessed by participants in their pursuit to re-establish work and family life in Calgary.

This chapter thus begins by exploring participants’ use of social networks during settlement, as well as the consequences a lack of support and culturally specific knowledge had for some participants. The focus then shifts to explore additional strategies that participants employed during the initial period of settlement, including financial trade-offs and the renegotiation of familial expectations.

5.2 Arriving in Calgary: The importance of Social Networks and Cultural Knowledge

Many of the participants in this study relied heavily on the support and guidance of existing contacts upon first arriving in Calgary. The post-migration narrative of Anna (introduced in Chapter. 4), offers one such example of the central role extended kin can play in the lives of newcomers during the early stages of settlement.

Anna: For us, the one who helped us was my goddaughter. Without her I'm not sure what we would have done when we first arrived.

Jeanna: So you were quite grateful to have her in Calgary then?

Anna: Extremely, extremely grateful. She is part of the reason why we chose this city. She's, she's my goddaughter, during baptism, but then when she got married, she make sure that all her godmother will be also during the wedding will be also her witnesses, so that's where I found out that she's also staying here in Calgary. Actually she's living in Chestermere. So when she found out, way back in 2007 that I have an application to immigrate to Canada, she already told me that, Anna, I will help you to settle. So for our first two weeks here we stayed in Chestermere, so and then after that we moved to Calgary. And I really think you have to be prepared. My application took five years, so in that five years, I have to research what province I would like to settle, what are the job opportunities, what's my schooling for my children. So I did all of that research but still it is just words on a page. The help that a friend or relative can provide is just so important for new immigrants who are starting out their lives. This is something so crucial that you cannot get through the um, through the internet.

Jeanna: I've heard that from a few participants now, that having relatives or friends in the place where you migrate can be a main, is often a main source for finding out about services and resources that are available in the city.

Anna: Absolutely, yeah, yeah. This is true. For many of the immigrants I know and that includes me, my, myself and my family, connections in the city you settle in is the main resource for finding everything out. And you know, knowledge holds the power, right? So you need someone to help you get connected to the services and things like that. Relative will always care more about helping you find the right informations then someone who is paid to do this as their job (IFCA012).

“Knowledge is power” is an expression that was drawn on in one form or another by a number of participants in this study. For instance, Laya—a mother of one from Iran—talked about how there is “no clear path unless you have this special knowledge of the society” (IFCA019), and Renato—a father of three from Venezuela—stated that “knowledge of the inner workings of the society is the most important thing for getting ahead here. You have to know what is expected of you. Knowledge is everything” (IFCA027).

The “type” of knowledge that the abovementioned participants are referring to is constructed in their narratives as a specialized form of information regarding how Canadian society works both culturally and institutionally. The understanding here is that those immigrants who find a way to “tap into” and apply this type of specialized knowledge will be more likely to get ahead in the Canadian labour market. For example, Renato went into great detail in his interview about a friend (also Venezuelan) who has not been able to find a job in Calgary. Renato explained that his friend’s misfortune was likely due to the fact that he wore strong cologne to his interviews and had also been known to make remarks about religion in public settings. While Renato asserted that these acts would likely not cause a problem during an interview in Venezuela, he was quick to explain that in Canada, the rules are simply different.

Renato extended the above line of conversation by explaining that while some new immigrants are simply not lucky enough to be aware of such culturally specific information, others are simply too “stubborn” or set in their ways to change.

Ranato: I told my friend that he has to change how he acts in the interview if he wants to get a job in this country. I told him that, and he’s looking at me, and I now have a professional job, and he says to me, “No, you’re wrong!” Okay. So what can you tell people like that? I mean, he’s been looking for a job since April. Nothing.

Jeanna: Do you know why he doesn’t want to take your advice? I mean, has he explained to you why he thinks you’re wrong?

Renato: He feels like he's, oh, he's, when he came here, he was 42 and he's been working for more than twenty years, so I'm way beyond that point and I don't need someone to tell me what to say, when, how to act. It's that mentality that keeps immigrants from excelling. He is stubborn and doesn't want to change. Okay. And really the point I am trying to make is that it's more about culture than anything else. I mean, it's, the thing about the perfume is because you don't like it, I have to respect you. This idea of respect regarding smells, that's your, I mean, that's western culture this respect. In Latin cultures, in Caribbean countries, they don't care (IFCA027)

Through an account of his friend's post-migration struggles, Renato displayed himself as someone who has the "type" of sophisticated cultural knowledge that is useful for getting ahead in the Canadian labour market. The importance that Renato and others placed on having meaningful knowledge of the receiving society during settlement emphasizes the role of *cultural capital* in the migration process. As Castles & Miller (2009) point out, possessing cultural capital as a new immigrant means having significant information and knowledge of the host society (often acquired through "strong ties" or family connections), and capabilities for finding work and adapting to a new environment. The authors also assert that cultural capital is crucial in "starting and sustaining migratory movements" (p.28)—a statement that is affirmed in this research via participants' discussions of the importance that having family, friends and/or acquaintances living abroad played in their decisions around migration.

For example, Katarina—a university instructor and mother of one from the eastern European country of Moldova—explained that the decision to pursue immigration to Canada was made in her family after she and her husband got in touch with distant relatives who had immigrated to this country many years before.

Jeanna: How did the decision to immigrate come about?

Katarina: Well, we knew that Canada is one of the few countries that accept immigrants because I have distant relatives in Canada and maybe two or three years before we came to Canada we kept in touch with my relatives, we had re-

established contact with these relatives. My, what was it? My grandmother's uncle immigrated to Canada before Russian revolution and he settled in Manitoba, and so his granddaughter, no, I think my grandmother kept in touch with her mother, and then when the letter become blind, then the contact was lost and we didn't email, we didn't, not mail, not mail for ten or twelve years. And then my grandmother said to me one day, why, because you are a university student and you know English, why can't we mail them and ask how they are doing, after ten years? And so this is how we mailed my relatives and they replied back and they told us about Canada and different programs in which we could come to Canada, programs that Canada has for newcomers. And this is how the idea was born, that we could try to do that. Because we were young, we had credentials, we could meet the requirements. So we thought, we might try to do that (IFCA025).

Katarina went on to explain that the contribution of her distant relatives to her immigration story did not end with the couple's decision to immigrate. They have helped Katarina and her family immensely since their arrival in Canada – a resource that was crucial during the first weeks when they were working to get settled:

Jeanna: What has it meant to you to have family connections here in Canada?

Katarina: Actually, it has meant so much to us because my grandmother's uncle, he had four children and all of them had about five to ten children of their own, so I have a really big family here in Canada and some of them, no, most of them live in Alberta, and then some in Manitoba and in Saskatchewan. I have seen five of them. Mm hmm and I have communicated with many others over the email and the phone.

Jeanna: So was one of your reasons for coming to Alberta that many of your relatives lived here?

Katarina: Yeah. Mm hmm.

Jeanna: But you also said that it was during a time of boom.

Katarina: Yeah. Because Alberta needed foreign workers at that time and we need that Calgary is a good place for my husband's job.

Jeanna: How did you know? Did someone advise you or did you look it up on the internet?

Katarina: Both. We talked to my relatives and we also looked it up and read information on the websites. Googled it, yeah [laughs]. But really my relatives helped us so much. They connected my husband to some other contractors who were building houses in Calgary because as I said my husband is a carpenter so this is how he got his first job, through the connection of my relatives. And honestly, I mean, I don't know what we did or, I mean to say I don't know what we would do without them because just like any question that we have I call them for their advice and also when we ran into a hard time here after our son was born they helped me as well (IFCA025).

As alluded to by Katarina, the birth of a child shortly after arriving in Canada somewhat complicated the settlement process for her and her husband. For example, after delivering her baby in Calgary, Katarina described feeling what she now believes were the symptoms of a severe case of post-partum depression.

Katarina: I felt very isolated at the time when I gave birth to my child. And I remember when I was leaving hospital, they ask usually different questions, if you have a family support here, if you have any family, and they were so surprised that I don't have my mom or my mother-in-law or any of my immediate family here with me for the birth. I think their thought at that moment was "she's the perfect candidate for the post-partum depression". And I did really experience that post-partum depression. To the fullest, because my child was very colicky in the first three months and I didn't sleep well and I had problems with my breastfeeding, but I'm very thankful for Canada and for the way how I was supported by different nurses, different breastfeeding clinics, because they would phone me and ask me how I felt, if I was depressed, those kinds of things.

Jeanna: Did you have to seek out that support?

Katarina: No, you know, I had problems breastfeeding at the hospital and then they thought that I should consult a breastfeeding specialist, and this is how all that thing started. I went to different clinics two or three times a week so that they can show me different positions and just help me go through all that difficult period, and then I think I had a very thick portfolio, because I had to go there for quite a long time, but yeah, this is why they called me, because they knew I needed that support and because they probably saw how depressed I was at that time (IFCA025).

Katarina chose not to reach out to her newly found extended family during this difficult time in her life. While her relatives provided ample support when she and her husband first immigrated, Katarina explained that the post-partum problems she was experiencing (as well as her concerns

over whether she was a “bad mom”) were simply too personal to share with her Canadian relatives. Rather, it was the connections she maintained with her family and friends in Moldova, as well as a newly formed friendship in Calgary, that Katarina relied on for support and comfort during this difficult time in her life.

Jeanna: So you started feeling different soon after your baby was born?

Katarina: Yes, almost right after. Although my husband, he took two weeks off, but at that, in the first two weeks, my child was okay. He wasn't colicky, but then that hit in two weeks, when my husband went back to work and I was on my own and he would cry hours, for hours and hours, and as a new mom, you don't know, you think, oh, you must be a bad mom. Or you can't handle that problem, or something must be wrong with the child, maybe he's mentally not normal. Those thoughts, they start bombarding your mind and it's really hard. And I felt so alone with these thoughts because I felt that I could not share my troubles, the problem was just so personal that I did not even let my relatives here know what I was going through. So my best friend at this time was Skype because I could talk to my friends and my mom back home and they would encourage me and they would support me, just talking to them was so important at that time. And I also had a very good one, one very good Canadian friend, she's an elderly lady from the um, the Caribbean island and that I met at the ESL. And at church. She was very supportive and helpful and so easy to talk to. She would come at least once a week and then I told her, I don't need really any physical help, like I didn't want her to cook, or I didn't want her to clean, I just needed someone to listen to me and just tell me something, that life is not that difficult (IFCA025).

How mothers interact with community is a vital issue for understanding settlement following immigration (Creese, Dyck and McLaren, 2009). The above quotations offer a window on to how a social network might be created and accessed during settlement. For instance, Katarina initially relied on the institutionalized support that was available to her via nurse practitioners in local breastfeeding clinics to help with her postpartum troubles. She then supplemented this system of formal support with the informal encouragement of family and friends in *two* countries. In this way, Katarina's account contributes to the body of existing work on immigrant social networks by highlighting the importance of immigrants' individual settlement strategies at both the local and transnational level.

It is important to note here that the strategies that immigrants employ during settlement are often household—as opposed to “group”—specific (Creese, Dyck and McLaren, 2009). In other words, levels and types of support (and the strategies used to acquire that support) vary greatly between families, both within and between ethnic groups. Furthermore, gender differentials exist in how new immigrants construct and access social networks in early settlement, but this has not yet been thoroughly examined in the literature (Creese, Dyck and McLaren, 2009). Interesting here is the question of whether and how versions of masculinity play a role in shaping immigrant men’s network building and support strategies. For instance, would Katarina’s husband be as likely to garner emotional support from a new friend regarding his adjustment to parenthood? Katarina thinks not.

Jeanna: And how about your husband, you said having a new baby has been difficult on both of you, has he made new friendships in this country? I mean, are there people that he can rely on for emotional support or guidance?

Katarina: Me. Just me is who he will talk to. Which is difficult at times I think because I am trying to deal with the um, the colic and the crying and my own feelings and then I have to support him as well when he has difficult time. He is in construction working on houses all day and his co-workers wouldn’t talk about such things. I’m very communicative person and I love being around people so that helps (IFCA025).

In the above quotation, Katarina links her husband’s lack of meaningful personal connections in Calgary to the type of work that he does and the topics men are willing (or not willing) to discuss with one another. In addition, Katarina described carrying an extra emotional burden in her household because her husband chose not to confide in anyone other than her about his feelings regarding the stressors in his life. While this situation was clearly one that troubled Katarina, she refrained from problematizing the added strain of extra emotional work any further than the comments shown above. Moreover, the idea that certain attributes can be linked to a specific profession or gender is somewhat normalized by Katarina who concluded our

discussion of the topic by suggesting that certain “types” of men (e.g. construction workers) simply do not engage in discussions of family issues or personal feelings. It is important to note, however, that dominant understandings which convey non-communication as “normal” for men may significantly limit their opportunities to cultivate “strong ties” during the post-migration period. What’s more, this reality can negatively affect not only the settlement experiences of the men themselves, but also the daily lives of their female partners who are left with the extra emotional work of being the sole sounding board for their troubles.

5.3 Navigating New Terrain without Pre-established Support Networks

Like Anna and Katarina, many of the participants (both male and female) in this study relied heavily on family and friends during the first weeks and months of settlement to assist with important tasks such as finding an apartment, getting connected in their communities (e.g. joining the “right” church or finding the stores with the best ethnic food options), applying for entry-level jobs, and procuring emotional support. However, participants were not equally fortunate in terms of the levels of kin-based support they enjoyed, or the breadth of informal networks available to them in early settlement. What’s more, participants with minimal pre-established contacts in Calgary prior to migration (about 23%) largely navigated the first weeks of life in Canada without assistance from anyone outside of their immediate family ³⁰—a reality that many described as causing them a considerable amount of stress.

Take Maria, for example—a trained engineer and married mother of two from Venezuela—who came to Canada with her family six years prior to interviewing. In her interview, Maria described the migratory process as “a terrifying adventure” (IFCA002), and emphasized the heightened level of anxiety she felt around the time of her family’s migration.

³⁰ While the opportunity to utilize the services of immigrant serving agencies during the first weeks of settlement does exist in Calgary, the large majority of participants did not seek out such services until after the first month of settlement.

The fact that she and her husband knew little about Canada and had no known contacts in Calgary prior to immigrating was also a serious point of concern for Maria.

Jeanna: Did you have a place to live lined up before coming to Canada or did you work out those details once you arrived?

Maria: [sighs]

Jeanna: A story?

Maria: Well, yeah [laughs]. Looking back, I can laugh but at the time it was not funny at all because we came with my little daughter who was just a baby at the time, two suitcase, and I, we didn't know where to go. We have no idea what to expect when we step off the plane. We just rent a car and drive and then we will spend all morning just driving, my husband and I, trying to get a hotel or something. And then we say, oh my God, it was a shock because you know, it's like now what are we going to do? We have to go somewhere we, we, cannot drive around all day like this, but we didn't know what to do next. So we finally get a hotel but we are almost stunned because I mean, what do we do next? The baby is crying, I am crying, and we think maybe this was all a big mistake. During that time all I wish is that we had done more research or find some friend or friend of friend or someone, anyone to help us with the first steps. But eventually we find our own way, we find some service to help us and then it just went from there (IFCA002).

A version of Maria's account of arriving in Calgary with little plan as to what she and her family should do next was echoed by a number of the participants in this study. In the following quotation, one such participant, Jana—a mother of three from Kenya who arrived in Canada in 2009—lightheartedly speculates that because many new immigrants to Calgary have little help from others during the first weeks of settlement, a large number of newcomers end up congregating in the Northeast quadrant of the city.

Jana: When we arrive in Calgary, me my husband and my three kids, we really weren't sure how to find an apartment. We got off the plane and rented a car and drive around just looking for buildings that say 'for rent' on a sign out front. That was, the airport is in the Northeast so that is where we were driving around and then this is where we ended up staying. It was probably two, three weeks before I saw any part of the city other than the Northeast [laughs]. By the number of immigrants living in our part of the city, I think that this same thing probably happens to a lot of people and, yeah, that really helped us

actually to become part of a community more quickly because there were people like us all around [laughs] (IFCA029).

While this statement by Jana was spoken in her interview with humour, it offers important insight into the initial experience of arriving in Canada without extensive knowledge of place, kin-based connections, or pre-established informal or formal social networks. Rather than dwelling too deeply on this, however, throughout her interview Jana emphasized the commonalities that new immigrants and visible minorities often share (both physical and experiential) and linked this type of shared experience to the deep connection she quickly felt to members of her current community.

Jana: I say to my husband all the time that I really don't know how I would have managed it, I mean, just coming here, settling in and then just figuring everything out, schools and programs for the kids, all of it, I don't know how I would have done all that without the people on our street and in our church.

Jeanna: How was that process for your family? Was it difficult to make those new connections?

Jana: Well no it wasn't difficult for us really at all we just, we fit in and made friends easily in our community and this has made such a difference for us. But what choice did we have, right? We didn't know anyone and we felt strongly that we should get out and meet people quickly. And it was pretty easy and it sort of just makes it feel more like home because people in our community here have similar ways of doing things. We have a coffee or some food with each other and just talk about all that is going on and also through meetups like that I find out about science programs and swimming, just different things that might be happening for the kids. And I think that having the same background helped us so much to fit in there. Not many of the people in my community were born here so that is just this shared experience, and we are all mostly all not white [laughs], which means the kids have friends that are, are similar in terms of looks and perhaps culture, cultural experience (IFCA029).

The above quotation demonstrates the importance Jana placed on developing connections with “like” individuals within her neighborhood upon first arriving in Calgary. In fact, three years post-migration, Jana's family continues to live in the Northeast quadrant of the city (albeit in a different apartment complex) even though her husband now works forty-five minutes away

and commutes to work via public transit. For Jana, living in a neighborhood where she feels strong commonalities with the other residents makes life in Canada easier.

What's more, throughout her interview, Jana refrained from emphasizing "within group" commonalities (i.e., commonalities that exist specifically between families from Sub-Saharan Africa) in order to focus the conversation on the shared experience that all immigrants have in common (e.g. not being born in this country, a certain lack of "insider" knowledge) as well as the experience of being a visible minority. Jana's continued reliance on members of her local community for both emotional support and information pertaining to her children, highlights the importance of informal social networks during settlement and the period of integration that follows.

Unlike Jana, however, a number of the participants in this study reported that the process of rebuilding social networks in Canada posed significant challenges for their families during settlement. One of the strongest examples of this existed in the accounts of newcomers who set up residences in communities not heavily populated by other immigrants and visible minorities. Such participants often had a much more difficult time creating and maintaining new connections within their neighborhoods. Interesting here is the fact that some participants described living apart from a community heavily populated with other immigrants as an outcome that resulted from their choice to live close to a particular school or service (e.g. in the case of Lucia). However, others explained that the decision to live one step removed from an area heavily populated with other immigrants was a deliberate choice viewed as a strategy for "getting ahead" in this country.

For example, Wanda—a mother of two from China with a Masters degree in telecommunication who arrived in Calgary five years prior to interviewing—chose to immigrate

to Calgary (as opposed to Vancouver, the Canadian city she thought most desirable geographically and weather-wise) specifically because Calgary is a less popular destination for Chinese immigrants. What's more, after arriving in Calgary and realizing that there were in fact many Chinese people living in the city, Wanda and her husband decided to move to the Northwest quadrant of the city to a community far removed from the popular Chinese enclave that has been established in the downtown core.

Jeanna: What did the process of choosing Calgary look like for you and your husband?

Wanda: You know, I went to Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal, and Ottawa for visit in earlier years. But I think Ottawa and Montreal, they speaks French. Yeah. And Vancouver is most I like, but I know there too many Chinese. And Toronto I don't like. I don't like big city. Yeah, so I search online and I pick out, they say, Calgary, you know, is Stampede, cowboy, you know. Because I've never been here. I just imagine, oh, this maybe is more friendly, you know, than other city and also, you know, there is less Chinese.

Jeanna: So you weren't interested in living in a city heavily populated with others from China?

Wanda: Yeah. We did not want that. But when I came, yeah, everywhere is Chinese too [laughter]. Yeah. Yeah. But anyway, it's good place. Yeah. I always say to my husband, I say I don't want to go the, to the place lots of Chinese there, you know. But I still come and they have lots of Chinese here. This, you know, I don't want to say that, but is somehow it happened, you know and we live in a city with many Chinese but the point is that Chinese not really good to take care of your, your, your Chinese people, you know. Chinese employers are very, very not good at taking care of Chinese people. No. They take advantage of the newcomer because we are looking for a job. They know you are looking for a job, right? And they take advantage.

Jeanna: That's interesting.

Wanda: But really, you know, I just had hoped to live in a community with the Canadian people and my family can be part of that. We not, did not want to have Chinese similar Chinese life here as before. When we find a place to rent we rent in the Northwest perhaps not that many Chinese there. But then when we think about it we think maybe this not the best choice after all. My son very quickly got so lonely because have no friends so it was hard for us. It was hard to meet other people in the community. At that time we did not even know the neighbor or the person across the street. The one family we met was another Chinese [laughter]. Then we decide what can we do for our son? So we give him a brother to help the loneliness (IFCA017).

Wanda's choice to settle in a part of Calgary that she believed would be less populated by Chinese immigrants than other areas is reflective of her desire to integrate her family into the larger social and economic community. While in China, Wanda conceived of immigration as a chance for her family to begin anew, and she explained in her interview that she had decided prior to immigrating that maintaining customs and traditions from her country of origin would not be something of top priority to her post-migration, largely because she felt that this would prevent her family from "moving forward" (IFCA017).

Wanda further explained that prior to immigrating she and her husband were both very enthusiastic about immersing themselves into all aspects of Canadian culture – especially the changed culture of work which Wanda was aware of because of a one-month job-training opportunity she had been given in Ottawa in 1998. As Wanda put it:

...back home, the culture is, if the boss want you whole days, kind of like whole day you work. So it's really just every day busy with, at work. Yeah. The stress is, how to say, yeah, the stress is great with this. But then I knew because of my time here, I knew it would be different in Canada (IFCA017).

The hope of establishing a new (and less stressful) life in Canada was something that remained very important to Wanda throughout the settlement period. However, Wanda went on to explain that her perception of what this life should look like changed somewhat when she and her family struggled to integrate into the larger community to a greater extent than she had anticipated. As it happened, Wanda and her husband eventually began to see the utility of building ties to other Chinese families in Calgary and made the decision to relocate to an apartment in the downtown core of the city (closer to Wanda's place of work, but also closer to organized activities specifically meant for Chinese youth and families). However, five years after immigrating Wanda remains adamant that she will never again take a job within a Chinese-run business—a

position she feels would both isolate her from the larger community and offer her less pay and harsher demands than most non-Chinese run organizations.³¹

Similar to the process of realization Wanda and her husband went through regarding their understanding of the importance of maintaining ethnic ties post-migration, this section of the chapter considers aspects of intrafamilial negotiation regarding integration into Canadian society in the earliest phase of settlement. The sections that follow continue this discussion by further introducing some of the changes immigration triggered in participants' family and professional lives, and discussing the varied ways participants took action in response to their new economic and social position. Specifically, these sections focus on the financial and emotional costs of early settlement in the context of financial trade-offs in early settlement, the reconstitution of familial expectations, and understandings and interpretations around the category of "Skilled Worker" respectively.

5.4 Financial trade-offs and Understandings of Class in Early Settlement

For the majority of participants in this study, the strategies employed to manage the turbulence of transnational relocation can be linked to both personal and family values and the level of economic stability they experienced at the time of migration (i.e. savings).³² Important here is the notion that in most cases, families require a certain level of financial stability to implement preferred versions of family life. As such, some participants had little choice but to find paid employment very soon after arriving in Calgary. In such cases, savings were often

³¹ Upon first arriving in Calgary, Wanda took a job at a Chinese run business but explained that she quickly quit this position because she was not being treated well by the managers, was asked to pay for her own travel to obtain job training in Toronto, and felt extremely isolated and undervalued.

³² Participants in this study came to Canada with varied amounts of savings, with the majority (43%) of participants stating that they had acquired enough savings to live for at least one year in Canada, 30% stating that it would not be possible to live on savings for more than six months, and 27% stating that it would only be possible to live on savings for three months or less. Out of the thirty participants included, only two had been in Canada for less than one year at the time of interviewing, so most offered this information in hindsight. These statistics are offered merely as a benchmark with the aim of demonstrating participants' perceived level of economic stability at the time of arrival as this perception greatly impacted some of the participants' actions during settlement.

minimal or deemed insufficient to support the family for any extended period of time.³³ In other instances, participants felt a deep-seated obligation to send remittances back to their home country to support remaining family members.

The unique combination of resources and demands that each family was left to negotiate in the post-migration period greatly impacted participants' varied experiences of reconstituting family life in Calgary. However, despite distinctive circumstances and backgrounds, all of the participants in this study reported a certain decline in socioeconomic status post-migration—a theme that echoes larger demographic findings on immigrant families during settlement in both Canada and the United States (Reitz, 2004). In response to experiences of downward mobility post-migration—and in many cases, the increasing sense that this state may be somewhat lasting—a fairly collective focus emerges in the accounts of participants. For example, the majority of participants voiced strong opinions about doing whatever is necessary to safeguard their children from experiencing the negative effects of class decline – a trend that sets the stage for how many negotiate the *earliest* phase of settlement.

For instance, Gabrielle—a separated mother of two and university statistics professor from the Philippines—described focusing all of her attention during the first year of settlement on ensuring that her daughters would not feel as though they had lost all of the comforts they had experienced prior to migration. After acquiring an entry level job in her field as a Research Analyst at a large public organization in Calgary, Gabrielle used nearly all of her savings to put a \$17,000 down payment on a small house for her family. Furthermore, Gabrielle explained that she refrained from buying anything new for herself during this period, spending what little

³³ Participants spoke in their interviews about having just enough “show” money to allow them eligibility into the federal or provincial skilled worker program. The amount of money required for skilled workers by CIC is based on what is considered reasonable to support one’s family during early settlement and is set by family size. As it currently stands, a family of four must prove that they have a minimum of \$21, 971 in Canadian dollars when they apply to immigrate (Government of Canada, 2014b).

money she had left over after the mortgage and other bills were paid on new coats, boots and school supplies for her daughters.

Gabrielle: ...And after everything, you know, uprooting them [kids] from their family and friends, turning their whole life upside down, there was no way I could allow us to become a *hand-me-down family* [emphasis added]. I used every bit of money that I brought with me to help my daughters adjust to this new culture. I was able to put a small down payment on a house located not far from a good Catholic school for them to thrive, they had the new boots and the winter coats and also the supplies for school. I put them first in my mind because I knew it would hurt them more than me if they felt that oh, all of a sudden we have, we have none of the supplies as we once did. (IFCA013)

Similar to Gabrielle, many of the parents in this study reported draining savings accounts and spending into retirement funds in an effort to establish a certain quality of life for their families in the initial months following migration. Strategies participants discussed in their interviews included: spending deep into savings to live in a specific neighborhood, refraining from purchasing second hand items, buying items on credit when possible, buying items for children but not for oneself, accepting nothing from charity, buying gently-used second hand items and then telling the children they are new.

Sumit (introduced in the previous chapter) is one participant who described employing many of the abovementioned strategies in his daily life during settlement. For example, he discussed spending liberally from his family's savings during their first year in Canada because he didn't want to feel as though he was part of the "lower class"—even though, as he explains below, he understood that this was in fact his current reality.

Sumit: Well, we are in, lower class, I believe, but I am not living with the lower class mentality, I'm not living with that standard. One thing I want to tell you is that I didn't buy any used items and I got, I buy all the new furnitures. I don't want to stay like a lower income people. I'm, I, I lease a good apartment. I buy all new furnitures. I, I got everything new, I didn't get used. Only one, only one, I got a used car. I buy a used car. But that is also 2007, it's good [laughs].

Jeanna: So what was the driving force behind your choice to live in this way? How did you decide that you wouldn't buy any used items?

Sumit: Because I don't want to feel, to be mentally feeling, as part of lower class.

Jeanna: So you don't want to feel that way, even though financially, you're saying that this is your current reality.

Sumit: Yeah.

Jeanna: So mentally, you feel to live this way would take a negative toll on you?

Sumit: My kids may feel like that too, you know.

Jeanna: Can you speak a little bit more on that point? What is your fear regarding how your children might be affected?

Sumit: Yeah, I don't want to, I don't want them to feel like that, like we are living at the point of poverty. I don't want to make them feel that, that's why. Because, because, back home they are, I already told you, they are having very good life, you know. They are getting what they want. Everything they want, they are getting, you know.

Jeanna: Mmmhm

Sumit: Now I told you that before, my son was the, he want Apple, you know. Like that. Yeah, he has this mentality because he grow up in a higher class, in a completely different situation than his current situation. In that environment. That's why I want to keep that same environment as we had back home. I don't want to feel, I don't want them to feel like we are going down, you know. Spiraling downward.

Jeanna: Does this cause stress for you?

Sumit: Yeah. Because at this moment I am trying to maintain this lifestyle of the, of the higher tier. And it costs me, financially, I am losing my savings, you know. It stress me. I'm not making any money. I am not earning good money. And I am expending more than what I earning, you know. It is one kind of stress, knowingly and unknowingly, it gives the stress, you know. But we need to enjoy life, you know. I try to focus on what we are doing as a family right now, to not think too much about saving for future, but I know this is not exactly smart financial planning (IFCA003).

For Sumit, the pressure of class decline during settlement was a great burden that wore on him.

As discussed in Chapter 4, Sumit has extensive accounting experience and therefore he

thoroughly understands the negative effects that poor financial planning can have on a family's

future. Yet, Sumit continued to spend into his savings and retirement fund during settlement because he worried about the negative impact the pressures of financial strain might have on his children. These worries, combined with Sumit's entrenched identity as the main family provider, served as warrant for making financial decisions that he likely would not have otherwise made.

Not unlike Gabrielle and Sumit, Sophia—a mother of one from Lebanon who arrived in Canada five years prior to interviewing—and her husband, Ahmed, chose not to buy any “extras” for themselves during their first two years in Canada. Instead, the couple devoted their savings to providing their daughter with a home in what they felt was a “good”³⁴ neighborhood (they rent the top floor of a bungalow for \$1000 per month), and used any remaining money to pay for essentials and extracurricular activities such as swimming. Items Sophia emphasized in her interview that she and Ahmed cut from their budget during settlement included: new clothes, makeup and creams, non-essential food items (e.g. juice), travel outside of the city, new glasses and prescription drugs.

Throughout her interview, Sophia made a point of emphasizing that she and Ahmed did everything within reason to provide the best life for their daughter during settlement. However, unlike a number of the participants in this study, Sophia also poignantly explained they set certain limits on the lengths they were willing to go to provide their daughter with the “type” of family life they desired for her during this time.

Sophia: Um, it was really difficult when we first came, I'll tell you. Um, just because in our culture, community, like, my husband, okay, like, most people know that he has a PhD, right? And that's like obviously, like not a small accomplishment, so just because we had decided that he would take the time to

³⁴ While Sophia and Ahmed chose a neighborhood in the Northeast quadrant of the city that is heavily populated with other immigrants, Sophia stresses that her neighborhood is filled with hardworking and responsible immigrants. Furthermore, Sophia juxtaposes this image of her neighborhood against “other” neighborhoods in the NE that are filled with immigrants from “Somal, Kenya or Sudan who had almost nothing where they come from and are completely fine with living in like a basement for the rest of their life or like in a small apartment sleeping on a couch, not really working or anything” (IFCA001).

kind of step back and see, okay, where we're going next, in terms of career, for him, like, where he's going next, right? Like, we kind of felt like people were kind of like, almost like looking down as if like, oh, you don't do anything and you're a doctor? Like I told you a lot of the people in Calgary from Lebanon are mostly villagers or like you know construction works in general here. And I don't, like I'm not trying to look down at some people like a lot of them work really hard and they have you know certain accomplishments, you know. And um so it just made us uncomfortable because they were just I think like okay you arrived in July, you should be working by August and that's it, you know? And if they're not, sometimes people if they're not, don't think of themselves as accomplished academically they want to find a reason to tell you, to look down at your accomplishments. Oh, look at you, you have a PhD and you're not even working. And look at me. I have my mortgage paid off basically. But we were just not willing to do that, like we were not going to make that sacrifice with my husband working at something like a Tim Horton's or something like that. It wasn't going to happen that way and we had decided that he would take some time before we came. So at that time we did the best with could with the money we had and with help from our family until Ahmed got a job in the oil and gas industry like we had planned. We just could not compromise on that for the short term gain most people are concerned with (IFCA001).

Sophia and Ahmed had decided in advance of arriving in Canada that Ahmed would not take a "survival job" during settlement. Sophia reported that it would be demoralizing for Ahmed, who has a PhD in Mathematics, to engage in this type of work unless absolutely necessary. Thus, the couple did whatever they could to establish a good quality family life for their daughter in Calgary, whilst refraining from compromising on a value that was of great importance to them.

The decision of Sophia and Ahmed to operate in this way during settlement can be directly related to the knowledge of North American life (and the plight of new immigrants in particular) that this couple had prior to immigrating to Canada in 2006. As Sophia recounted in her interview, Ahmed completed his PhD at an American university and during this time the couple experienced extreme hardship and a certain level of poverty that was exacerbated when Ahmed's funding was revoked partway through his studies. Sophia maintained that Ahmed's fellowship was stopped when a Palestinian professor, who had somewhat unspoken political

differences with her husband, took over as department chair. Ahmed felt that he lacked the power necessary to effectively appeal this decision and worried about being sent back to Lebanon. During this difficult time, Sophia and Ahmed did whatever they could to make ends meet, with Sophia working illegally when possible because she did not have a work visa.

In the final year of Ahmed's degree (after relocating to a different university in a separate state), the couple had a daughter and applied to immigrate to Canada – a process Sophia described as teaching them even more about the multidimensional nature of discrimination.

Sophia: Like I said, we knew what it was going to take to be successful [in Canada]. And we knew that there would always be someone trying to take us, or bring us down to their level. But like, we just didn't imagine that this type of negativity would exist within our, like our own community. But I guess that's something new that we learned here that this discrimination exists at all levels. I'm talking like employment, school, and the people that you meet. I have a story I could tell you about school too, like in the settlement school here [laughs]. But, like yeah you have to set your own standards and live by them if you want to be successful, and we feel like this is most, even more important when children are involved, right? (IFCA001).

In the above quotation, Sophia demonstrates the importance that having knowledge of a society prior to immigration can have on individual experience during settlement. For instance, she draws on the experiences she and Ahmed acquired in the US in a discussion of how they chose to approach life in Canada ("we knew what it was going to take to be successful"). In this way, the knowledge and experience Sophia and Ahmed garnered in the US ultimately bolstered their feelings of preparedness when it came to dealing with new situations of discrimination in Canada. Unfortunately, however, many of the participants in this study simply did not have the opportunity to acquire western cultural experience prior to landing with their family in Canada – a reality which some drew on in accounts of feeling unsure of what to expect post-migration.

A final note is required about the link between expectations held prior to coming to Canada and experiences of downward mobility once in this country. A small number of

participants explained in their interviews that it was well understood before migrating to Canada that they would have to “start over” upon arrival. In such cases, participants were far less likely to spend beyond their means during the post-migration period, and were also considerably more open with their children about their current financial situation.

Maria: Uh, I knew that it was not going to be easy coming here because of course we didn't have the language. We knew that we had to start from zero. From scratch. Even when we first came here my husband didn't look for a um a professional job, he knew, we knew that if we want to wait for a dream job, we cannot, we have to pay bills and everything so. So he just went out to look for any job. But yeah when I moved here, like I psyched myself. I had no expectations at all but really I was happy. It's easier I think when you don't expect.

Jeanna: That's interesting. What was the basis for your decision?

Maria: Say again sorry? I did not understand the question.

Jeanna: Sorry, I could have been more clear. What I'm trying to ask is, how did you decide to eliminate any expectations? I mean, what caused you to decide that you were going to have to start from zero when you got here?

Maria: Ah. Okay. Well as I told you my husband had had the opportunity to do some travelling with his work [mechanical engineer]. He had a good understanding of what would be like after we immigrated even though we knew nothing about the exact place we were moving [laughs]. But through his travels and research on the um, on accreditation of his credentials, and then just knowing that we don't have the language, that was enough really for us to know that we would have to start over. But really it worked out to be better than we had expected which I know now is ah, different than most (IFCA002).

In the last sentence, Maria is referring to the fact that her husband was able to find a job closely related to his previous work as a mechanical engineer relatively soon after arriving in Canada.

Furthermore, the company that hired Maria's husband also helped him to apply for reaccreditation in Canada. After four years of exams and working a lower-rung job within this company (albeit still a relatively well-paying one), Maria's husband had successfully reaccredited and was working as an intermediate engineer in Calgary at the time of interviewing.

During her interview, Maria explained that the involvement of this company in her husband's reaccreditation, combined with the couple's lack of expectations regarding what their life would be like in Canada, left her and her husband feeling quite satisfied with how the settlement process had unfolded for their family. However, re-establishing family life in Canada was not without struggle for Maria. At the time of interviewing, Maria had been working nights at a local department store for three years and spent any free time she had during the day completing various bits of online training. This schedule resulted in Maria rarely seeing her husband who worked regular day-time hours. Yet, while Maria was quite open about the toll the couples' lack of time together has had on their marriage, she also explained that they maintained a positive outlook, keeping focused on a future that involved Maria finishing her training and both of them working regular hours with free weekends.³⁵

While Maria drew on her lack of English and the knowledge her husband garnered while travelling abroad in her explanation of why she felt she would have to "start from zero" upon arriving in Canada, other participants suggested that family members living abroad had told them to adjust their expectations prior to immigrating, or that they had read information online or watched TV shows and movies that relayed the idea that life in North America was very difficult for immigrants. Quite often, however, given the present difficulties they were facing in their countries of origin, participants emphasized downplaying or overlooking thoughts of the hardships they might face upon arriving in Canada.³⁶ For instance, Isabel explained that she was willing to do any job in Canada (despite her high level of education) if it meant that she would

³⁵ Throughout her interview, Maria repeatedly gestured with her hands as though climbing a rope. To her, this gesture best described how she and her husband approached their first years of settlement – starting from the bottom and devoting all of their energy toward climbing the socioeconomic ladder of their new society.

³⁶ A number of participants emphasized that this mental work was often somewhat easy in the pre-migration context because they could fall back on the idea that their education, work experience, and acceptance into the "Skilled Worker" immigration stream meant that they had the social and intellectual capital necessary to do well in Canada.

be permanently removed from the home of her in-laws in the Philippines. However, as she spent more time in Canada, Isabel began to adjust her expectations around the “type” of work and pay she felt she deserved.

Isabel: So I knew Canada is like a, I was more afraid of the cold, really. And... [trails off] But, well, I knew I will have to wait [to get a decent job]. And I was prepared to go back to school even because I heard, well, that’s what I heard from my brothers and sisters. But for me, no, it wasn’t difficult because when I was in the Philippines, I say, when I get to Canada, I don’t care what job I get. I’m going to do it. It doesn’t matter. I know what, I know because I’ve been reading and like, in North America, like, it’s not easy. So, when you go abroad, life’s not easy. You have to take whatever job is available.

Jeanna: Where did you read that?

Isabel: So, Um. I think I heard it or I read it in an article or whatever or movie, a Filipino movie. But because I know how life is. So I’m ready, whatever, yeah, I’m ready. So I, I opted to apply in Wendy’s. I know, at first, I said, can I do it? But, yeah, I tried and yeah I had that job for eight months but I quit because I feel like I’m being you know abused, like I’m working so hard and just getting \$9, so it’s not worth it. You’re working so hard (IFCA014).

It is clear from Isabel’s account that her expectations around acceptable work were changed during her first months in Canada. The final section of this chapter delves deeper into narratives such as Isabel’s by further exploring participants’ interpretations and expectations around working in Calgary. However, at present, the main point of importance is that participants held varied interpretations of what life in Canada would be like prior to migration, and these interpretations were formed in the context of competing factors. For instance, many pre-migration viewpoints were in fact strongly connected to participants’ legitimized “skilled worker” status. For these participants, the pre-migration belief that they would be able to work in their profession because they had met the requirements of this program was initially quite strong (see more on this below). However, understandings were also based on what friends and family had told participants life would be like, or in light of what they had read online or watched in movies and television.

To conclude, participants in this study cultivated various strategies during the initial months and years of settlement to establish a certain quality of life for their families. Moreover, many participants reported that during the initial phase of settlement, they felt this type of spending was reasonable given their *perceived* level of cultural capital. In other words, the hope of using education credentials and work experience to acquire a well-paying job that would allow them to rebuild their savings and provide for their families was initially very high. The subsequent section highlights a shift away from this type of thinking by introducing a theme that was salient in the majority of participants' accounts: the moment when it was realized that they would have to revise initially high expectations regarding work and family life in Canada.

5.5 Downward Mobility and the Revision of Expectations

As previously discussed, during the first year of settlement, the majority of the participants in this study focused their available resources on re-establishing a certain quality of life for their family in Canada. Unfortunately, however, underemployment and a lack of social resources eventually ended up limiting most participants' ability to implement or sustain their ideal version of family life. During their interviews, participants described the defining moment when they realized that they would have to take a "survival job," rent a less expensive home, or dispense with children's extracurricular activities. Ultimately, participants were faced with renegotiating practices and values around work and family life in order to make ends meet. The narratives of two Filipino participants—Jay and Gabrielle—best illustrate this theme within the research.

Jay

Jay is a father of one from the Philippines who has two masters degrees and worked as a human resources director for a large corporation prior to immigrating to Canada. At the time of

interviewing, Jay had been in Canada for four years and had worked a series of odd jobs in different sectors of the labour market. During his interview, Jay recounted withholding the truth from his wife about the low-wage work he had taken on post-migration, as well as the personal difficulties he experienced in relation to his changed class status.

Jay: Before coming here [to Canada], my family had been enjoying already this prestige, then all of a sudden, bang. It's all gone. As I told you the story of my coming here was in a sense a trick because they brought me here for my credentials but then when we arrive there is nothing. So I have my wife and my baby here to care for and I am the provider of this family so what am I to do? At first I had told my wife that I have this job in a company doing the human resources. I said to her that it is a good place to move up from but that at this time I am a little bit lower than I was before coming. My wife could not work because her English was not so good at this time and also we have a young baby at home and we have no nanny. So I tell my wife this and we buy things for the baby and expensive foods and the clothes, especially the winter clothes. But really I was taking money from my, our savings because I was working as a janitor at this time.

Jeanna: So you told your wife you had gotten a job in your field but really you were working as a janitor? That must have been very difficult for you.

Jay: It is hard to even say how this made me feel. This lie and also this inability to um, to provide my family for the, with the things of need. But at least I need to, I don't want to be carried with that emotion, I need to manage myself. So I cannot blame others. So I worked hard and I worked two jobs, in fact, janitor and also this what you call, order picker, carrying this boxes at a warehouse. At this cleaning job it was quiet because I was mostly alone so I just spend this time trying to come up with a plan of what I can do. How many times that I've been crying, like especially when I was cleaning these toilet bowl, ohhhh. When I was in the Philippines I can say, before when I entered the room, oh, sir, it's already here. But now, it's really a humbling experience. But I cried how many times, that oh, is this the way?

Jeanna: How long did you carry on in this way?

Jay: I cried and talked to God and worried over this for months. At least four months it went on in this way. Finally I have my answer, I tell my wife about what has been going on and perhaps that was even more humbling experience. I told her what her husband has been doing, how he has been spending his days cleaning the, cleaning the toilet, moving the boxes. This was so hard, such a hard moment for me (IFCA0026).

An important contextual piece concerning Jay's experiences of downward mobility is that dominant understandings around male gender roles in the Philippines are heavily steeped in the tradition of the breadwinner/ "good" provider model of fatherhood (see Chapter 4 for additional discussion of this topic). Within the Filipino culture, husbands are often publically acknowledged as being the "head of household," and as such, experience strong social and familial expectations around economic provision (Alcantara, 2004). It is possible that such cultural ideas played a role in Jay's decision to initially withhold the information about his working conditions from his wife. However, Jay's account is largely centred around the daily practices involved in the work he was doing (e.g. cleaning toilets, moving boxes) and it was this situation of deskilling—rather than his inability to purchase certain goods—that he emphasized as causing him considerable angst during the post-migration period.

In the chapter that follows, I explore how the absence of fathers' permanent employment affected the division of labour in participants' post-migration households, including whether and how masculinities compatible with breadwinner fatherhood were (re)negotiated in the absence of paid/full time work. While Jay's narrative opens a window on to this topic, his account is also extremely useful to the current discussion because it offers an example of how deeply entrenched understandings about work and family life were renegotiated post-migration to fit with changing socio-economic circumstances.

Jay: After I tell my wife about everything that has been happening for me, about not being able to locate a, a job in my field, about spending into our, our settlement fund, after telling her all of this we really had to think about and to discuss what it is we will do next. I sold my properties before coming here to this country, because it's a settlement fund. Like, it's different, we're not refugee, we are invited to come here to resettle. We sold all our properties, we brought millions here but this doesn't last like millions in your currency of course. The way of life here is such that you can spend through such a settlement fund in a very, um, very short period of time. So I talk with my wife, and we decided that I should quit the job as janitor because I had such a feeling of, of the loss of dignity

that went with this. So I quit this and kept my other job and decided I would seek help from the professional. But while I was finding a way to upgrade my skills here in this country we knew we would have to change the way of life as it would be impossible not to do this.

Jeanna: Right. That's very interesting. So how did you decide on the direction in which you would change? I mean, what were the major changes that you made to accommodate your new reality? Does that make sense?

Jay: Yeah. Yes, it does. Ok so the first thing we would have to do is to cut back on spending in almost every direction. This was the most obvious of things that we should do and to be honest it helped that my daughter is small because there was not really any sense of expectation from her, she is too young to know the difference and it was more what our expectations for her had been than anything else. So, um, that was the first. But I think the biggest thing, the most important perhaps for you, for your question, is not what we changed so much as what we were able to preserve. Ahh... for example, we can say, because this is in Canada, we are very different by law in our neighbouring country down south on the US. That is a melting pot. Here it's really clear, we have a mosaic culture. You can co-exist with your culture, it doesn't mean that the minority culture needs to amalgamate, or needs to melt down to the dominant culture. Because by law, it's illegal. So that's why I keep on talking with my wife about how this means we can maintain the most important things for our children in this culture without any money perhaps at all, without this prestige. So we make the decision that with our moral values, we don't want to sacrifice. We believe it's our role as parents to do the best we can to keep her [daughter] values strong, to teach her the values we grew up with. We need to be strong, or solid, educating her, so something like that. Because if not, then we are letting her go away. And then in the end, at least we can say that during your formative years, you cannot blame your parents that, hey dad, mom, why you did not teach me like this? So we still exercise our role as a parent (IFCA026).

In the face of socio-economic decline in Canada, Jay claimed that he somewhat reconfigured his parenting practices to focus on fostering strong cultural and personal values in his daughter—a role that is more traditionally taken on by females within the Filipino culture. For instance, Jay emphasized the importance of teaching his daughter the immoral nature of pre-marital sex (a very prominent value in the Philippines) and certain values around sharing and caring for others who are less fortunate than her.

While Jay began his interview by strongly identifying with the stresses and strains associated with deskilling during the difficult period of settlement, his account develops to offer

a story of transformation regarding the shifting of gender norms in the face of real financial and employment constraints. Interestingly, a shift is also easily detectable in Jay's talk throughout the interview – he ceased using “I” as a personal pronoun and began only to use “we” in his discussion of how he and his wife would organize their family life in Canada.

Gabrielle

The narrative of Gabrielle (introduced above) offers a second example of how transitioning to life in Canada—and negotiating new financial and familial strains as a result of this—can greatly impact the “type” of family practices and values participants’ implement. For example, while Gabrielle stated in her interview that she considered herself to be “extremely lucky” for having acquired a job in her professional field promptly after arriving, her settlement story is largely one of survival and change. As Gabrielle explained, her common-law partner arrived in Calgary seven months after she and her daughters had landed and upon moving into their home, became increasingly abusive (both verbally and physically). Gabrielle recalled the series of events that led her to leave her partner, and the moment when she realized that “*hand-me-down*” items can be life altering:

Gabrielle: He had kept me up all this night not letting me sleep at all. And he says, I want you out immediately. I'm going to rearrange your face. Kick in your computer. I want you get the ticket right now, right now. It's 12 midnight. On a Sunday. So he made all this stress and, yeah, so, I have a friend, just one house down, that's where I went to her at around 9 a.m. and said I cannot go home anymore, I want to know if there's a place I can stay. I've heard about things like shelter before. I read it in, in, you know, you hear about it in the news. Like, CTV. I know like Mary Dover House, right? So I'm thinking of those places and so she says, okay, hang on there, I'm going to search online. And I think she put in the word shelter for women and the first that came up was the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter. So she says, there's a number here. We called it immediately and the friendliest of all voices. Okay, calm down. We have room. We have room. And if you need a place to stay where you're safe we can, you can come when you're ready. And I say, I'm, I must go, I'm ready now. Where are the kids? She says, we need you to be secure papers. Like your passport, your immigration papers and your Alberta Health

card. She says, that's very important. And she, I told her, I don't know where it came from, but I says when I left this morning I put them in my purse. I was so scared he'd destroy them. That was, so, she said, oh wonderful, where are the kids? I said, they're in school. At least I managed to still bring them to school. Okay and can you get them? I said, maybe later. It was one of those, stormy days like, that week was like last week. Really horrible at end of February. I said well, he didn't go to work today because he was just so drunk the previous night. He even made me call his own boss to report that he was sick. Yeah. So, like she says, well you better go and get your girls. The place where you're safe. If you don't have your vehicle, we'll go and send out a taxi to pick you up. And we didn't have anything except the clothes on our backs. I feel sorry for the girls because they were like just so confused. They were in school, like having their lessons, and then suddenly mommy calls them and it was just 2:30 and says, we have to go, girls. And, and then at 4 o'clock, when we were all gathered together and safe at a friend's house, they sent a taxi down. We thought it would be like an open space, you know, like a gym or something. You know, there would be like several mattresses on the floor and then that's it.. But it turned out to be like you know, a big, big, big house where you have your own big rooms, so one family to a room with your own bathroom and then there's a big kitchen. It's really homey. And then the lady who helped us is the social worker. She says, I'm going to be your social worker. She's like a very, very friendly and warm. I guess she's from, let's see, the Caribbean, one of those islands. So she says, have you eaten? It's 5:30. Well, dinner's being served, so let's all go. So where are your stuff? Like, suitcases. I says, we don't have anything. Like, I just came! Well, not to worry, so let's go shopping downstairs. So she says, do you need pajamas? We said, yes. So there's like, and these are like donations from people. So they have like a room there. So pajamas of different sizes, toothbrush, slippers. And this is really when I started to see that not all, not all charity is this bad thing like I had thought. That we were not above this but actually it was the best thing for us. Without these people we could never have left him. It changed everything for us and we are so much better off as a family now (IFCA013).

The assistance Gabrielle received from the women's shelter, combined with the extreme situation of financial and emotional hardship she faced after separating from her partner, greatly affected both the "type" of daily life she was able to create for her daughters, and the values around which she structured this life. For instance, after moving her daughters into a small apartment because their father would not vacate their home, Gabrielle spent the majority of her money on lawyer fees in the hopes of getting her home back. This situation left her with little choice but to renegotiate some of the ways in which she previously parented.

Gabrielle: So he's still in our house and I have a lawyer, he's really good, he's trying to convince *** [ex-partner] to sell the house. But I mean, for example, I cannot depend on the lawyer too much because just, even just last week the lawyer signed this file and it was \$60. Just like that. \$60. So my initial retainer of \$3000, was just nothing. At December time, I get a letter that says oh, we wish to inform you, this is the breakdown of your retainer. It's all gone! I was so surprised. And that's when I, because each time, like I felt like talking to the lawyer, I pick up the phone and call or email. It's very difficult because I don't qualify for any, much of any assistance with the lawyer because I earn more than \$40,000, can you imagine \$40,000 that's all, I cannot get Legal Aid. So, yes, so a life in Canada! So now I know better. So it pushes me to have to deal with it on my own with him, but I don't want to talk to him too much because I don't want him to find a way back into our lives. So that is where we are now. Living in a small apartment with the girls at a different school. Everything is different than it was but I know that God has a plan for us and it will all be OK in the end. I pray about this so much.

Jeanna: How has your daily life changed since you left him? Are things quite different within your family?

Gabrielle: Oh, very different. Everything is different for us because the girls have to be much more independent now than they were before we came to this country. For example I have to leave very early now to get to work, so the girls have to take care of themselves before and after school. They are 8 and 10 years old now and they are very good girls. So I got sets of duplicates [keys] to the apartment. And I've learned them how, I've taught them how to turn the key. They go to school. There's, we have an alarm clock, the minute alarm goes, they have to leave, put on their jackets and go to school. They're already dressed. They just have to put on their jackets. And then they know already how to let themselves in the apartment. And they wait for mom. I'm home by 5. I leave work at four. I hop on the train and one bus ride and I'm home by 5. So they're home by one and a half hours before me. So now they know how to operate the microwave, just to heat up something if they're hungry or they can turn on the computer or rest, whatever they feel like. So, so far it's working and plus the apartment is safe. Now, oh boy, we are in an apartment. That still surprises me to say that.

Jeanna: How did leaving them home alone make you feel when you first began this new schedule?

Gabrielle: Bad. For sure it was bad. But I had to become OK with it quickly because there were no, no other options available to us. And sorry to say this, but those, like, some women that went to the shelter, because they have a younger kids, plus they're also new immigrants, they don't work. Oh, they get assistance for the rent. They get a lawyer, Legal Aid will pay for that. They have nothing, they have to do nothing. They were set up in their own apartment. I don't know the Calgary Housing. I never qualified for that. I didn't even bother to apply. And

then, the, how do you call it, the fund for child care? The social worker and I tried to apply. We calculated the fees online. Again, zero dollars. That's why my last resort was to train my girls. Thank God they're at a certain age. And my social, my counselor told me, the government of Alberta, Child Welfare, has no law that you should not leave alone, well for short periods of time, your ten year-old. Child Welfare Services will not take your kid away (IFCA013).

Faced with the reality of no financial aid and no extra money for childcare, Gabrielle resorted to "training" her daughters to fend for themselves before and after school. This is not something that fits with Gabrielle's prior parenting practices. For instance, during her interview, Gabrielle explained that in the Philippines, her girls were well cared for by extended family members and a female nanny who watched over her daughters when she was working at the University. Also, it was Gabrielle who walked the girls to school at this time, and she would always arrange to have someone close to her pick them up afterward if she could not be available to meet them herself.

Furthermore, to leave her young daughters at home alone in the Philippines for any length of time, or to allow them to walk to school without adult supervision, would be considered quite dangerous and socially unacceptable in Gabrielle's Manila community. Gabrielle explained that because her children are both female, they were much more vulnerable to predators and "risky behaviour" in the Philippines. Moreover, Gabrielle described Manila as a very dangerous city in which to live (e.g. she would rarely ride the city bus without a knife in her purse).

In part as a response to such external factors as those described above, Gabrielle explained in her interview that before immigrating she was an "extremely cautious mother" who was intimately involved in organizing the daily lives and activities of her daughters (IFCA013). However, in her new (and more precarious) social and financial position in Calgary, she had renegotiated some of the values on which she parented by allowing her daughters a higher

degree of independence. For instance, as demonstrated above, Gabrielle began to see her oldest daughter as mature enough to be in the home alone with her younger sister. Moreover, while Gabrielle demonstrated her sense of vulnerability in regards to Child Welfare Services who have the authority to “take your kid away,” she also drew on the rules and regulations of this organization to legitimate the organization of her family’s daily life.

Furthermore, Gabrielle had come to the conclusion that life in Calgary was much less dangerous than life in Manila, and therefore, it made sense that her daughters would be offered a higher level of independence in this Country.

Jeanna: So let’s talk about family life right now. How are things going at home with your daughters?

Gabrielle: Okay, so I always worry for the girls, like there’s not enough time and it’s conflict for me inside. I would have preferred the, to have much more time and resources to offer to them if I could find some way to do this. In the Philippines no, because I have a, a very good nanny. So I really didn’t care. I mean, I cared but I don’t worry. Yeah. But here, I think its more quality. It’s harder, but really, like I talk to the girls a lot and we discuss about safety.

Jeanna: Do you feel as though your daughters are safer here or less safe?

Gabrielle: Oh, more safe, definitely more safe. In the Philippines you have to protect them [your kids]. It’s true. Because also it’s because it’s a big city. It’s the third world. So you could expect a larger level of violence. Here I’ve never heard of anyone snatching your bag, your purse, when you’re walking. You never hear of these things.

Jeanna: You haven’t heard of anything like that happening in Calgary?

Gabrielle: No. Is that not what happens here?

Jeanna: Well

Gabrielle: [cuts in] Okay, okay. Well there it’s quite common. So if I walk there [Manila], it’s like [gestures to holding on tightly to her purse]. If you step on the train you’re like that. But here [Calgary] I see people like just hanging on their laps, with their purses on their laps. There it’s, so um, it’s pretty close knit but if you step out of your community also then you’re exposed to that level of, of danger as well. So don’t, if you’re not asking for trouble, don’t be late out at night, or walking by yourself, especially if you are female because you are more likely to be targeted there if you are female because you are less likely to properly

be able to defend oneself. So, it's quite common to have a knife stuck here at the side of your, your purse. But here, more what you worry about is are they [children] confident enough to go home, to turn the key, to use the microwave. So, I don't worry that there will be a bad person waiting for them in the alley.

The above quotation highlights Gabrielle's interpretive practice regarding the assessment of risks and crime in Calgary and her feeling that she no longer has to be worried about her daughters being overtly at risk to violent acts when unsupervised (e.g. "I don't worry that there will be a bad person waiting for them in the alley"). Gabrielle legitimized this shift in her mothering practice by deducing that Calgary is a safer place to live and raise daughters than Manila – an evaluation she made by focusing on clear and observable differences between the two cities (e.g. how people hold their purses in the two cities and the instances of child abduction she hears about). It is possible, however, that the shift in Gabrielle's mothering practice is also a strategy that enables her to justify the increased amount of time her daughters now spend unattended. This viewpoint is consistent with existing research on mothering that highlights the ways in which the level of resources a mother has available in her immediate social and cultural milieu (e.g. time, finances, and support) are implicated in the construction and practices of "good" mothering she chooses to uphold (Johnston & Swanson, 2006; Aiello, 2011). In other words, the literature suggests that women may alter the terms on which they mother as the circumstances and available resources in their lives change.

What is also clear, however, is that while Gabrielle's "choice" to mother differently in Canada has been carved out in the context of her changed personal and financial circumstances, her decisions around mothering have also played out in a specific discursive context. For instance, the official discourse of Child Welfare Services legitimates Gabrielle's strategy of "training" her girls to care for themselves by asserting that a ten-year-old child will not be apprehended from the home due to a lack of supervision. Knowledge of the rules and regulations

of child services thus empowered Gabrielle to alter how she parented, and in so doing, Gabrielle made the transformation from vulnerable recipient of institutional protocol to active user.

The next section of this chapter further explores the part that discourse plays in participants' understandings of Canadian life by considering a very specific discursive context – the institutional category of “Skilled Worker” within which all of the participants in this study are categorized, and the meanings and interpretations participants attached to this.

5.6 “Skilled Worker” Category of Immigration: Meanings and Interpretations

As outlined in Chapter 2, immigrants accepted into both the federal (FSWP) and provincial (PNP) skilled worker programs are selected as permanent residents to Canada based on their presumed ability to settle and take part in the economy. To this end, prior to being accepted into either stream of this immigration program, applicants are rigorously assessed via the criteria of a merit points system that considers such things as level of education, length and type of previous work experience,³⁷ and whether there is a valid offer of arranged employment. This assessment is completed in an effort to gauge an applicant's likelihood of making a meaningful social and economic contribution in Canada.

The length of time it takes to be accepted into either the FSWP or PNP varies greatly from year to year, province to province and application to application, and processing times can change without prior notice. Many factors contribute to variations in processing times including (but not limited to) the state of the economy, labour market conditions, and circumstances within the Canadian Immigration Visa Office that is processing the application. For some of the participants in this study, the immigration process took many years, while for others—especially

³⁷ Work experience is classified by the Canadian government according to a system of “Skill Type Classification” (e.g. Skill Type 0, Skill Level A or B) as per the Canadian National Occupational Classification list. Such job types include professional, management, technical and skilled trade occupations.

those applying to the Alberta PNP during the time of economic boom in 2006-2007—the process took only a few months.

Despite the duration of the immigration process, or an individual applicant's knowledge of life in Canada prior to immigrating, participants' acceptance to immigrate to Canada as a skilled worker left them with the knowledge that they had been selected to come to Canada largely because of their experience in an occupation that was considered to be in high demand in this country—a fact that many emphasized as influencing their pre-migration beliefs about how life in Canada would unfold. For instance, Daren—a married father of three from Nigeria who worked as a financial manager for a large NGO prior to immigrating—described his pre-migration interpretation of what it meant to be accepted into the FSWP: that he was an ideal candidate for immigration with strong labour market prospects because Canada required his professional skills.

Jeanna: So you applied to come to Canada as a skilled worker.

Daren: Yeah, as part, as skilled workers, permanent residents.

Jeanna: Were you the primary applicant?

Daren: Yeah, in terms of sponsorship, we didn't sponsor anybody. What I mean, we came together, we filled the forms together, and as a family, and as skilled immigrants, but yeah, I was the primary applicant on this. And we were thinking at this time when we are accepted, we were thinking skilled worker, my wife and I both have Masters, we've had great jobs in our country, this is not going to be so bad when we get there.

Jeanna: Right.

Daren: But, well, when we got here we saw that things are quite different. You need to satisfy your, your academic certificates with Canadian accreditation. And we found out that because of the official system in Canada and the fact that the jobs, there are many requirements for the workers' environment, we needed to go to school. And that's why you had all these agencies, and you know that are set up by the Canadian government to assist immigrants when they come in. And so we made use of such opportunities in setting ourselves up because we hoped that

this was an avenue to get a job in our field quickly. Rather than staying and looking for a job all the time and you don't get it, we decide to go to those agencies and schools and take some short courses to be able to get jobs in Canada. And again, what we found out in Canada is that the way resumes are written here is quite different from the way resumes are written at home. And if you come with your resume from your home country, whatever country you come from, I can bet you, you're not get a job because Canadians have different standards. Canadians have formats for their resumes and cover letters and if you do not follow those standards, you're not likely to get a job. So once we got here and started applying for jobs we realized it would not be as easy as we had thought. And when we saw that we decided that, oh, I think the best thing is to go to, take a certificate course, that ensures that you acquire the skills and then get yourself into the workplace environment (IFCA004).

In his interview, Daren explained that he had saved enough money to last his family approximately six months in Canada and had never dreamed that this money would run out before he or his wife found a well-paying job. However, Daren went on to describe that at about nine months post-migration, his savings had been spent and his family was left scrambling to make ends meet on his wife's part-time salary at a local retail outlet, and the small bursary he had received from the Canadian government as an incentive to take part in a corporate bridging program.

Not unlike Daren, Aisha—a married mother of two and a medical doctor from Pakistan—felt confident before coming to Canada that she would be able to get a job in her professional field post-migration. Somewhat different than Daren, however, Aisha had been informed that there would be an extensive re-credentialing process to regain her medical career in Canada. Yet, Aisha described feeling certain of her ability to work hard, pass the necessary exams, and thus begin practising medicine as soon as possible.

Aisha: When we come here, we sacrifice our families. We have extended families in Pakistan and we all live together and everybody is happy with everyone. But if we come here as immigrants, we come here for much better future. That's the thing. And we are doing our professional jobs there but if we come here, because our society is not, it is a Muslim society, it's very conservative and those who come here, they are not happy with those traditions. That's why they come here. They want to have a free life. And, and, and they

sacrifice, and they do that and they have to sacrifice their professional careers there, in the hope to get much better careers here. Being accepted as a skilled worker should mean something. It should mean that this is a promise to this immigrant who gives up their career that they will be able to get this back, to regain their professional identity in this country. That's why we are allowed to come here, is it not? To contribute. And this is how the idea is sold to professionals. Oh, there is this need, we need you in our country. But if that is not happening, and the good life you have, but you don't have your professional life, and then if you do the hard jobs, my husband has to do overtimes and he has to work on weekends, and if, then our family life is disturbed and we are not having that good life, then what's the point? So I think if the skilled workers like doctors or engineers, if they come here, they should be given opportunities as they have been promised. They have been told that they are needed so they deserve these opportunities. And if they fail to meet their requirements, to meet their expectations, they should be let, they should be expelled, they should be fired. But at least, first they should be given opportunities in their professional life.

Jeanna: That's very interesting. And I know that this is a topic that is very important to you, especially given your decision to now return to Pakistan because of your troubles in getting a job in your field here.

Aisha: Yes, yes, it is very important to me. Because still my husband will remain here and I will keep trying for a residency program while working in Pakistan. But this will mean my family is split, split apart for some unknown time. Just like me though many skilled immigrants are coming here but then choose to return home because of this impossibility to work in their profession. My husband and I are both considered 'skilled worker', and when I was coming I was hopeful that I'm professional I'm a medical professional, and I'll get a job in my field. And, but we say that if there are no opportunities for people like us, then these, the, what do you say? The incentives should not be given and people should not be made hopeful that they will have a good life. And instead of going back with bitter memories and bitter experiences, it's better to be there and dream about the land of opportunities, as they call it [sighs]. It seems to me that Canada is more the land of missed opportunities than it is of actual opportunities. Canada is missing out on so many good, skilled workers. Yet, they claim immigrants to be their future because birth rate is so low. They should learn to treat people better if they want them to stay here in this country (IFCA020).

After successfully completing all of the necessary requirements to re-credential in her field, Aisha failed to be matched to a Canadian residency position two years in a row. As she saw it, the very small pool of residency positions designated for immigrant applicants are most often given to Canadian-born citizens who go abroad to study medicine and then apply to return to Canada for their residency program. While Aisha was willing to redo her residency program in

Canada (she had already been working as a fully certified medical doctor in Pakistan for three years when she immigrated), she was unwilling to continue waiting in Canada for something to happen, largely for fear of losing her professional identity altogether.

Jeanna: One of the things that you said to me in your email, which I thought was quite striking is, you said, you felt like you are losing your professional identity.

Aisha: Yeah.

Jeanna: Can you talk a little bit about that?

Aisha: Yeah. Actually people have been telling me to do, to do volunteer work. It's a good thing. I have been trying and I want to do that, to be able to be in touch in the hospital with patients and everything. And people have been telling me that if you have financial hardships you can some, you can do, you can work at McDonalds, you can work in Tim Hortons and there's why I told you that, if I go into that and I'm earning money, I'll be saying, okay, if I'm earning money, I can afford my expenses, I can take good care of my kids. And then I'll be farther going away from my medical career. I'll be losing my professional identity over here. While in Pakistan I will have my medical job right away, and this is why I have decided to return there without my husband because I will be able to regain this piece of myself that in Canada has been lost. My professional identity was taken from me even though I did everything right and I was told of the great need for doctors in this country, that I would be needed. But no. This is simply not true (IFCA020).

Like many of the participants in this study, being accepted as a skilled worker in the Canadian Immigration process held very important meaning for Aisha. Acceptance into this category was interpreted as a promise from the Canadian government that the opportunity to obtain a career in one's professional field would be there, and that these immigrants' skills and experience were needed in this country. In return, the large majority of participants placed great importance on their perceived duty to make a positive contribution to a highly skilled workforce that contributes to Canada's economy. In other words, a number of participants felt it their personal responsibility to give back to Canada, and thus saw their inability to obtain a "professional" job as a failure on both personal and civic levels. Wanda—a married mother of two from China—offers one example of this.

Wanda: I think here in Canada, what employers really need is skilled worker but different than how the government or immigrant officials define it. What I mean the skilled worker to me is kind of like apprenticeship. So you have specific skill like husband who works with air condition [husband has background in refrigeration], and the, the, the way to getting a good job in Canada is really clear you know, because there is way for them set out by employer. They work, train, work, train, and then move around in company, like that. There's a clear cut path. Yeah. But for people like me, no. Is totally dark. There is no path to show me how to use the skills I have from my Masters degree. My job in China not exist here.

Jeanna: That's interesting. So, if we compare you and your husband, you have more years of education, but it was much harder for you to find meaningful employment here in Calgary than it was for him.

Wanda: And I'm the main applicant, right? The "skilled" worker [laughter]

Jeanna: Right.

Wanda: Yeah. For me, easier to get to immigrant here. But for him, is not possible to get that immigrant status, like main applicant as skilled worker. He would not be admitted. And then I don't feel so good. This is what I'm suffering. I feel lost in a way because I went from being skilled professional to a job that does not challenge. Yeah. So I am lost in a way and suffering because I am not using my skills, not contributing to this country in any way that is great meaning. You think you will come here and be good citizen use skills that you have and contribute, but no. You lose your professional way and then the contribution not so much (IFCA017).

5.7 Summing Up

An important point to make at the conclusion of this chapter is that many of the participants in this study chose to apply to the skilled worker stream of immigration because they felt they had much to offer in terms of education and work experience. Legitimation of these beliefs via their acceptance into the program left a number of participants feeling hopeful that they would be able to work in their professional field in Canada – even if this meant beginning at an entry level and working their way up through the ranks over time. What participants in this study were less prepared for was the reality that obtaining even an entry level position in their field would be impossible for many. While a small number of participants

decided before coming to Canada that they would have to “start from zero” upon arrival, the majority of the participants felt that their status as skilled worker meant that if they were dedicated and worked hard, an opportunity in their field would open up.

Unfortunately, however, the expectation that they would be able to re-establish their careers and family lives in ways similar to the organization they had established prior to migration left many participants unprepared for the drastic changes they would have to negotiate in this country. While social and cultural differences were largely anticipated by participants, how the immigration process and labour market challenges would affect the organization of their family lives was not something that most participants described focusing on prior to migration largely because there had been no real signs throughout the process that their professional lives would be so drastically altered.

In the chapter that follows, the consequences of immigration for the reconstitution of participants’ family lives in Canada are considered in more detail. Specifically, certain practices within the family (e.g. the level of involvement parents have in the daily lives of their children, the division of household tasks and responsibilities, and so on) as well as the ideals and values around which participants described organizing their daily lives, are considered in an effort to explore how participants’ family relations were changed in the post-migration context.

Chapter 6: Gender and Parenting in the Post-Migration Context

6.1 Introduction

Research on families living in poverty has shown that couples adjust the terms on which they parent when faced with insufficient economic resources (Furstenberg, 1995). However, whether and how this trend materializes in the lives of immigrant families is not well known. As described in the previous chapter, many of the parents in this study drained savings accounts and spent into retirement funds in an effort to re-establish a certain quality of life for their families in the initial months following migration. For the large majority of participants, however, changed financial and social circumstances came together to drastically impact the organization of their family's daily life in this country.

For example, families accustomed to living in a dual-earner household where paid help or extended kin were essential to the smooth running of the homestead, and middle-or-upper class practices and values around childrearing paramount,³⁸ were now faced with negotiating trade-offs in work and family life. Which activities would be prioritized? Who would care for the children, cook the meals, do the cleaning and schedule appointments? During the settlement period, many of these once taken-for-granted tasks were up for negotiation as previous patterns regarding the ebb and flow of daily life came undone in participants' new social and economic location.

In her study of thirty-two Canadian families who are opting for less traditional divisions of labour within their households, Ranson (2010) provides an important account of how families' ground level practices can assist in contravening conventional expectations of motherhood and fatherhood. More specifically, Ranson finds that when both parents are equally

³⁸ This refers largely to the large amounts of time and resources parents spend cultivating particular attributes within their children (see Creese, 2012 for more on the middle class parenting practices of skilled immigrants from Africa).

involved in hands-on caregiving, over time they tend to become “functionally interchangeable” in their practices (i.e., each parent knows on a daily and ongoing basis how to meet their child’s needs) (p. 169), and that this can help to alter expectations around family relations (especially in terms of that which is considered “normal” for mothers and fathers). Interestingly, the couples in Ranson’s book experienced varied paths leading to their untraditional divisions of labour. For instance, while some were largely motivated by the need for two incomes, others opted to reverse traditional responsibilities altogether (e.g. breadwinner mother).

Similar to the work of Ranson (2010), the bulk of this chapter is focused on who does what within the (post-migration) family, how this particular division of tasks came to be, and the meaning participants suggested their familial organization has had for both their personal and professional lives. In so doing, this chapter explores the complex process of familial organization that occurred for participants in the post-migration context.

As a method of organizing the data, participant accounts are largely grouped by what they stressed in their interviews. The first half of this chapter considers the accounts of participants who emphasized particular challenges in the reconstitution of post-migration family life, while the second half is focused on the accounts of participants who highlighted largely positive experiences in terms of the ways their family had organized since immigrating. Consistent throughout the chapter, however, is a focus on the embodied practices of participants in the post-migration context, including an exploration of events they have found emotionally compelling and the joys and sorrows associated with this.

A number of themes are thus examined throughout this chapter including financial and emotional strain, changes to parenting roles (mothering and fathering), gender norms and values,

and involvement with children. Furthermore, consideration is given to understanding the complex factors and social relations present in participants' accounts of integration and struggle.

6.2 The Reconstitution of Family Life: Immigration Challenges

For some of the participants in this study, the reconstitution of family life in Canada became a difficult hurdle to negotiate, leading to feelings of loss of identity (both personal and professional), family struggle, and instances of domestic violence. In these cases, the increasing burden of financial strain, the pressure (either personal or familial) to find a job in their professional field, entrenched gender norms and values, and worries over the negative toll of downward mobility on children are just some of the factors that participants emphasized in their accounts of feeling anxious and unsatisfied with the current state of their personal and professional lives.

An example of the latter can be seen by revisiting the narrative of Aisha—a medical doctor and mother of two from Pakistan—whose immigration story was introduced briefly in Chapter 4 and more extensively in Chapter 5. In the quotation that follows, Aisha describes her increasing concern over the daily life and development of her two children in Calgary.

Aisha: Well, it has been hard for us with the children. Like for example, if my kid wants to go swimming here, he has to pay. He has to pay some money and as I told you, my husband is not doing his professional job. So it's very, very difficult. We cannot even send them to day home, day cares. So it's really difficult for us to pay for any activity for them, we have to have plan every month for all the things we may want to do. And also, my kids are, when my son was two years old he was in Pakistan and he was saying many words and he was very active and he was very confident. But coming here we are living in a small apartment, and they don't have much opportunities to go outside. In Pakistan we have very huge home and gardens or lawns at home. And they feel much more comfortable and relaxed and confident to grow. But here they have to stay in a small place and just in front of TV and, so that's why, that is one reason I'm also not comfortable here. Because they are not going to day cares and they are not going to school, so after two years, if I come back, and if they start going to school, then maybe it is different for them. But at the time being, I'm worried for their, their upbringing as well. And also for my, my husband and myself. Life is

so drastically different. One of us always has to be with them, so we both cannot work or do courses at the same time because we cannot afford for them to be watched by someone else.

Jeanna: Right.

Aisha: And because you know my, my other relatives, my brother's kid and my sister's kids, they are the same age as them, as my kids, but they are, their kids are very confident and they are talking much and, because they are with family and other people who help them to grow. Their minds are stimulated by the environment. But here we are alone and they do not have interaction with other kids and although I do try to take them to parks every day and work with them in learning, it never feels to be enough (IFCA020).

The above quotation illustrates a theme that is present in the narratives of many of the participants in this study. During their interviews, it was not uncommon for participants to express worries over how their children were coping with the changes associated with immigration, especially if they were too young to be enrolled in the public school system. Since accredited daycare services are often quite expensive in Canada, the majority of participants who had been in this country for three years or less (about 60%) with children under the age of five kept them at home on a full-time basis. A number of these participants reported in their interviews that they juggled the responsibilities of full-time childcare, paid work, and English and other courses on a daily basis, leaving little time for sleep, relaxation, or quality time with their partner. Nonetheless, the majority of the participants maintained a belief that immigration would positively affect their lives and the lives of their children in the long run (e.g. because of enhanced education and work opportunities, the value of Canadian citizenship, and increased levels of safety). For many, however, this was a premise that was based entirely on speculation regarding their family's *future* circumstances, as opposed to the reality of their current situation.

Not all participants were able to assume or maintain this frame of mind. For example, the prospect of re-obtaining her medical career kept Aisha focused on the future for the first three

years of settlement. Yet, Aisha explained that once she realized she had little control over if or when she would be able to work as a doctor in Canada, her mind became consumed with doubt about whether remaining here was indeed the best option for her family.

Aisha: Coming to Canada was very difficult for me, of course, yeah. It was very difficult for me to adjust here and I cried every day. For the first two years, I cried almost every day. I had never had to worry about the chores of the home or the welfare of my children. These things are taken care of in Pakistan. When I am not there, it is my, my mother that is with the children. They have a very big house with seven, seven or eight helpers, and it is there that my children would run and play and be free with their cousins. In Canada everything is different and as I told you, I had worries about this before coming but it was important for me to try. Once we got here I spent every free moment studying for the exams, for the work to accredit my previous work. It was so hard because I was with the children during the day and studying in the evenings but I held on to the hope that this process would be fruitful for us all so I did this. But now, after the last two failed attempts for placement, what can I say? The hope that I had in my heart is gone and it is time to make the difficult decision to return to my life in Pakistan before my career and the upbringing of my children is ruined beyond the point of fixing. But as I told you, it will mean the loss of a husband for some time and the breaking apart of my children's family (IFCA020).

Unwilling to concentrate solely on what “might” become of her children and her career in the future should she remain in Canada, Aisha chose to take action by returning with her children to her home country of Pakistan. This was an extremely difficult decision for Aisha, who described worrying that she was (somewhat selfishly) “breaking apart” her family by returning to Pakistan without her husband.

It is also important to note that making a decision such as the one described above, is likely not something Aisha would have ventured to do prior to living in Canada, for it was here that Aisha claimed she learned to vocalize her needs to her husband.³⁹ Still, even with a broadened sense of self-confidence, Aisha explained that she was very unhappy, wanting only

³⁹ As illustrated in chapter 4, Aisha did not communicate her fears around immigration to her husband before leaving Pakistan, even though these were very prominent in her mind at the time.

for an opportunity to re-obtain a career in her professional field of interest to materialize in her absence.

Aisha: I'll be applying for different Masters programs from there [Pakistan] and for the residency program again. Every year we apply and they, they charge a lot of fee and a lot of money and my husband's salary is not that much to afford me that so I am going back to at least work there and apply from there to, to pay for my fee expenses and for everything so that I am earning money and paying fees are not a problem for me. I am not giving up on the idea of coming back to Canada, whether as a student in the Masters program [Community Health Sciences] or in the medical residency program. All I want is to accomplish this, to have my family together here in this country and I will continue to work from my home to achieve this.

Jeanna: How does your husband feel about your decision to return to Pakistan? Has he been understanding of the choice?

Aisha: It's going to be very difficult for us for my husband to be staying here and me and the kids to leave. If he finds a good job in his, in chemical engineering field, then of course we'll come back. But, uh, well, um, I don't have any expectations because he has been trying for the last eight years and he is not getting it.

Interview: Do you feel that leaving will be stressful on your marriage?

Aisha: Yeah. It will be. Yeah. Definitely, of course, because my husband will be here and my kids are so attached to him. We have a family life. If, if, if we have financial hardships, that's another story. But we have our own family and if we split them, of course it's going to have negative effect on our family life. In some ways, our family life has been even better here because my husband and I have grown to talk to each other in ways that we didn't before. I was lucky in that he was a very respectful man to me even before coming here, most men in my country are not respectful of women's choices or careers, but as I told you, my family is very educated and my father especially helped to ensure that my husband would be of a more liberal mind. But in Canada he has become even more liberal I would say. We have both learned how to compromise. Each of us. We have decided that, okay, in the next two years, if I don't get anything in my medical field in Canada, then we will discuss again and we'll have a new plan again. He has been supportive and has compromised with me (IFCA020).

In the above quotation, Aisha illustrates the interplay of negative and positive changes that have occurred in her life during settlement, and also introduces the idea that immigration can assist couples in becoming closer, as deeply held personal and cultural values and practices

are renegotiated in response to a new social and cultural milieu. It is important to note, however, that even though new immigrants may alter values and ways of being in response to their new Canadian location (and the “liberal” cultural and social values they may engage here), our society and the type of neo-liberal thinking that guides policymakers, are often indifferent to how people organize their personal and family lives.

For instance, Aisha explained that she was offered no assistance in her pursuit to re-establish her career in Canada. While she was considered an extremely desirable candidate in the immigration process, Aisha was now living in a state where families are expected to take responsibility for their own care and survival and workers are responsible for the progress of their own careers (Luxton & Fox, 2009). What’s more, Canadian immigration officials do not follow or track new immigrants in their pursuit to re-establish family and professional life in this country – a practice I was surprised to hear many new immigrants wished was in place so that at least one person in an official capacity might be invested in their social and economic success.

Exhausted by an institutional process of credentialism in which she described feeling powerless, Aisha had decided to return home to Pakistan to evaluate her options, a decision that would have tangible implications for her family life. The majority of the participants in this study faced similar post-migration issues to those described by Aisha (e.g. increased financial troubles, problems with re-credentialing, worries over the wellbeing of children, and so on). Yet, as will soon be demonstrated, the narratives of participants in this dataset show that it is the *responses* of newcomers and their partners to these issues that have the greatest impact on family life (as opposed to the issues themselves). Along these same lines, it will also be shown that male and female immigrants living in the same household regularly face very different challenges post-migration, and their ways of coping with such issues can be quite distinct.

However, it is also important to keep in mind that, as demonstrated in Chapter 5, available resources vary greatly from household to household, and this plays a significant role in how newcomers engage with emerging issues.

6.3 Immigration Challenges and Immigrant Women

It has been well documented that migration is a gendered process with frequently uneven implications for women and men (Creese, Dyck & McLaren, 2008: 271). One reason offered in the literature for why this is the case is that immigration policy and dominant discourses in Western societies have long constructed men as principal immigrants and women and children as unemployable dependents (Castles & Miller, 2009). Such constructions often work to produce hierarchies of power along gender lines that have meaningful implications for how male and female immigrants are perceived both in the labour market and within society in general (Erez et al., 2009).⁴⁰

Turning our focus to immigrant women, both male and female participants in this study underscore the significance of how macro (e.g. support systems) and micro (e.g. language and job skills) factors of immigration impact women and motherhood differently from men and fatherhood. For instance, a number of female immigrants involved with this study struggled with worries about how their English language skills would be viewed in the labour market, and whether they were in fact “good enough” to work outside of the home. Interestingly, it was quite rare to hear these same types of concerns from male participants, even though no real difference was discernible in the language and social skills of male and female participants during their

⁴⁰ The large majority of principal immigration applicants to Canada are men (about 77%), and most immigrant women continue to arrive in Canada as “dependents” of their husbands in the “family class” of immigrants (Tyyska, 2007). Immigration researchers have argued that such actualities can lead to female immigrants having higher levels of both real and socially perceived dependency (e.g. due to policy implications for family class immigrants, financial dependency, higher levels of family responsibility that limit opportunities to learn English, etc) (Kilbride, 2006; Albanese, 2005; Makabe, 2005; Calliste, 2003; Cohen, 2000 in Tyyska, 2007:87).

interviews. What's more, while female participants were slightly more likely to obtain part-time low-wage employment more quickly after arriving in Canada than their partners were, they were also much less likely to obtain a position in their professional field of specialization at any time.

In response to the state of flux experienced during the post-migration period, some of the participants in this study clung to and even intensified pre-migration understandings of family life and orientations to cultural values and practices that were dominant in their countries of origin. Existing research on immigrant mothers affirms this finding, suggesting that it is not uncommon for immigrant women to "retreat" into the family during the settlement period by realigning priorities with mothering and domestic responsibilities and away from paid work (Seongeun et al., 2006; Moon, 2003).

An example illustrating this idea is found in the narrative of Danny—a pharmacist and married father of two from South Korea (introduced at length in Chapter 4). In the quotations that follow, Danny offers his interpretation of the personal struggles that his wife Jin has experienced since arriving in Calgary, including the shift in Jin's identity from worker/provider to full-time at-home caregiver.

Jeanna: Do you anticipate that your wife will remain in the home a while longer?

Danny: Yeah for at least a while but I think long, long term maybe, yeah. Because she's not, she think she's not good at English and she feel shameful when around any Canadian. She is feeling like only foreigner.

Jeanna: Really.

Danny: Yeah. But I think that she is good at English, same, same score as me. Am I so bad? [laughs] But, but, she think, she pretty shameful and avoid speaking. I think when she got, if she can get a confidence she work again but I don't see how possible because will not speak in public.

Jeanna: I can understand you perfectly [laughs]. How is your wife coping with this transition?

Danny: Yeah very, very difficult for her. In Korea there were some problem because wife work all times always expect to be at the job ah, because this is the way of the culture, the work, ah, culture. This very hard for her because never home and sad not to see the children. Only talk by phone. Also stress very high too. So she, I be at home more with the children even than her. We both work full-time but she work harder. Here now is different. Wife always at home and never, rarely leave home. So now stress different. Wife prepare the food, clean, clean up, all the home work that before she not. This make wife sad too so is hard for her. But she worry all the time worry about how people will think of her like, like foreigner (IFCA026).

Danny went on to explain that rather than working outside of the home, Jin had decided to take boarders into their three-bedroom townhouse in an effort to offset the cost of their rent and monthly expenses. This had greatly increased the amount of domestic work and responsibilities that Jin was faced with, but at the time of interviewing, she had told Danny that she felt more comfortable with this arrangement than venturing outside of the home.

Jeanna: So have there been any particular challenges your family has experienced since coming to Canada?

Danny: Yeah. It was a difficult, really difficult to, there is financial condition. After we are here one year we spent about \$40,000 - \$50,000.

Jeanna: Of your savings?

Danny: Yeah. We spent. It's all gone. Yeah. So, so we have to [have] some method to [deal with] this problem, so but instead of working in, working in restaurant or some other job, my wife, my wife choose to sublet. We share house with another people. Yeah. I live in townhouse so there are three rooms, so we use one room and sleeping one room and living room and kitchen and we share another two room with another Korean people. So we save some money to spend and my kids are used to this hard condition because they understand my, our current financial condition.

Jeanna: You explained it to them?

Danny: Yeah. Luckily they understood it because really my two kids don't want to be isolated from their mom, so there is no problem to stay one room. Difficult for my wife though because very much work in the home and I mostly not there to help because to, too much noise to ah, to um, study for the exam (IFCA026).

As will be illustrated later, Danny viewed immigration as greatly improving both his relationship with his wife and his level of involvement with his children. However, while on the whole Danny claimed that the organization of his family life was much improved, Jin's individual circumstances should not be overlooked. For Jin, immigration to Canada had offered her the opportunity to spend more time with her children, but had also seemingly meant the loss of a career, a shift in self image, and the much increased burden of domestic work.

A second example of a female immigrant who has subsequently realigned her priorities with mothering and domestic responsibilities post-migration is provided by Renato—an electrical engineer and married father of three from Venezuela. In the following quotation, Renato describes the challenges his wife has faced since immigrating to Calgary two years ago and her consequential “retreat” into motherhood.

Jeanna: So your wife worked full-time in Venezuela for an oil company but she hasn't worked since coming to Canada. Has that been difficult for her?

Renato: A lot. yeah, because she's been always so independent. When I met her, she already, she had been working for five years and I met her on, on the job. So she was always working, always really independent. When she comes here and she doesn't get a job, she feels frustrated. She thinks because her English is not good enough. And she went for some interview but she never was comfortable and this really hurt her sense of confidence in herself. Her English is the same as mine, I can tell you and I have had no problems. But for her the interview was a terrifying experience... it was so hard for her because our older boys were in school all day and she was at home. But that's when the pregnancy came and then it help a lot.

Jeanna: Does she have any plans to try again once your little one is older?

Renato: She wants to work. She had to wait seven months, it's good to say that. She had to wait for seven months for the English course because she needed day care and there are only a few academies here that offered that like **** and one other, so she had to wait because otherwise we would have had to find someone to take care of the baby and then you have to pay. So there have been a lot of challenges for her but she is happier right now than when we first came (IFCA027).

Renato's wife worked as a health and safety manager for an oil company in Venezuela prior to immigrating (a significant factor in the couple's choice of Calgary as a point of destination). Upon arriving in Calgary, she applied to oil companies once again but was unsuccessful in the interview process. While these rejections were quite frustrating, Renato asserted that a new pregnancy "helped a lot" by focusing his wife's attention on mothering instead of finding a job. However, this transition came with a new set of issues concerning affordable daycare and a much increased domestic burden for this woman to negotiate.

It is worthy of note that after a number of unsuccessful attempts at procuring a job in her professional field, Renato's account of his wife's experience has her believing that the problem must exist within herself (e.g. in her level of English competency). However, as previously noted, immigration discourse often categorizes immigrant women as "dependents" who are "unemployable" and existing research contends that such stereotypes—which are widespread and well understood within western societies—can make it very difficult for immigrant women to find decent employment (Creese, Dyck and McLaren, 2009: 500). Thus, while it is entirely possible that Renato's wife lost these job competitions to a more qualified applicant, it is equally likely that existing discourse produced a negative depiction of immigrant women that was taken up at the interactional level of employment.

Not unlike the wives of Danny and Renato, female participants in this study were more likely to put their own career aspirations on hold to look after children and prioritize their husband's upgrading of skills or re-entry into the labour market. It is important to stress that this did not occur because female participants were any less educated than their partners, or had any less professional experience. Rather, the themes that came through most strongly in the interviews were that female immigrants have a higher level of concern about how they will be

perceived in the host society—both as mothers and as workers—(i.e., feelings of insecurity over level of cultural competence) and feel a stronger pull than their partners to see their children securely settled before attending to their own wants and desires.

For example, in the following quotation, Hana—a medical doctor and mother of one from Iran—discussed feeling pulled between wanting to ensure that her daughter is well taken care of in Canada, and her desire to be a strong female role model.

Hana: I'm kind of person that I don't want to speak that, I hope this happen or that happens. I prefer to be happy with the things that happen right now. But at the beginning, it wasn't easy for me, when the first two years that we were here. I was so disappointed that I cannot get started in my career and no matter how many exams I pass there is still so many exams that I need to pass. I am taking care of my daughter so I am trying to study at night and be with her at the day. So it was harder at the beginning and I was just always saying that, I'm a physician back in my country. Here I cannot do anything. And I am not that kind of stay-home mom. I am not that kind of person who enjoy cooking or cleaning or I become really bored at home. I don't say that it's bad to stay home, but I'm not that kind of person. So I don't enjoy it, but right now, I know that my daughter needs me. She has no other family here and her dad is always, always working. So I will keep trying my best to achieve what I want. But if not, maybe I'll go into nursing or something else.

Jeanna: So your plan is definitely to work once your daughter is in school?

Hana: It's a good thing, that she, she see women can work as well. Some funny things happened, you know, few days ago she was speaking with my mom with webcam because we use to communicate with my mom and my in-laws by webcam. So they can speak with each other and they see each other. And my dad was at work, at office, he didn't return back home. And you know, I told my daughter that grandpa is at work and he went to earn money. And something like, my mom who is a gynecologist told her, yeah, I will go to work to earn money later as well. My mom told my daughter. And my daughter said no, you cannot go to work. Only daddies can go to work. So because she sees that I am not working, and you know, we have some friends around that have same situation, that the woman was not able to get to work, so right now I think she thinks that women cannot work. But it's not true. I don't want that, I need to be here for her but also be a good role model, to show her that women can do what men do (IFCA021).

Hana immigrated to Canada when her husband (an engineer) was recruited by an oil company to work in Alberta. After unsuccessfully trying a daycare, Hana decided to care for her daughter on a full-time basis while studying for her medical accreditation exams in the evenings.

Interestingly, Hana chose not to tell her young daughter that she was a physician because she didn't want to tell her something that "may not be possible to continue in this country"

(IFCA021). Largely as a result of immigrating, there had been an establishment of conventional gender relations in Hana's family that did not exist before. Consequently, Hana now worried about the example being set for her daughter regarding what is "normal" for women and men.

A final example of how the process of deskilling can detrimentally affect women and their families post-migration is provided by Kevin—a senior agricultural researcher and married father of one from China. Throughout his interview, Kevin told the story of his wife's struggle to deal with the loss of a career she worked extremely hard to obtain, and the subsequent dissolution of his family life.

Kevin: In China my wife's job is kind of, kind of working in the government as researcher, in the government. This is not a normal company but a research academy for the government. It's very, pretty important and she work very hard to get. She did same degree as me but at provincial University, I at Capital University. Provincial smaller, less known, yeah, and harder to move into good job in bigger city. She's, she did though, made transition to this job. Job is not relaxing, very not flexible, she work really hard and they exactly they know hour that she come, which, what time, and then leave, so but that is what she know and she did well. She not traveling and didn't study outside the province, so for me, I study far away from my home and also travel a lot to South Asia, lots of that country. I spend several months there. So already, I adapt to this place [Calgary] different. She had routine and work hard to get and I experience more flexible before coming here. This mean I was more open to idea of coming where my wife have much harder time even with the idea.

Jeanna: So you said that your wife struggled more than you did with coming here. Can you explain some of the things she found most challenging?

Kevin: In cooking, more work. My first, after we arrived, my wife didn't know how to cook good here because it's different now. We cannot buy the same food exactly. And the ovens, we can work on that oven, but it is very different, for her

it is overwhelming with this new change, yeah. New, new, environment. So feel like hard to do anything right. Job difficult to find, food do not have same or cannot cook same. And also because of language, and because of worrying about the future and also the weather [laughs]. And I thought, oh, why we move? Maybe it was careless?

Jeanna: Right.

Kevin: Yeah. So struggle with all these changes in food, cooking, loss of friend and family, no job, and difficult to speak the language to meet. Daughter at school too so wife lonely I think because not used to being at home. So then we make change, we spend more time together. We do the housework together a lot. And actually I like to do these things.

Jeanna: So this is different than how things were in China? You didn't do much work in the home there, is that right?

Kevin: No. None. But yeah. It's actually, we spent more time together here in Canada than in China. We are family, always together, always together, face the difficulties. I think that for my personality and character, I like to spend some quality time with my family, with my daughter, with my wife, but in the previous environment [China], not happen because of the environment and the demand. Work takes many hours and also there are those in your family to help with home work and children care and so different. But when we come here and my wife and I begin to share, share in the duty, she see that I can do and that I enjoy. I think this make it easier for her to return to, to her family in China because she know that daughter and I are doing quite well so she is there now.

Jeanna: So you think your wife was comfortable returning to China because of the changes your family has gone through since coming here?

Kevin: Yeah. Yeah. So good and bad thing, right? [laughs] But she's still there. Planning to come back in April but I'm not so sure. Is hard for her (IFCA028)

Unlike the earlier accounts offered by Danny and Renato, Kevin's wife does not "retreat" into the family as a strategy for dealing with post-migration challenges. Quite the opposite in fact: after ensuring that her family was fairly settled, Kevin's wife returned to China for an indefinite period of time. The departure of this wife and mother had greatly affected Kevin's family life, and most significantly, the parent-child relationships.

Jeanna: Is it difficult to spend so much time apart though? How is your daughter doing with the separation?

Kevin: Hmmm, yeah difficult, but not really for my daughter, I don't see her missing her mother too much. She is twelve years old and she went back to China for the winter vacation herself. Herself went and came back so is very, spend there about one month. About one month. Now when I call her mother, and chat with her mother, she just sometimes, sometimes just like to talk a little bit but after that she's in her room. And I don't know. So, yeah, where I stay with my daughter together, I spend a lot of time with my daughter and we do a lot together and we find that we have much in common too. I think maybe she worry her mother will not come, will not come back. That she will stay in China. She is very smart girl, good, nice girl. We are doing good together and I think maybe easier for her not to think about other thing (IFCA028).

Throughout his interview, the depiction Kevin offered of his family life shifted from something akin to a traditional nuclear family, to a post-migration family where work and responsibilities are shared more equally, to a transnational family characterized by complex family relations over distance (see Ambert, 2006; Panagakos 2006; Wong & Satzewich, 2006 for more on this topic). While Kevin emphasized his belief that the changes his family had experienced since immigrating had greatly improved his relationship with his daughter, as he saw it, the mother-daughter connection in his family had been significantly stressed by his wife's decision to leave Canada and his daughter's possible fear of abandonment. Moreover, while Kevin emphasized that his enhanced contribution to childrearing and domestic responsibilities had had certain positive effects for him on both a personal and a family level (e.g. Kevin now had an increased understanding of the needs of his daughter and of what it takes to run a household), he also stressed the belief that this shift in family relations likely affected his wife's decision to leave.

Kevin's narrative is interesting because it offers a somewhat different depiction of immigrant family life from that which is regularly seen in the literature on gender and immigration. For example, existing research has highlighted the importance of fathers' beliefs and gender ideologies—and specifically, fathers' willingness to alter these beliefs in the post-

migration environment—on the reconstitution of immigrant family life in the host society (Creese, 2012). Thus, it has been argued that if fathers are flexible in their gender ideologies after immigrating, parents are more likely to share parenting and household duties (Moon, 2003). Kevin's newly flexible attitude toward the division of household labor produced a different type of result, however, in that his wife decided to part from their family possibly because she now felt confident that her husband could adequately care for their daughter in her absence.

6.4 Immigration Challenges and Immigrant Men

Not unlike the experiences of the women in the previous section of this chapter who more fully engaged conventional roles around mothering in the post-migration context, it has been argued in the family and immigration literature that men who experience a loss of privilege post-migration may seek reaffirmation of masculine identities through idealized notions of husbands and fathers (Creese, 2012).

More so than male interviewees, female participants were quite open about their partners' struggles with new social and cultural expectations, experiences of underemployment, and troubled understandings of male authority post-migration. For example, a small number of female participants reported that their partners became emotionally, verbally and/or physically abusive during the post-migration period, and in various ways, link these responses to the destabilization of masculine identities. In these instances, female participants mentioned an increased level of alcohol consumption (arguably another way of asserting masculinity – see Gamburd, 2003 for more on this), intensified orientation to dominant practices and values of the homeland, and a deliberate withdrawal from Canadian society when describing their partners' methods for coping with post-migration changes.

One example of the above exists in the narrative of Tira—a mother of two and pharmacist who immigrated to Canada from Syria in 2007. At the outset of her interview, Tira explained that there were no financial issues in her household because she and her husband had saved enough money to live comfortably when they first arrived in Calgary, and Tira had since successfully re-credentialed as a pharmacist.⁴¹ However, Tira was quick to add that when an immigrant couple's focus is no longer fixed on problems of financial strain post-migration, they are more likely to begin to focus on other issues they are experiencing in their personal and family lives.

Tira: I know like the financial part is a big problem for some [new immigrants] but that's, that's only one part. The other part is the psychological, like you know, feelings. And then, a new society, it's not easy to get integrated, like in this, so my husband was not able to upgrade the degree [civil engineering], so he started working. It's so difficult. Like, you try but it's hard for a guy in his 50s, start again, going back university seats. So, it was hard for me but then, I don't know, anyway, like he start working as like developer, maintenance services, or renovation services. But that did not satisfy his feeling so that was the hard part. So after a while he just quit working, or he went in like depression. So for me personally, things are okay, but like on the family or the relationship and between the house, especially me and my husband, sometimes that different cultural, like perspective, puts you on an edge. And it depends on your personality because it's kind of difficult for my husband. He cannot accept, I don't know, he cannot accept like he keeps thinking that we changed, like the way we're thinking here.

Jeanna: So he feels as though you have changed as individuals since coming here? That your values are different?

Tira: Yeah. Yeah, like for me, keeping the same mentality as you were there, is not right thing. Because if you living here, you need to be, like get integrated. Where my husband is thinking we should keep some of our tradition.

Jeanna: So what would that look like? What kind of traditions?

Tira: Okay, like, usually the wife would always listen to what her husband says. Or the wife should take care of everything in the house plus her work. There's no equality in our country between, but actually we did not treat our daughter this way, so she's okay. Nothing wrong happened with her. My family, like my dad and we were three girls and one boy, like younger, but we didn't feel like there's

⁴¹ Now working full-time, Tira made a gross annual salary of \$85,000.

a difference between boy and girl, so if you just grow up that way, you feel it's okay. And then he's [husband] thinking I'm getting, I'm taking advantage of being inside here, in a society where I am like equal to him.

Jeanna: But it sounds like when you were in Syria equality between men and women wasn't as much of a problem for him? At least in how you brought up your daughter?

Tira: No, it didn't with her. But maybe I was not like, I would not, like I used to listen maybe more. I don't want to blame my husband, say, oh, like, I'm not saying, but I was not, I myself was not the same there as here it is true. For example like when we came here, I'm start thinking, I want my account separated, or my own savings. Because like even though I'm the one earning, I don't see the money. But I don't, but that's not acceptable, like in our mentality. But I've been working all my life. I didn't save anything for myself any time. And now, maybe I have a chance to save some, but then I am the one who will, this is not acceptable and the, in the traditional, the oriental part of us. So it is like this, like the psychological issues more, he feels threatened as a man. And I think maybe because we're not suffering from like financial issues as I'm like a pharmacist, so issues of power they happen more. But if financial is consuming all of your thoughts like it does for so many immigrants, then you would not look at other things. But now like we don't have that financial. So when you get rid of the financial issues, then you start thinking of the other side (IFCA024).

Tira introduces an important issue—especially in the context of this research project where the majority of participants spent much of their interview describing the stresses and strains associated with their post-migration financial situation—by reminding us that the issues immigrants face post-migration are multifaceted and multilayered. In the event that financial stresses were not an issue for Tira and her husband, Tira described her husband as problematizing the cultural changes he perceived his family to be going through. In addition, Tira emphasized her sense that she has changed in ways that no longer produce her husband's masculinity as consistently as she once did (e.g. by not “listening” or by wanting her own bank account). While Tira depicts such changes as a natural part of integration into a new society, she also suggested that her husband has not shared this type of thinking.

Tira's account also demonstrates how difficult it can be for immigrants to prepare prior to their arrival for the types of changes they will be faced with in Canada. While many

participants suggested anticipating certain financial and cultural differences prior to landing in Canada, a number also disclosed that they could never have prepared for how their very identities and understandings of “self” (e.g. as mother, father, husband, wife, caregiver, provider) would be affected and subsequently altered by the changed conditions or work and family life in Canada.

Tira: But I mean, you never know, when you come, like to a new world, you never know the possibilities of how you will change or how your family will do to accommodate. Something changed with my husband. Something changed since coming here, that’s the hard part and that’s related to his, like, the way he think. If I was not able to upgrade and he did, I don’t know, how would I feel? But like, I have, it depends on personality too. I was able to adjust and to change to make some friends and to live a life here, but he, my husband does not live any life.

Jeanna: That must be very difficult.

Tira: Yeah. And then what’s make it worse now between me and my husband, like, there’s a fight in my country. If you would listen to the news in Syria. And now he is with the government. I’m against the government. And that’s, that’s the last thing we needed in our relationship, so we cannot listen to the news together. But he would never have been with the government before coming here. He was not like this, not this radical to go against the people. So I look at him and I’m wondering, who is this person? What has become of you and how? Is it because you are a man, you no longer feel like strong? I mean, I mean, it’s hard. Even, I feel like, myself, inside, like I’m strong enough. But still in sometimes, like at home, I feel like, like I can’t stand his problems. Like, you know? I don’t think of leaving him, that’s too much. I try to avoid and then I have my books. I said, okay, go study and just forget everything. Like you know, we have good health, your kids is okay, your family back home, still okay. So, you need to find a way. It’s so hard to live with people who’s like not happy (IFCA024).

Tira speculates above about the reasons why her husband was having such a difficult time adjusting to life in Canada. The two major themes that run through her interview in regard to this question are that her husband was not able to regain his professional career in this country (and she was), and that he no longer knows how to think of himself as a “man” because as she sees it, he stays at home but has not found a way to make a meaningful contribution to family

life (e.g. Tira suggested that he does no domestic work, refrains from helping their son with his homework, and is not actively looking for a job).

In addition, Tira emphasized that her husband did not like to associate with other Arab people in Calgary because (as she saw it), he didn't want them to know that he was staying at home while his wife was working full-time in the paid labour market.

Jeanna: Has your husband gotten involved in the church⁴² here as well?

Tira: No. Even like, yeah, not exactly.

Jeanna: Because I know that for some people who come, when they don't get a job right away, getting involved in this type of community is one way of meeting people and it can help with integrating.

Tira: Yeah, exactly. You would think this but he just like doesn't like to see anybody. Because he thinks everybody around, like from those people who going to meet, which is mostly Arab people in the church, and then they know that he's not working, like, since. It's not easy, it's not easy. But he's, his position and then everybody knows that I'm working and then he's just staying home. Like its important, I want you to know that he is not really living here, so all he does is think about there [Syria]. When you are not living here, you can um, ideal, idealize life there. So here he's thinking of there. And so it all becomes more intense in his thinking.

Jeanna: Right.

Tira: Yeah. Even in Syria, like when we use, like in Ramadan? You know Ramadan?

Jeanna: Yes.

Tira: The TV will be like posting a lot of things and it's Arabic episodes whatever, and we were not able to watch because we, like my husband didn't watch Arabic things. Now here he keeps the TV on Arabic channels all the day. Like he did not listen before. We used always to listen to like famous English or pop music. And then now, he listen to the news and everything in Arabic. And I keep telling him, you not be happy that way. But it's still like, I would say, I don't blame, it's just yeah. Maybe if he got like a better job than me, or he got more

⁴² Tira's family are Muslim but throughout her interview she mostly referred to her place of worship as a church (and when asking questions I picked up on Tira's language and did the same). This was likely a generic term that Tira used for my understanding. Towards the end of her interview, however, Tira did shift in her language and used the term mosque on two occasions.

money or he had a feeling that he's doing more than me, like, that's one part of feeling, like men in our country, that the man is making money or is having a higher degree than your wife, or if he was successful here, he would not thinking that way (IFCA024).

In the above quotation, Tira offers a thoughtful psychological analysis of her husband's situation as well as her feelings regarding it. Tira is sympathetic to her husband's post-migration struggles and would like to see him working. However, she also appears to like the changes that immigration has had for her personally. This account of the distribution, negotiation and limitations of power in Tira's post-migration family provides a useful reminder that while migration to Canada may certainly destabilize previously conceived notions about gender differences and spheres of male authority, it is neither the case that men will always be willing to accept such changes (even when necessary to maintain family livelihood), nor that women will find this new organization agreeable or easy to negotiate.

Along these lines, existing studies have shown that some new immigrants construct the post-migration family as an economic and emotional "survival unit" that must be held together in a hostile social and cultural context (Javed, 2009; Seongeun et al., 2006; Moon, 2003). In other words, because racism and gendered inequalities exist in both the workforce and within communities, immigrant families—often led by the mother—feel they must band together to face injustices if they are to succeed in their new environment. This research thus offers a strong reminder that shifts in power in the post-migration conjugal family necessarily play out in a larger social and cultural environment that has its own set of power relations, and that the interplay of these relations may greatly affect perceptions of family roles and responsibilities.

It is crucial to consider how intersections of different systems of classification (such as race and gender) may affect participants' experiences of a new society. For example, many of the participants in this study spoke about feeling discriminated against on multiple levels (e.g. at

an employer level, within the immigrant services sector, during certain components of the professional reaccreditation process,⁴³ etc.). In these discussions, race, gender and language were regularly constructed as the main factors that contributed to participants' understandings of discrimination, and participants described this as having tangible effects on both their work and family lives.

For example, Tobi—a manager in oil and gas and a father of four from Nigeria—explained feeling as though his accent and the color of his skin made it more difficult for him to get a job in the oil and gas industry upon first arriving in Calgary. What's more, such feelings of personal rejection greatly affected Tobi's willingness to be flexible in regards to the ideals of masculinity he brought with him to Canada.

Tobi: Back there [Nigeria] the culture is that the man provides, you know. Financially for the family, and the man that is unable to do that, of course is, is ashamed, you know. And that is why for me here, I felt this way too, you know.

Jeanna: You felt ashamed at not being able to provide for your family.

Tobi: Yeah. Like when I can't work and that is why I keep, you know, keep on moving forward, yeah, setting goals and moving forward. Because it is a horrible way to feel. And I think the worst, the biggest part of it for me is also that I have the skills to get the job, to do it well. I have the technical skills. For this last job, I know the guy from class [corporate bridging program] that ended up with the position. We both did our work placement at the company and I have much more experience. He was always asking me questions. But he got a contract. And why? They cannot say. Maybe it's my accent. Maybe the way I look, you know? He is from Eastern Europe. It's hard to know what, but I do know that it was not my ability to do the job. So then this is why I'm frustrated because it is a part of me that I have to provide financially for my family, but I am rejected and I think for things I do not possess the control. It makes you resent.

⁴³ One example that participants emphasized was in professional programs in the health sciences (e.g. pharmacy, dentistry, and medicine), which require applicants for reaccreditation to complete an Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE). Such tests are designed to test clinical skill performance and competence in skills such as communication, clinical examination, medical procedures and evaluation and interpretation of imagery results in a practical setting. Participants argued that cultural and language differences caused them to be given poor evaluations (e.g. because they took more time, asked for clarification, or were unsure about western practices when it came to interacting with patients). A number also emphasized the lack of opportunities available for new immigrants to acquire this type of knowledge (e.g. through shadowing, mock exams, etc).

Jeanna: How have you decided to handle the situation? Is there anyone you can talk to?

Tobi: Uh, I've met, I've met a couple of guys but you see, back in my home country, there are not such things like relying on other guys, you know. There, I was providing financial assistance for other guys. So coming here, really, you know, I, I wouldn't want to rely on anyone. I'd rather juggle it, you know, work, it out.

Jeanna: I see. So you were helping others who struggled in Nigeria and it would be difficult for you to receive help here because you have always been on the other side of things? Is that right?

Tobi: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Coming here I feel even more that I need to normalize back to this, to be in a good position where I am assisting others and, uh, with the appropriate means to run of my household in similar ways. This is how my kids know me. In my family, my kids knew that, they, yeah, they've mentioned a couple of times. They say, oh, but dad, back home we knew people who our family was supporting in one way or the other. I say, yeah, and I tell them, just take it easy, when I get my job in my field, things will get more normalized (IFCA005).

The ideals of masculinity and class that Tobi describes above are largely reflective of the dominant model of the family seen in Sub-Saharan Africa (e.g. revolving around male authority and the values of respect and obedience, as seen in Creese, 2011). Feeling respected and regarded as a provider both within his family and within his community is thus something that has always been important to Tobi's understanding of masculinity. As Tobi put it, "This is how my kids know me." Furthermore, as illustrated above, it had become increasingly important to Tobi since coming to Canada that he re-establish his family life and social position in ways that were equivalent to his life prior to immigrating (e.g. "coming here I feel even more that I need to normalize back to this").

It is possible that Tobi's desire to "normalize" back to the way things were in Nigeria is directly related to the hostile post-migration context he now found himself in. For instance, in an environment where the very tenets of Tobi's masculinity were threatened by downward mobility

and racial discrimination, maintaining his position as a certain “type” of man (e.g. a man that has no reason to feel “ashamed”) may become even more vital to his sense of self. This is evidenced by Tobi’s refusal to seek “help” in a situation where race or language discrimination may be affecting his job prospects.⁴⁴ While many of the participants in this study expressed a willingness or desire to acquire assistance for “getting ahead” in the Canadian labour market wherever they could obtain it, seeking help does not appear to “fit” with Tobi’s understanding of what strong men do (e.g. offer help but not accept it).

While it is impossible to know whether Tobi was denied the abovementioned job contract because of racial characteristics, it is *his* understanding of this situation that is important to the current analysis because it provides insight into how racialized masculinities are experienced (i.e., how one’s race influences understandings of what it means to “be a man” (Kwan-Lafond, 2012)). While categories of race and gender are both situational and culturally specific (i.e., they are not static across time and space), Tobi clung to pre-migration understandings of masculinity once in Canada both because he was not being offered any attractive alternatives (e.g. his experiences in Canada thus far had not offered him an alternative framework for understanding masculinity) and because these beliefs helped to ground his identity during tumultuous times. Thus, similar to the sentiments of Ray provided in Chapter 5, Tobi held firmly to the values that “made sense” in his life as a way of combating his precarious social and economic circumstances.

The accounts in the first half of this chapter illustrate some of the ways in which the process of immigration can affect the reconstitution of household dynamics in the host society.

⁴⁴ Tobi seemed to interpret my question about “talking to people” and receiving help in Canada as referring to the possibility of him turning to other African men for support or sympathy (which he won’t do). He doesn’t appear to be thinking about talking to specialists at immigration or labour services or seem to think that any “help” on that front is possible.

Specifically, this section explores the renegotiation of family life post-migration, including participants' accounts of complex and changing forms of dependence, conflict and familial stress along the fault lines of gender, race and class, and changed spousal and parent-child relationships. The sections that follow continue on with an exploration of the renegotiation of family life post-migration, but shift in their analytical focus to consider participants' accounts of enjoyable family practices and experiences including budding forms of independence and interdependence, an increased understanding of children's needs, and shifts toward the "degendering" of family relations.

6.5 The Reconstitution of Family Life: Immigration as a Catalyst for Positive Change

As demonstrated in the previous section of this chapter, the reconstitution of immigrant family life in North America may result in increased levels of family stress, the further entrenchment of conventional gender roles, and the deterioration of familial relationships. However, this is not the whole story. Researchers are beginning to explore whether and how the period of reorganization that occurs during settlement may act as a catalyst toward more egalitarian change within families (Albanese, 2009; Ali & Kilbride, 2004; Anisef et al., 2001; Jain & Belsky, 1997). This section of the chapter contributes to this emerging body of literature by exploring some of the more positive effects participants described immigration has had for their family relations.

It is worth noting that immigration opened up a period of uncertainty for all participants. Whether in regard to how best to re-establish a professional career, organize daily schedules and tasks, or pay for children's activities, well established patterns of pre-migration daily life were disrupted by participants' new social, economic and cultural location. Times of major change often make it difficult for actors to draw on customary practices and taken-for-granted

assumptions and ideologies (Shibutani, 1986). Rather than resisting this disruption, however, many of the participants in this study responded by constructing immigration as an opportunity for change and adjustment in their personal and family lives, although as shown by Tira in the previous section, members of participant families did not always change in mutually compatible ways.

A number of participants in this study stated that re-establishing family life in Canada offered a welcome change of pace from busy pre-migration work schedules, while others emphasized a new found opportunity to redefine parenting practices and household arrangements away from the involvement of extended kin or social and cultural expectations that push definitive ideas about gender and family life. Take Danny, for example. The many difficulties Danny's family (and particularly his wife, Jin) had to negotiate since immigrating to Canada are described in a previous section of this chapter. However, in his interview, Danny also offered his interpretation of the positive changes that immigration had brought about in his personal and family life.

Danny: After we came here we spent more time together than in South Korea. Sometimes it was stressful but there, but we found that there are many things to do with my family without any money. For example we are playing soccer in the park. There are many parks in Calgary. Each facility is very good. My son likes to play baseball. I find some baseball, play some baseball at public stadium, stadium in many park. And my daughter likes snow, yeah. In Calgary this winter we enjoyed playing sledding. My daughter very like it. And we sometimes we make snowmen. And wear a cap [laughter]. Yeah. It's very fun.

Jeanna: So you didn't really have this type of quality time with your children in South Korea?

Danny: There are no time, so we are not happy. Here I get to really know my son and my daughter. I know them differently here. What are they like and make them happy. This is very important change for me. Before with mother-in-law living with us, this make things very difficult for me to spend time with family how I like to. Now I go to son's school, talk with teacher, take daughter to activity. We all have better life together.

Jeanna: Do you think your wife is happy as well?

Danny: As I told you wife had very hard time with job, find language hard so different type of difficulty here for wife, yeah. But she tell me she would not want to return. For her the family life is very good. She would not change. Wife and I much closer too. We spend many time in family and at home so I have had time to talk with my wife face to face, not by phone. It was a good opportunity to increase family bond and husband wife bond also. In South Korea, birth rate very low, marriage is very low, divorce rate is very high. This because there are many problem in family system in South Korea. People work too many hour, parents live with young couple and impress their view on the household. People want to get married less to avoid this. In Canada I feel much better that wife and I have strong bond, will not meet this statistic [laughs]. Big part also is I am no longer just money-maker. I bake some cookie, cook some meal, put in the ah, the clip. I try to do any jobs when home. Same jobs as wife just less because home less.

Jeanna: The clip?

Danny: For the hair, daughter's hair. [laughs] It's better now we can do as we like without relative in the home and no neighbor talking behind me. In South Korea I always, I always say, don't do that, don't do that [to kids], but in Calgary I don't have to do like this because I don't have to watch out on other's take care about another's opinion. Yeah. In South Korea many people lived in a limited region so it's not easy to have some private life. Here we live together as a family in the ways that are making us happy [laughs] (IFCA023).

Danny was very candid throughout his interview about how both cultural expectations and pressures from his mother-in-law affected the “type” of father he was in South Korea (i.e., an “uninvolved money-maker” – see Chapter 4 for more on this). Yet, it is important to note that there is a very strong undercurrent of dissent in Danny's talk of pre-migration family life. For instance, Danny made it clear that he had always felt that he wanted to be a more involved father and husband, but that he simply didn't know how to realize these feelings in his previous cultural and familial milieu. Now in Canada, Danny no longer felt the pressure to conform to that which is considered “normal” for South Korean fathers (e.g. long hours of paid work and little responsibility for childcare and domestic tasks) and took advantage of this enhanced level

of autonomy by parenting in ways that held more meaning for him (e.g. doing his daughter's hair, playing soccer in the park, and so on).

While Danny emphasized an inability to be involved with his family in all of the ways that he wanted to be prior to migration, this was not the case for all of the participants who described having higher levels of involvement (and the benefits that can come from this) in their post-migration family lives. For instance, recall Sumit—a chartered accountant and father of two from Nepal whose narrative was introduced in Chapter 4. Sumit reported being extremely proud of his pre-migration parenting practices and values, which he described as focusing on providing his kids with the best opportunities possible (e.g. in education, travel, and extracurricular activities), and doing what he could to make them into “better Nepalese citizen with good job” (IFCA003). Thus, as Sumit put it, “this meant that I worked a lot! And my wife, she did the same. But we did it for them [kids] and they benefited too” (IFCA003). However, at a later point in his interview, Sumit explained that immigrating to Canada had altered his practices as a father in ways that he came to greatly value.

Sumit: About a month ago my wife is working and my youngest comes home from school crying. I take her by the hand and we talk it through. She felt good after and went off to play in her room because she was no longer upset. I think I felt better than her though [light laugh]. After being here for some time I started to realize the things I was missing in Nepal with my family. But how could I have known the meaning of this there? I come from a male-dominated society. They have, normally what happen, the girl, the woman, once they get married, they come to the male home, means the man's home. If the wife works outside of the home then the paid helpers which are also women, they do the work in the home and the mother of the son, my mother, would care for the children if possible. This is the way that it is and I always felt we were doing the best for our kids. I mean, how can you know the value in this experience I just had with my child without ever doing such things? I had never done. So since that I am here, the job, not working in my profession has been so difficult. The difficulties with finances we have talked about also, right? But this change in how you come together as a family. My role as a father is very different to me now.

Jeanna: Do you think that when you get back into your professional field that this new way of thinking about parenting will change? Perhaps when time gets tight again?

Sumit: No, no. I could not allow it to happen. Taking my family out of the lower, the lower class is very important to me, but I want to be involved in their lives too. I do whatever now, whatever I can do to help, you know. I'm in home too. So I help, I enjoy helping. I like cooking. I am living in the kitchen [laughs] (IFCA003).

Not unlike Danny, Sumit began to redefine his parenting and domestic roles once living in Canada. Yet, while Danny had longed to do more with his family prior to immigrating, Sumit's story is about not having had any idea about doing things differently, or the value that might come from increasing his engagement in hands-on care. It is impossible to predict how time and the acquisition of a full-time job would affect each participant's parenting views and activities. However, at this point it is clear that the increased level of parental responsibility both fathers are experiencing in Canada has influenced them to participate in new embodied practices with their children and wives that have been both pleasurable and emotionally compelling.

Not unlike Danny and Sumit, Anna—a mother of three and medical doctor from the Philippines—explained how immigrating to Canada had affected how she, her husband and their children viewed their familial relationships and responsibilities to one another.

Anna: I'm just very lucky because I have supportive husband, actually. So I'm a lucky person because in the Philippines I would say that this is rare. So my husband has an experience way back in the US, remember I told you? He was visiting before. So he knows this North American kind of thing. This cultural attitude. So he knows how to be happy and still do work in the home and time with our girls. So and he's good in cooking. He's the one in charge at home with cooking. I'm the one in charge with laundry and cleaning the house. And this works for us. Yeah. So even I don't have helpers here, we value our privacy here. Because if you have helpers like we did, there's pros and cons, actually. You cannot have your privacy if you have a helper. And also your children do not learn how to be independent. So we learn this now and we all value it.

Jeanna: Did your helpers live in your home?

Anna: Yes. They live in our house. They have their own room. But at least if you wake up, breakfast is ready. But here we can do that. And laundry here is easy because you have lots of gadgets. You have washing machine. They have rice cooker. In the Philippines, if you, if I use my rice cooker, my electricity bill will go up. Yeah. Electricity in the Philippines is expensive, so, yeah, we're having a good time. Because at five o'clock, five o'clock, for example, I'm home. And we're already having chit chats, short talks, small talk in our dinner table. And then there's, how do you call it? There's more time for each other. In the Philippines I arrived home at 8 o'clock or 9 o'clock. So their dinner, I don't, we don't have dinner together. So yeah.

Jeanna: That's very interesting. How do you perceive that your role as a parent has changed since coming to Canada?

Anna: Good question. Coming here, I'm more involved, I'm really happy because I realize that before coming, I'm really a busy person, I'm working hard, I don't have time for my children. We all take each other for granted. But coming here we realize, my children are telling me, you know, Mommy, coming here, I realize that we're really very lucky to have each other. Because we all go out together. So we all have quality time. So for me really, if you, even if you are really a busy person, just having quality time with your children will really make a difference. So in the Philippines when my children are still young, two girls, I make it a point to every Friday night we went to McDonalds. That was our quality time. Not so much, right? [laughs] Well, of course here I cannot do that. But now I have more attention with my daughters here. They need attention. Especially my youngest because she doesn't have a playmate. In the Philippines they have several playmates because they're with their cousins. Here I have to make time with my little girl, she's still nine. So she's my playmate and we became close together here. None of my children want to go back to the Philippines. They all say how much more they like having their parents with them. Even if it means more chores [laughs] (IFCA012).

Anna's narrative provides insight into how dislocations of class might be negotiated within immigrant families post-migration. Similar to the narrative of Jay outlined in Chapter 5, Anna explained in her interview that she had reconfigured her priorities to focus more on "being there" physically and emotionally for her children, and less on paid work and provision. Furthermore, Anna reinforced her moral identity by contrasting the close bond she now had with her children with the seemingly more distant relationship she had with them prior to immigrating (e.g. in the Philippines, "we all take each other for granted").

Similar to Anna who constructed the time her husband spent in the United States as helping to increase his level of comfort around undertaking domestic work, a number of female participants cited previous exposure to western cultural ideals as essential to their partners' flexibility regarding the organization of family life post-migration. This is a complex notion in that it may be perceived as suggesting that western cultural values, and the families that uphold them, are altogether more egalitarian or modern than those of other nations. Rather than accepting this generalization, however, I argue that it is more a matter of interpretation, or the meanings that new immigrants attach to western family relations, than an assertion of the former. This theme will be fleshed out further in the discussion of frameworks that occurs toward the end of this chapter.

Unlike many of the participants in this study who struggled greatly during the first weeks and months of settlement, Anna went on to explain that her first four months in Calgary were amongst the happiest of her adult life.

Anna: Yeah. I'm the principal applicant. Yeah, so for me, since I've been working for so long in my life, that four months that I didn't work, when we first came, because I had to settle for the education of my children, we have to make a lot of, I have to actually I have to research first how can I get my certifications here, my foreign credentials here. So I did a lot of research, but those were the times that I really feel happy because those were the times that I did not feel stressed in my life.

Jeanna: When you weren't working.

Anna: When I'm, when we came here. When I'm not working and when I have the time to pay this attention to my family. So, yeah (IFCA0012).

Interestingly, Anna's explanation offers additional grounds for why immigrant women might "retreat" into the home post migration. For instance, existing research has shown that new immigrants may opt to release themselves from the burdens of the long and stressful hours of paid work that were customary in their pre-migration lives (Moon, 2003). In line with this, Anna

claimed that she was most happy when she was not working because she “did not feel stressed” and had the time to “pay attention to [her] family.” This is a theme that was echoed by a number of participants in this study, specifically those who had worked long and stressful hours pre-migration and were not in any immediate danger of financial hardship in their post-migration lives (i.e., because their partner was working or because they had enough savings to comfortably subsist for some time).

A further example of this is found in the narrative of Cindy—a mother of one and a power engineer from China who immigrated to Canada in 2011. While living in China, Cindy’s husband gave up working outside of the home in order to care for their daughter on a full-time basis. Cindy explained that this was the best option for the couple at the time because her work was very demanding and often involved long hours and extended stays away from their home city. Now, in Canada, it was Cindy’s husband who worked outside of the home and Cindy who had yet to start working. Cindy reported that this decision was made based on the fact that the couple considered Cindy’s English to be stronger, and therefore she should focus her attention on trying to obtain a “professional” job while her husband worked in a “survival” job to pay the bills. However, after being in the home for some time, Cindy decided to postpone her job search in order to “do as Canadians do” (IFCA018).

Cindy: After I arrived Canada, some time and no work, I start enjoying spend time with daughter and time with husband. I start to think too. I should be, I should be as a mother, as a wife, not just as I was in China, as an engineer. You know. In China, I almost pay all my attention to the, to my job. Little time to stay in home with my daughter, with my husband. But here, I think, I have talk this with my husband. I say two years. Maybe I stay home for two years. My husband working and maybe even he can do something, get in the process to his professional. During this two years, we decide maybe we will enjoy some life. We should do as Canadian do [laughs].

Jeanna: As Canadians do. Do you mean by spending a lot of time together as a family?

Cindy: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Lots of time together. Mother at home taking care of daughter, father at work [laughs]. Very different than life before but for two years we try to have this experience. Also, I was this kind of people. I don't know how to say it. Ah, kind of person, put work first. Husband different. So maybe he work I stay home but he still be at home too, not always work (IFCA018).

As Cindy describes above, her post-migration family life conformed much more readily to conventional western expectations around gender than did the organization of her family life pre-migration. However, similar to Anna's account, the context surrounding Cindy's shift into being at home on a full-time basis is both interesting and important.

Cindy had seemingly made the decision to take on the bulk of the domestic work and childcare responsibilities in Calgary as a way of reclaiming a balance between work and family life that did not exist for her in China (where long and demanding hours are part of a well established culture of work). Furthermore, it is quite apparent from her narrative that Cindy viewed this transition as a pathway toward becoming more involved in her daughter's daily life. However, while Cindy characterized the transition from paid work to at-home caregiving as a personal decision that she made to improve the quality of her life, it is important to bear in mind that "choices" around mothering are made in the context of competing discourses. Western conventional expectations around mothering are not lost on Cindy who cites "mother at home taking care of daughter" as a dominant cultural norm to attend to now that she is living in Calgary.

The circumstances of Cindy's shift into at-home mothering are somewhat unique in this sample. For instance, as demonstrated in a previous section, many of the female participants in this study who went from full-time paid work to at-home caregiving post-migration appeared much less certain or less in command of the change. However, the accounts offered here also illustrate that even when parents do not necessarily have power over the specific opportunities

available to them in their post-migration lives, nor the new material realities they may be faced with, social interactions that reduce gender differences between couples and strengthen familial bonds are indeed possible.

6.6 Factors that Support Flexibility in Post-Migration approaches to Parenting

The question that remains then is, why? *Why is it that a large number of the participants in this study leaned more toward redefining parenting and domestic roles once living in Canada than they did toward re-asserting pre-migration ideals?* Two overarching reasons are present in the data. First, as has been illustrated in many of the accounts included in this chapter, unemployment and underemployment associated with migration pushed many participants (both male and female) who had worked long hours outside of the home before immigrating back into the home on a regular-to-full time basis during settlement. As such, participants who had largely relied on paid help and extended family in the day-to-day care of their children were now confronted with doing all of the childcare and domestic responsibilities in their household.

In many cases, what emerged were stories about how increased involvement with children—whether by “choice” such as in the case of Cindy, or by circumstance like that of Sumit—led to their engagement in new (and often enjoyable) family practices that had a hand in triggering a rethinking of parenting roles and responsibilities. In other words, participants came to value their increased involvement in children’s care in ways that served to reduce gender differences in parenting. Furthermore, similar to the findings of Chesley (2012), participants reported that their engagement in new types of family practices led to the development of increased bonds and the enhancement of nurturing and communication skills (e.g. because he was physically available to her, Sumit was able to share a moment of bonding with his daughter

that contributed to a drastic shift in his understanding of what enjoyable and meaningful fathering work can look like).

What's more, both male and female participants in this study suggest that spending more time at home with their children or spouses helped them to develop a more complex understanding of family responsibilities. For example, as described above, Anna was adamant that the removal of paid helpers in their post-migration home had helped all members of her family more thoroughly appreciate one another and the work that goes into running a household. Daren—a financial manager and married father of three from Nigeria—provided a similar (albeit more detailed) example.

Daren: After being here for some time, maybe two or three months, we, my wife and I tried to work out a timetable for ourselves. If I'm going out I'll probably agree with my wife, let me go for the next three, four hours. I'll be back and then she goes out as well too. When she has appointments, I relieve her so she may attend appointments. On these days, I wait at home with the baby and then the other boys go to school while I wait at home with my, the little baby at home. And so we kind of worked it out in such a manner that we balanced our time, that if you have appointments, you are, your appointment precedes the other person and then you go and the other person waits at home.

Jeanna: What happens if say, one person has an appointment but the other is scheduled to work? Because you're both doing part-time work at this point, right?

Daren: Yeah, exactly, yeah. What we did was if that happens, so we had a day care centre that was very close to the house. And so they were owned by some immigrants as well, and then we negotiated with them that any time we wanted to go out if two of us have to go out we will bring the kids there. And then we agreed on some rates to pay and they were quite generous in helping us since, seeing that we just came to the country, and so we had reduced and subsidized rates that they take from us. So it was really much more of a continuum and safer and you had rest of mind that your kids were somewhere safe, not too far from the house, and we could go about our daily activities then.

Jeanna: Okay. How comfortable are you with this set-up? It's very different than your life in Nigeria with two live-in nannies.

Daren: Yeah. You're right. In Nigeria it is females, females are thought to know how to take care of children, and they're thought of as quite affectionate and and

more homely than men. You could say it is this kind of, of typifying, stereotyping of the female into this role. So our nannies were female as well. And we would rather prefer having females as nannies because this is how we think. As a parent though I have always been more affectionate to my kids than my acquaintances, I try to be more understanding of their concerns. So being here has allowed me to develop this further. And as I told you my wife and I have a timetable, an organized scheduled, so this has given me the opportunity to learn more about the running of things because I am in our home. So here, I'm quite, quite involved and everything's pretty equal between us. Shared equally.

Jeanna: Why do you think you've felt differently than other men? You were a part of this same culture that sees women as, I guess, natural caregivers. What has been different in your experience?

Daren: Well, for me as a person, I'm indifferent. Indifference in the sense that I love kids, I love children, so I rather take, I rather spend more time in organizing and doing a lot of those things than my wife because the banking job in our home country takes a lot of time and so whenever she has time she gets involved but most of the time I try to you know plug in where she cannot do things herself because she was very busy. So already I was spending more time than the average [dad]. Your views sort of just develop from there (IFCA004).

Daren and his wife set up their "timetable" as a strategy for combining paid work and domestic responsibilities without juggling the heavy costs associated with full-time daycare. Yet, according to Daren, this organization had also enhanced both parents' understanding of what it takes to run a household and care for three young children. The above quotation also illustrates Daren's realization that it is not only women who are well suited to take care of children on a regular basis—a shift that largely occurred because of his increased involvement in such work. While Daren claimed that he had always been more affectionate and understanding with his children than the average Nigerian man, his account also suggested that he was now beginning to see himself as an "equal terms caregiver"—where shared involvement in the hands on care of children gives parents a mutual understanding of children's needs (Ranson 2010).

The second theme that runs through the data concerning why participants leaned more strongly toward redefining parenting and domestic roles once in Canada has to do with their participation in the settlement sector. Each of the participants in this study had some affiliation

with the settlement sector in Calgary, with the large majority of participants having been involved in a professional bridging program at some point since their arrival (see Chapter 3 for further detail). During interviewing, I was thoroughly surprised by the number of people who discussed learning Canadian cultural norms around parenting and family in these courses, especially given that the institutional focus of bridging programs is generally stated as helping internationally trained professionals work towards securing employment in their profession and gain accreditation.⁴⁵ While participants did acquire useful information on such topics, a very important sub-theme ran through much of the talk regarding what was learned in the settlement sector: if you want to *get ahead* in Canadian society, sharing in the work of the home and the family is necessary.

Once this theme surfaced in a couple of interviews, I began to ask subsequent participants specifically about what they had learned regarding family organization and values while they were a student in the settlement sector. A number of ideas were offered in response to this type of questioning, including maintaining two income streams when possible, fitting with what other Canadian families are doing, and maintaining a “happy home” to allow for productive work. In line with this, Daren had the following to say about his experience in a corporate bridging program:

Daren: I, I was told by *** [instructor] in that class that Canadian men share in the work of the home and the care of the kids. You know, they share in everything. It helps their families to be successful. And this affirmed for me what I, what really I already knew, it was a demonstration of how the Canadian family operates with busy schedules of both parents but also without much help or assistance from others. So, I, we learned that Canadians are very individual in their family, ah, relations. They don't have a lot of help per se. This is different than many other cultures like ours where help is readily there (IFCA004).

⁴⁵ <http://humanservices.alberta.ca/documents/Calgary-etcs-immigrant-bridging-excerpt.pdf>

Daren and his wife had already been working at dividing up family tasks and responsibilities before he began the bridging program. However, the information Daren garnered in this course regarding “how the Canadian family operates” helped to validate his family’s chosen strategy of (re)organization.

Not unlike the example provided by Daren, John—a chemical engineer and father of four also from Africa—discussed how the information he garnered in a bridging program helped him to understand the importance of “letting go” of customary ways of being.

John: If you want to get ahead in Canadian life, you have to work harder than those born and raised. Most new immigrants would expect this. But the class [settlement sector] helped me to realize the importance of letting go of the way things worked at the job, in the house. And I don’t think most people expect that, you know?

Jeanna: What do you mean by “letting go”?

John: The best I can describe is that it offered to me a different way of thinking. For example, this idea that being a man, a strong man, a providing man, a man of stature in the community, this idea of being a man in one way may not be the same now, it has to look differently here. So what is important is to let go of your engrained ideas in order to move forward. So when in Canada, you should be more open to doing as Canadians do. You know, if your wife is not happy because she is having to work and do all of the chores at home, if she is overworked, the family cannot, it cannot prosper (IFCA006).

It is worthy of note that John specifically linked his flexibility regarding new definitions of masculinity to his family’s probability of “prospering” in this country—a link that is explored in further detail below.

As a final example of how involvement in the settlement sector can influence the reconstitution of family life for new immigrants, Lidia—a manager in international trade and common-law mother of one from Poland—explained how her participation in a bridging program better prepared her to deal with issues related to work and family life in Canada.

Jeanna: Do you expect that when you finish your program it will be easier for you to find a job?

Lidia: Actually they didn't really say about the job prospects. They, they encourage us and they say we have good opportunities and good chances, they say that the groups before us, a lot have jobs. They all happy, so, I think it's good. They really prepare us good, you know, in the resume or way of the looking for a job and how to go and do interview. Everything is different here. So you really have to meet that expectation. They really prepare you very good for that one.

Jeanna: How has your participation in this course affected your family life? Does your husband take care of your daughter so that you can attend?

Lidia: Now that I'm doing the school, it's kind of, we can't do everything at the same time. So we have to support each other. When I finish the school he [partner] will think probably what to do with his education.

Jeanna: How was it decided that you would do a bridging program first?

Lidia: It just happened like, I applied for that course and I've been approved, so because I was accepted first, this is how we made the decision. And, you know, they give us some strategies in our class about this, so we learn about the importance of if you want to eventually have two people working, it may happen that in the beginning it's important to take turn. So if you have small kid like us, one person will upgrade and find work and then another. You can't resent for this because this is how the family will break down, when one person thinks their career is more, more important.

Jeanna: That's very interesting. So you learned about this in your bridging program? Did you share this information with your husband? Sorry, your partner.

Lidia: [laughs] Don't worry, I call him my husband too. It's easier [laughs]. Yes I would tell him everything I've learned after getting home. He has been with daughter all day so is always eager to talk about anything. So this is when we do our planning, but it's not so different for us really. Back home [Poland] it's very hard to start like independent life because everything is very expensive and the money you earn are very low. So it's, it's really, really hard to you know, to afford the same few things every day. Like take a child to the swimming pool, like you really, sometimes you don't have money until the end of the month to just buy food even though we both had what would be considered very good job. So a lot about sharing and like the strategies we already do. But it's good, like good refresh [laughs] (IFCA015).

Lidia's partner has a medical degree and worked as a government health inspector prior to immigrating to Canada. Despite having highly esteemed professional positions, however, the couple found it difficult to afford a home of their own or keep up with the changing costs of

amenities and foodstuffs in their country of origin. In the above quotation, Lidia draws our attention to the fact that this ever-present financial pressure helped the couple to realize the importance of working together to meet a budget. Now in Canada, Lidia and her partner continue to share childcare and domestic responsibilities and have also learned to make important trade-offs regarding re-entry into the labour market. Moreover, the principles Lidia had acquired in the settlement sector (e.g. “it’s important to take turn”, “You can’t resent for this because this is how the family will break down”) validate this organization by constructing turn taking as “useful” if you want to restore two professional occupations.

Lidia makes an important point regarding this couple’s established level of openness toward strategizing and sharing responsibilities in family life prior to immigrating. During their interviews, many of the participants in this study appeared quite open to new ways of “doing” family roles in Canada, and more than might be expected expressed that this willingness had been there prior to immigrating (even if it had not been realized in their daily lives). However, it is also important to keep in mind that interview accounts are “public accounts” (i.e., versions deemed acceptable to share in an interview setting) and that this may influence the narratives that participants share. Yet, it is also possible that the high levels of education, professional experience, and previous world travel of these participants significantly affected their views on family life in more egalitarian ways.

6.7 Summing up

In sum, the accounts of Daren, John and Lidia illustrate how the information provided in settlement sector classes can be taken up by new immigrants as a conceptual *framework* for “doing” Canadian family life. For some, hooking into this framework may simply legitimize ideas they had already been working with in their family. However, for others, such frameworks

provide a new (and often institutionally legitimized) context for rethinking the social organization of the family. Also, in cases where no such framework is available or utilized, participants appeared more likely to struggle with integration into Canadian society (e.g. as seen with Tira's husband).

Over and over again, participants pointed out in their interviews that they would attempt to "do as Canadians do" in their family lives. For some, this equated to dismantling entrenched understandings of gender roles and responsibilities that had previously structured day-to-day interactions. For others, it meant touching base more often than before by speaking with their partner regularly about how they were coping, or ensuring that their children felt they could come to them with new issues and concerns. In short, it was idealized notions of Canadian family life (i.e., how immigrants *perceived* Canadians interacted in their families) that appeared to be significantly influential in the ways that many new immigrants organized their families.

For example, Cindy stood out as one participant who highlighted the gendered patterns often typical of Canadian families (e.g. "woman at home"), but many participants seemed inspired by depictions of the Canadian family characterized by terms such as "equality," "independence" and "sharing." The reasons why are not easy to decipher. One reason may be that they had been told this is the way of it by family, friends, or in classes such as those described above. Another option is that when juxtaposed against the established social and institutional norms of their country of origin, Canadian life simply felt more free from constraint and thus more liberal or democratic (e.g. as illustrated by Danny).

Furthermore, as shown most clearly in John's account, participants also opted to enact principles around shared work and responsibilities in family life as a strategy for re-establishing their socio-economic status post-migration. The underlying idea here is that if things are running

smoothly at home (e.g. both partners feel supported), the route to realizing one's professional goals will also be smoother. This notion was one that some couples came to on their own, and others discussed learning in the settlement sector. However, in the current context, it reminds us that there are multiple reasons why new immigrants might open up a space for redefining orientations to work and family life post-migration. Sometimes adjustments made for a specific purpose (e.g. to "get ahead" in Canada) can foster real and meaningful change within families, especially if members are willing to commit to the establishment of flexibility and understanding in their family relations in order to achieve their objective.

In the next and final data chapter, the ways in which participants responded to the post-migration education and activities of their children are explored in order to shed light on how understandings of their children's development informed participants' approach to post-migration family life and organization.

Chapter 7: Raising New Canadians: Kids' Schooling, Activities and Development

7.1. Introduction

The foundation of current Western child rearing philosophy rests on the assumption that contemporary parents must come equipped with the tools needed to deliberately cultivate their children's progress in life (Quirke, 2006). Furthermore, to have an "unsuccessful" child is oftentimes viewed as a direct consequence of parents' own irresponsible behavior, or lack of effort toward acquiring the knowledge and resources needed to provide the best opportunities and services for their family (Beck-Gernsheim, 2002).

Existing research has shown that the parenting practices of immigrants are affected not only by their ethnic culture but by the mainstream culture in the host society (Shan, 2014; Fontes, 2002). As recently exemplified by Cindy, who in the previous chapter described her understanding of the "normal" role of Canadian mothers, immigrant parents are both exposed to, and must contend with, dominant ideas about "good" parenting in the host society. For example, as has been shown of their Canadian-born counterparts (Parsons Leigh et al., 2012; Johnston & Swanson, 2006), immigrant parents in this study discussed newfound worries over whether they were providing their children with the tools and opportunities they needed to be successful in later life, while juxtaposing demanding income and time constraints in the Canadian context.

The purpose of this chapter is to delve deeper into how the skilled immigrants in this study made decisions around their children's daily lives, and to consider the effects such decisions have had on the post-migration integration of children and teenagers. To achieve this aim, the chapter begins with an exploration of parents' accounts of the differences between children's pre-and post-migration experiences in education, and then moves to consider various themes related to children's development in the post-migration context including school choice

and integration, health issues and treatment, and the stresses and strains associated with parenting in the context of heightened time and financial constraints.

As outlined in Chapter 3, participants in this study came from fifteen countries spanning four continents. As such, the pre-migration experiences of the children of participants, including the education systems that were available and attended, the emphasis placed on extra-curricular activities, and the overall structure and organization of day-to-day life, varied significantly. Rather than separating out the experiences of participants from particular ethnic or national groupings, however, this chapter draws on *immigrant* as a positioned identity within the post-migration social structure (Erez et al., 2008), and thus focuses mainly on interesting commonalities experienced by participants and their families in their new Canadian location. As a result, the specific and unique elements affecting each participant's pre-migration experiences are drawn on to provide context where possible, rather than as an analytical tool for generating a critical (albeit partial) knowledge of a specific ethnic group (Erez et al., 2008).

7.2 Parents' Descriptions of Pre-and post-migration Schooling

The school success of immigrant children has a direct impact on human capital accumulation post-migration (Albornoz-Crespo et al., 2011). Yet, the different systems and level of choice available in Canada (and Alberta in particular)⁴⁶ are often quite different from those that were previously available to immigrant families in their country of origin. This is a reality that can deeply complicate newcomers' perceptions of post-migration education and schooling preference, and the accounts of the immigrant parents in this sample reflected this reality. For example, many of the participants in this study—especially those coming from the Philippines, South America, and countries in Sub Sahara Africa—had their children enrolled in private

⁴⁶ Alberta provides more choice in schools than any other province. It is the only province to fully fund charter schools, it offers more support for parents who choose to homeschool and both the public and Catholic systems offer English and French options (Clemens et al., 2014).

education systems prior to immigrating. The deplorable conditions of the public school options available in their cities and towns (e.g. some participants spoke of schools having no running water, dated books and curriculum and unqualified teachers) was a topic of great concern for a number of these participants, and many discussed having to adjust assumptions about public schooling once in Canada.

On the other hand, participants from countries such as China and South Korea were far more likely to have had their children enrolled in a public school system prior to immigrating, and very few participants from these countries spoke about alternative options (e.g. such as international private schools). In fact, in one particular instance, a Chinese participant explained that it is largely perceived as “anti-Chinese” to enroll your child in any system other than the public state-run system which is run by the Chinese Ministry of Education (IFCA018).

While the pre-migration schooling preferences of the participants in this study were tied to both the cultural traditions and economic conditions of their country of origin (e.g. the poorer the country, the poorer the perceived quality of public education), important themes emerged in participants’ talk of their children’s experiences with education that transcended any categorical classification (e.g. country of origin or type of education system attended). One such theme is exemplified in the account of Isabel—a mother of two children ages 12 and 8 from the Philippines—who described her understanding of the major differences between her children’s education pre-and post-migration.

Isabel: My oldest child is 12 now. In the Philippines she was in private Catholic school. The public system in the Philippines is quite, not good. So if you really have the money to send them to private, you do it. Even you have many parents who do not have the money but they push, push to do this for their children because it is the best way to get a good education in our country. If you want this education you have to pay. But it also depends on where you live. So because we live outside Manila, it’s more affordable. But if you live in Manila, it’s a poor city. So it’s more expensive. Like maybe three times more than what you pay in

the other province. So it depends on where you live. So my daughter was in grade two in the Philippines and then we moved here. And she loves school here. Because it's too stressful there. Grade one, like, um, when she was in grade one, every day they have a test. Every single day. And then after the test, a short quiz. After that a long test. After that periodical tests. So you just have to keep on study, study, study, study. So we don't have much time for play or any activity other than study. And she is only grade one!

Jeanna: Do you know if this type of testing only happens in the private schools?

Isabel: I don't really know in the public anymore. I study in the public school and that's what, what we did then so I think it is still the same, yeah. It's so stressful for her. So, and you know they're doing multiplication table in grade one? Yeah. So on the one hand, in our country, at least in private school for sure they teach good education. So I, I know if she graduated there she'll have more knowledge. But she will be so stressed. And she will miss that side, she missed, she will miss that part of the world that she's still a child, she needs to play. In the Philippines there's no playground. Most of the, there's no playground in the school. They don't play. You just study. Study, study, study. Okay. So you go to school 6:30 in the morning. You get off 12 o'clock in the morning, 12 o'clock lunch time. And then you go home. Study, study, study. For the test tomorrow. That's just, that's what they do. They don't have time to play. They have recess just to eat snack and that's it. And here, they have to go out first recess, second recess. And then when you don't get a play, like the child gets hyper. You have to play. They will send you to play, right. So it's really different here. So when she sees the playground, the first time when she got to school, oh, I love the playground. Because they don't have a playground in schools.

Jeanna: Right.

Isabel: Like, the two systems or the um, the philosophy is very different. So in Canada the focus is for the kid to get to experience, like in a practical way, you know, in the Philippines, you just studying it theoretically. But here you get to actually experience it. This is what the emphasis is. Like my son is learning something and they're doing it, actually doing it. In the Philippines you're just seeing it in a book. So you don't get to do it like actual. But here, for example they're studying rocks so they will really, literally, they will study the rock here. But in the Philippines they think they don't have time for something like this, they just read a book. You learn the rock, you don't have time to experiment that. So they're learning the bug here and my son went home with a bug. Of course they won't provide a bug in the Philippines (IFCA014).

When comparing the education of her children in two countries, Isabel juxtaposes what she deems to be the Canadian focus of teaching children *how* to learn by doing, against the more unidirectional focus of teaching children *what* to learn through content accumulation. This is a

common theme that was present in the accounts of many of the participants in this study, regardless of their country of origin. More specifically, participants regularly described their children's pre-migration education as largely knowledge-based or knowledge-driven, and compared this against what I will refer to as the more "liberal arts"⁴⁷ approach of Canadian schooling. Sumit—a father of two children ages 11 and 16 from Nepal—offered further illustration of this theme when recounting his children's experiences of schooling.

Sumit: In terms of grades my kids are doing pretty good. Because one thing is that they found that the education system here is not so challenging as it is in Nepal. When we arrived here in 2010, my son finished his grade ten, right? And he joined eleven here. And what he realize, it's very easy to, easy going, you know, this education system is totally different than what they're used to in terms of work load, and also the teaching method are very different from most schools in Nepal. So they feel is that it's easier and also easier to learn because the teacher are not as focused on the memorizing or the amount of homework. But it's important to say that they speak very good, they speak very good English when they arrived here. Now they can speak as a Canadian [laughs].

Jeanna: Right.

Sumit: It's sort of a joke you know, amongst these immigrants to Canada. We say it's the reason why Canadians and the Americans are so tall. Because they don't carry much books with them [laughs]. And that's the reason, the reason why Asians, Indians, and the Philippines are so short is that when they are kids at school but also even at the university, all the way through education these people will have to carry ten, twenty books. Really, ten, twenty books on the back [laughs]. But really you know, in seriousness it is this different system between the west and other parts of the world. Here in Canada the education is focused on learning of specific materials yes, but also about these certain values of the society, of how to ah, to be critical in thinking you could say. So the kids are not just told this is truth and this is fact. They are asked "and what do you think?" For me, what I've seen is that this is more unique to Canada and the US and parts of Europe. In other countries where there are many more people the education is lacking almost entirely in these communitarian values. It's about getting the highest mark, right? Learning the most so that you can compete on these tests to get a good university to get a good job maybe. I think maybe there is so much scarcity in poorer nations that it becomes difficult to change how we think about education. My kids were lucky though because they go to the private school in

⁴⁷ This term was chosen because participants generally describe Canadian schooling as concentrating on not only academic subjects, but also on producing well-rounded individuals with strong oral presentation and critical thinking skills.

Nepal. They have a very good education there too because of this school choice. But for this we need to pay a very high tuition to have them there. But it's one of the best schools in Nepal and it runs on more of the British system so they are learning in some ways similar to here, but still much more study and homework. For me growing up I did not go to this school but it ended up ok for me. My kids would have this different opportunity though (IFCA003).

The emphasis placed on the liberal arts approach of Canadian schooling which is exemplified here in the narratives of Isabel and Sumit, but is common across the sample, connects in meaningful ways to other common themes that emerged around post-migration schooling. For instance, a number of participants emphasized the positive effects that Canadian learning had had on their children overall. In the quotation that follows, Jay—a father of one child aged 5 from the Philippines—offers one such example.

Jay: Before arriving in Canada I saw my daughter is, she is a shy type and often has the difficulty to talk. Because like even she's being bullied she will not really talk. She's always a victim, she will not really assert. In my country this is something that is engrained in our youth in many families and also at school. You must listen, you must obey, these are the types of messages. So before is that when she is being bullied she will just shut down. So I'm happy at this time because she is now able to talk, she is able to express. That's the good thing that I learned, that I like in the Northern American culture. Our children are being trained to express themselves at a young age. Like in the Philippines, like the first time that I had presentation in public, when I was in college defending my thesis. There is just no opportunity for such things. Except for others who have already this talent like entertainment, just like impromptu speech, but it's not a program, it's only for a few, for those who have done it. But here, it's really a program that they're going to show and tell, like giving picture, this is my dad and we went to do this on the weekend, that's how they learn to express. That's what I like. That's what I like here. My young daughter is able to speak in public better than I was able as a young man. So this way of teaching really helps the children to grow and express their idea (IFCA026).

Similar to Jay, John—a father of four children ages 5, 8, 11 and 16 from Nigeria—offered his interpretation of the positive effects Canadian schooling has had for his children.

John: I love the [school] system here because the teachers speak to you about assessment of your children and that has offered me the opportunity of knowing how they are faring. I'm really amazed by the changes I see in them. Especially by my girls who are really developing so much but also I am around more to take notice so that helps too.

Jeanna: Yeah.

John: You know, it's interesting because even in the education at the elementary level my, my five-year-old when she came here she can read up to four-letter words and not only but she writes and she surprised the teachers on the first day she took a book and she wrote her name you know, in a book, legibly, you know. So and they could see that she could make clear sentences and she would write it. But, they say, look, even if she could do that she would still have to be in the Kindergarten because there are important differences to this curriculum. So that was difficult for her because she couldn't imagine herself there because the kids were not at the same level, but this has really helped her too. You know, she gets to be creative, you know, making stuff. Like a policeman stopping you know, learning signs of the road, how where to stop, when to move. Learning how to be courteous, respectful, waiting for direction, waiting for your turn. These are basic lessons in education here. So we felt, look, this is another level of education. You know, making sure she understands these things that some in our country may not really call education. Now she comes home every day, Dad we made this today. She will come with various things. And being creative, that is helping her to have, to develop initiative. You know, this is a different level of education. Here probably you don't believe in taxing your brain you know like we do, the system is just different in this way. But I see all my kids growing and developing, learning how to interact, how to be social. Because in Nigeria, it's a kind of reform for children. So in some ways education closes down your personality more than the opposite (IFCA006).

Both Jay's and John's stories illustrate common themes that emerged across the sample of participants. Particularly, parents were extremely impressed with the level of creativity and interpersonal skills their children were developing at such a young age. What's more, a general consensus existed that this "type" of educational focus would help children to develop meaningful social skills (e.g. public speaking, turn taking and respect) that would significantly increase their chances of future success in both higher education and the labour market.

However, it is important to point out that while parents were generally impressed with the new skills their children were garnering in their Canadian schools, this outlook did not equate to a consensus around the belief that education in Canada is stronger overall, or that their children should dispense with principles and habits learned in previous school systems. Take

Isabel, for example. At the beginning of this chapter, Isabel described the extremely stressful conditions of her children's schooling in the Philippines. Yet, when asked whether she deemed the education her children were obtaining in Canada to be as strong as that of the Philippines, Isabel had this to say:

Isabel: I don't think so. Yeah. The quality, um, it's actually different. But and it's also, it also depends on the child. But based on my experience, I think education, based on my experience in the Philippines, is better than here because the teachers are more stricter. They can teach you lots of stuff. Because here it's more lax. I think it's more lax. So the tendency to keep on studying and to keep more focus is much stronger there than here. So now though because it's different here, it's my job to be more strict so that our children get that discipline, right? So now we have to study at home a lot, especially, my, my daughter is in Junior High. So they don't learn everything in the school. You know what I mean? Because they don't have much time and then they spend a lot of time not studying the facts. So when she gets home, they don't have homework. Like you have to keep doing homework in the Philippines. That's how we learn. Like even our writing, we have to learn how to write all the strokes. So if you will notice our penmanship is better. I, I'm, I don't know. But like the kids here, my son, he started school. He went in the preschool in the Philippines, but he started writing here. It's really different. Because here you're not being taught how to write. You learn it on your own. In the Philippines you have to learn every stroke of every letter. You have a subject, writing subject that you have to do it for one grade one, Kindergarten to grade three. You have to do that. But here, you just learn at your own pace. But in the Philippines you're being taught how to read every single sound of the letter. So like for example, for a three syllable word, you will be taught how to read every syllable. But here you just have to say the word. It's different (IFAC014).

Isabel described feeling as though she has had to take on more work at home since immigrating in order to ensure that her children are learning and retaining the appropriate amount of material for their age and grade. What's more, not only did Isabel do homework with her children every night (even when they said they didn't have any), but this couple also assumed the expense of enrolling them in an after-school math and reading program.

Isabel: So on top of the work we do at home my husband and I have also enrolled our children in Kumon. Have you heard of Kumon?

Jeanna: I don't think so. Can you explain it to me?

Isabel: Yeah. Kumon is like a Japanese way of teaching, it's academic. So they're doing math and they're doing reading. It's a Japanese way of teaching these subjects. So it's by practising, they learn by practising certain techniques repetitively and they get used to the math and they master it. So it's, it's supplemental to what they learn in school. But it's a different way than they are learning in school. So it really helps me to know that they are retaining all of these basic principles that are important for learning more advanced concept later.

Jeanna: Right.

Isabel: My daughter took it in the Philippines as well but it was part of the schooling there. You just paying extra to the school and they learn that then after regular hours. But first, the first when we came here, it's for me it's too expensive because you try to convert the money. In the Philippines everything's cheap so when we come here, everything I see in dollars, I have to convert it and it's so expensive. So it's just like after, maybe two years, that I get used to the, to the currency. So like, okay, its \$100 a month. Which I thought was so expensive. But it's fine. My husband can pay for it. Yeah. We can afford it now. So this with the homework I do with them and then what they are learning in school makes me feel pretty good that they are on the right track (IFAC014).

Similar to a number of the participants in this study, Isabel worried about her children not learning or retaining the fundamental principles of reading and writing in their Calgary classrooms. Tobi—a father of four children ages 8, 11, 14 and 17 from Nigeria—was another participant who emphasized this problem, while also discussing the drawbacks he saw with the math program used to teach children in Calgary, and particularly, the limitations imposed by the ubiquitous use of technology.

Tobi: In their schools, yeah, in school, they doing okay, it's just that, you see, I have been able to notice myself and my wife, mostly she being a teacher back in Nigeria, we've been able to notice that the math here, the math skills here, that is mathematics, uh, is a little bit tricky so to say because I see here the kids and even I would say the teachers rely totally on calculators and computers, you know, to do, but in Nigeria, you know, the kids don't rely on that.

Jeanna: The math is done by hand, you mean?

Tobi: Yeah, by hand, so they have to think a lot more, you know. Like myself, when I went to school, things like scientific calculators, we didn't use them much. We used things like law of tables. Then here there was a time I went to buy some stuff in the mall and uh, the customer service staff, she was trying to, that is the sales associate, she was trying to make a calculation and I just told her the

answer. She say, how, how did you do that? But to me, that was normal, you know.

Jeanna: [laughs] Yeah.

Tobi: Yeah, even now, instead of using a calculator, no I'd rather use my brain. I'll just write it down, make the calculations happen pretty fast. And I would rather my children do math this way, to at least learn how to do it this way first before they begin to rely on a calculator or laptop to give them the sum. But if the teacher is doing it in this way, it's difficult for me to impress this upon them such that they take it to school because they say there won't be enough time to do the test.

Jeanna: Ah. I see. The tests are designed with this method in mind.

Tobi: Yeah. Yeah. Exactly. But then they don't know, they don't know how to really do. So that is one aspect we have seen that the kids, they're not doing the way we expect they should do in math, you know. And I'm sorry to say, but everyone in their English, because we're on the British system back in Nigeria, so here I see there's also a lack in the area of learning how to write with English because again, they are not learning the basic principles. So I see a big difference in my older children who learned these fundamentals before coming here than with my younger children who are still in a phase where they should be acquiring such skills. So that is when we, my wife and I step in and we do this work in the home. We see now that it is our job to ensure that they know these fundamentals. And also I always tell them, one day I say, no, you, you don't check the spellings using the spelling checker in the computer, you have to know it. So I can see an area where they're not doing as good as they should be, but we're working on it.

Jeanna: Right.

Tobi: But coming to presentations, you know, talking with people, and oh, the confidence level is a lot higher. So imagine my daughter in grade six. They already posting stuff on a, on the board, you know, between the school teacher and herself. Those are things we, you know, we really lack back in Nigeria. I talk to be honest, you know. You have got internet system here, so doing things in their own brain is often not happening as fast, you know. But the communication, or interaction between students and teachers here is much better. And I think this breeds confidence and interpersonal skills that will help them later in job, life, those sorts of things (IFCA005).

Similar to Isabel, Tobi recognized both strengths and weaknesses in what and how his children are learning in Calgary. In addition, Tobi also explained that he and his wife now see it as their responsibility to compensate in the home for what they feel their kids are missing at

school. This is a theme that is echoed throughout a number of the accounts in this sample – increasingly, after coming to Canada, parents take a more involved approach to their children’s education.

7.3 Post-Migration Involvement in Children’s Schooling

It was quite common for participants to report a higher level of active participation in their children’s education in the post-migration context than they had previously experienced. However, it is also worth noting that participants’ motivation for this increased involvement varied quite significantly. For instance, similar to Isabel and Tobi, a number of parents reported feeling that they needed to compensate for what was not being learned in the Canadian school system, while others cited wanting to ensure that their children and teenagers were fully grasping the new curriculum, or not becoming overwhelmed with the sizable changes in style and approach. In all of these cases, however, parents expressed the underlying belief that how their children were doing academically now was a chief indicator of future academic and professional success (i.e., what post secondary institution and program they would be accepted into).

Alternatively, criteria such as how well a child is prepared for school, and their demonstrated ability and behaviour, are commonly used by teachers and school administrators to discern the character of a parent, and this may apply doubly for immigrant parents who are more likely to be constructed as “outsiders” or “other” (Brooker, 2002 in Hamilton, 2013 pg 299). Furthermore, those who fail to live up to such expectations are often thought to be “poor” parents (Hamilton, 2013).

Given that the connection between parents’—and especially mothers’—“behind the scenes” labour and children’s school success has been well documented (Griffith & Smith, 2004; Lareau, 2003), it seems likely that immigrant parents’ increased interest and involvement in the

post-migration education of their children would be viewed favourably at the level of the school. However, a number of participants reported that their heightened interest in ensuring their children's academic success caused increased strain on the parent-teacher relationship. For example, Rosa—a mother of two children aged 6 and 7 from the Philippines—discussed feeling blocked from achieving the level of involvement she desired to have in her children's schooling by what she understood as an “uncooperative” teacher.

Rosa: In terms of the school and the education, um, studying, I have, um, the one thing that I noticed, they don't have homeworks. Back in the Philippines, there's tons of homeworks. You know. So when I got here I was expecting some amount, some, not really, you know, not really five hours of homework, but some amount at least. So, um, I'm, I ask the teacher, uh, what they teach, because I want, I want a copy of the lesson plan because I want to reinforce this at home, right? And they gave me a one page of um, something descriptive about a class even though I thought I was clear about wanting the daily plan. So it's, hmm, I don't know what they are learning, and when I ask my children, what did you learn in school? And they say, like, oh, lots of things, but then they can't say, they can't say it. I know they're learning but they can't totally explain it to me so I don't have any way of reinforcing their learning. So, that's why I buy worksheets books, the ones that you see in stores, Scholastic things like that, in Costco that specialize in Canadian curriculum. So I make them do that, so that I know that when they're able to answer that at least they know this material. So this is what I can teach them. And um, my husband and I sort of, are on the same level with that. Well I'm the one who does it, he, but he wants it done [laughter].

Jeanna: Right. He wants it done. So do you feel that your children are benefitting from the extra work you do with them at home?

Rosa: Um, yes, I think so. I mean, I think they benefit overall. And if nothing else it gives us this peace of mind that they know this general age appropriate curriculum. If the teacher had been more helpful I could have made sure that their learning at home was more well suited to their daily school plan. But the teacher does not want me involved in this way. Uh, I don't know. Perhaps they see it as an over, an over stepping. I don't, I'm not sure. Because see we want to know that, um, how our daughters are faring in school, right? It's important because I'm responsible for them to get a good education and to be successful here in this country. I take this more seriously than anything other, anything else in my life. But sometimes it feels like you are also competing with teacher. Not competing but, um, not cooperating. The teacher is not cooperating with you (IFCA016).

Like many of the participants in this study, Rosa saw it as her individual responsibility to ensure that her children were successful in Canadian life – of which academic success is a primary measure. What's more, while skilled immigrants often have high expectations regarding their own successful integration into social and economic life in the host society, this does not appear to diminish the emphasis that is placed on ensuring the success of their children, especially since the latter is often viewed as the primary reason for relocating.

However, rather than discussing issues with her children's teachers, or bringing them to the level of an administrator, Rosa explained that she decided to do the best that she could with the scholastic materials that were available at her local Costco wholesaler. This was quite troubling for Rosa who later suggested that she would deem it a "personal failure" should her children not flourish in Canadian society. Yet, as Rosa went on to explain at a later point in the interview, she felt uncomfortable taking this issue further because she was concerned that it would cause a "backlash" towards her children.

Not unlike Rosa, Wanda—a mother of two children aged 8 and 2 from China—offered her experience of feeling impeded from contributing to her children's educational growth at both the institutional and intergenerational levels now that they are in Canada.

Wanda: I have experienced when my boy is in grade two, he has some worksheets they bring back home, right? And the teacher check. But I figure out something wrong, spelling or something. So I told my boy that this is wrong, he had not answer this problem correctly. But you know, my boy doesn't believe my English. He said, teacher doesn't say I'm wrong, so how come you say I'm wrong? But I know he's wrong. So I just wrote a letter to the teacher. And the teacher answer for me, in this stage, we're not focused on each spelling. Just focus on he has the idea to have a long sentence or something. But that doesn't make sense for me. You have to pay attention to detail when younger, not when you're older. When you're older you difficult to change. And then teacher said, if you really pay attention so much in the spelling, can I send a sheet for you to check? So just give me a hard time. I'm not English speaker. So I give up.

Jeanna: That wasn't a pleasant experience.

Wanda: No, not pleasant. Hard for me, very hard for me. I just, maybe some people thinking you are the trouble maker. I don't know. But this, what I, maybe just my personality teacher don't like. But I try to be very polite with him. And you know, if you send home something home I want to see it. Because back home [China], if you're in the school you have a, the book and I can see what are you learning. Here, only he brings home agenda. Agenda says tomorrow is teacher convention, no school. Right? I don't know what he did at school. So every paper you have something he can show what he learned at school, I pay much more attention. But why do I even bother pay attention? The teacher put a check mark, no explanation. If I think something is wrong, and then I want to try my best to correct my boy but my boy say, your English is not good as me or teacher. He not listening, so I need teacher's help, right? But he not give it. That immigrants, I think, all, if it is your language is not English, always has this problem, right? Yeah, so what answer I got is like that. So and then the teacher say, send a sheet to you for you to fix. I say, come on, how can I help, right? And this reason why I send him to school so pretty discouraging, right? But also I learn, yeah. The teacher don't want parent involved, right? Want parent to just be too busy not check these thing. I think allow teacher to do bad job too, yeah (IFCA017).

A number of studies have documented that immigrant parents feel their parenting ability is under significant stress on multiple fronts (see Tyyska, 2007: 88). Similar to the sentiments expressed by Wanda above, one area of stress for many new immigrants is caused by the intergenerational gap in language learning. Due to the influence of schools and peers, children often become fluent in the official language of the host society more quickly than their parents, which can lead to challenges of parental authority in the post-migration household (Hereandez et al, 2007; Tyyska, 2007).

While Wanda described struggling with her son's claim of English language superiority, when she looked to legitimate her position of authority in the family through her son's teacher, Wanda claimed that the teacher ultimately reduced her efforts by both informing her that the class was not focused on the lesson she was trying to teach her son, and subsequently undermining her query through what she heard as mockery (e.g. "if you really pay attention so much in the spelling, can I send a sheet for you to check?"). Unsure about how to navigate this

situation, and feeling somewhat insecure because she is “not an English speaker,” Wanda stated that she simply “gives up.”

Wanda’s account of the above situation suggests that there is a conflict occurring between home and school cultures. For example, while the teacher appeared to be focused on how children were conceptualizing ideas (e.g. in getting them to put ideas into words that make up “long sentences”), Wanda was focused on the precision of her son’s written work. Thus, the “type” of parental involvement that Wanda attempted to contribute was seemingly discounted by the teacher because of its perceived lack of value to the lesson at hand. What’s more, Wanda occupies the subordinate position in this discursive exchange because the teacher hooked into an institutional discourse in order to make his claim (i.e., the lesson plan) and Wanda had no such resources available to her (a reality that is compounded by the fact that English is not Wanda’s first language).⁴⁸

Had Wanda and the teacher met in person to discuss this issue, it is possible that things might have been resolved differently, since Wanda would have had more time and resources available with which to make her case (e.g. hand gestures, the revision of statements if she felt the teacher was not grasping her meaning, and so on). However, because of the way things unfolded, Wanda lacked confidence to initiate further exchange with the teacher or press involvement in her son’s schooling. The exchange concluded with Wanda convinced that the teacher was poor at his job, and Wanda’s son convinced that he should not have to meet his

⁴⁸ Adding to the discourse analysis literature, Miller and Metcalfe (1998) argue that language is the only means through which we can communicate about the world, but not all language-in-action is equally counted. In other words, while specific versions of reality are legitimated through dominant discourse, others are provisionally disqualified. Thus, new immigrants may be at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to having their claims recognized, since they often lack important knowledge of or access to meaningful interpretive schemas in their new social and cultural location.

mothers' expectations around writing because he and the teacher were more advanced in this area than she was.

7.4 Diversity and Freedom in Calgary Schools

Differences in expectations around *how* and *how much* children ought to be learning, and the sometimes difficult parent-teacher relations that ensue, were by no means the only concern that participants described having in regards to their children's post-migration experiences of schooling. A smaller number of participants also discussed concerns regarding the level of diversity in Calgary schools (whether too much or too little), while others focused on the considerable amount of freedom that children and teenagers are afforded. As an example of the former, Sophia—a mother of one child aged 6 from Lebanon—offered her concerns about her daughter learning Christian customs in the Calgary public school system.

Sophia: You know, we want her to grow up a little bit differently, yeah. I want her to understand that the Christian customs they learn in school are not part of our religion. Because it is a religious thing. Instead of a cultural thing. So I am the intermediary then, with the teacher. It's my job as a mom in this country to talk to the teacher about our beliefs and what we're comfortable with. I, and um, I don't know. Maybe that's something that needs to be changed because a lot of the students in the public school are not all Christians. So I don't know. It's something that because there is like a private school uh for like, where a lot of the kids are Arabs. It's called ****. But um, it's like an ESL school and I wouldn't want my daughter to go there because her English is good and I think she would be bored. And also it is all, there is no diversity there. So, right now in Calgary there's no kind of in between. It's either an ESL school or public school where she's doing things that are sometimes not of her beliefs. So I have to make sure I am careful and pay attention to these things.

Jeanna: I was under the impression that the Calgary public system doesn't teach religion in its schools?

Sophia: Yeah good point. Yeah. But I think that makes it, like, worse for us. Because, yeah. There is no official religion during school time. But the majority of the teachers are white and Christian and many of the kids are too. I know they are not supposed to be teaching specific customs in her school, but that usually means that my daughter learns nothing of her own values while other kids are talking about Christmas and these things. Maybe that's how it needs to be changed, the, the schools here should teach all religious customs instead of this

sort of ban or whatever, right? That would allow my daughter to contribute rather than being silenced. Yeah. Because she is a minority (IFCA001).

Sophia was concerned that the lack of space for official religious expression in Calgary schools was reinforcing her daughter's position as an ethnic minority. Meanwhile, Laya—a mother of one child age 3 from Iran—was on the opposite end of the spectrum, in that she worried that the high level of diversity and multiculturalism in Calgary day cares and schools would both confuse her daughter and detract from her English language learning.

Laya: I think, here in Calgary, everything is fine, I think, yeah. They have good culture. But the problem is people are different, really different. They are not only Canadian people, and they are, yeah, many people from several countries here. Yeah. And that is another point, in the day cares and schools, that is another problem. For example, the teachers there, they are from several cultures. They are not Canadian people. And I'm worried somehow about the accents. When I go there I, yeah, speak with them, some of them are, have bad accents, really bad accents. And I think, how my child should learn from that? Yeah. About the new words from these teachers. The problem is not only the culture, but yeah, more than one culture, yeah. I couldn't find a day care with good English speaking teachers, one with at least yeah Canadian teachers that I can trust them. When you are trying to teach your children English, this is very stressful. He knows only some words but in Canada you can't find Canadians to teach the language and the culture. I have a friend who also works at the call centre and she says the same thing about the school. Her son is in grade seven in Northeast public school. All his friends are from several parts of the world and then also teachers are sometimes not even Canadian.

Jeanna: Do you think there could be some benefits to having that level of diversity though? It may be easier to fit in for instance?

Laya: Yeah for sure this. But also we come here and we are supposed to do this integration but it's hard to know what is Canada, what is Canadian, I can't even find people to teach my son the language without accent. I just think in the, in the education maybe should be different. In cultural yeah I agree this diversity is good because people are more equal and have more freedom. But in the education, this is one thing I cannot agree (IFCA019).

The accounts of Sophia and Laya demonstrated two different interpretations of multiculturalism in Calgary schools that were present in the data. Similar to Sophia, a number of participants suggested that they were motivated to take a more involved approach at home in

order to ensure that their children retained the importance of certain ethnic and religious customs now that they were in Canada. However, unlike Sophia, very few went so far as to say that Canadian schools should be accountable for facilitating this arrangement. It should not go unrecognized, however, that Sophia's point regarding the positive benefits that might come from formally recognizing religious diversity in multicultural schools (as opposed to extracting religious teachings from the curriculum altogether) is both interesting and thought provoking. Moreover, Sophia's account offers a reminder of the importance of including immigrant and ethnic minority voices in conversations about diversity at the level of the school board.

Unlike Sophia, Laya focused our conversation of schooling on the problems she saw with multiculturalism at the level of teachers. An important piece of contextual information to be added in this case is that Laya and her husband were struggling a great deal with the time crunch associated with shift work. Laya worked at a call centre six days a week from mid-afternoon until midnight and rarely had the time or energy to take on extra work at home to help her son improve his English. While Laya's husband watched their son when she was at work, he was also in the process of searching for a job and very unhappy with his current situation. As a result of these stresses and strains, Laya said that her son was "always watching TV and not really learning" and that this flow of day-to-day life was having a "very negative effect" on him (IFCA019). Thus, Laya wished that she could find a suitable day care run by "good" English speakers so as to offset the extra burden of feeling responsible for teaching her son Canadian language and customs.

Not unlike Laya, Katerina—a mother of one 5-year-old child from Moldova—described the risks she worried might be associated with growing up in a multicultural society such as Canada.

Katerina: I want to so say something, but I don't know if, I don't want you to understand that I am doing discrimination of some sort. It's not that. But I do think that the greatest risk to my child growing up in Canada is that there are so many different religions and cultures and I don't want my child to be influenced by them to the extent that it becomes dangerous. So do you know what I mean?

Jeanna: I think I understand where you're coming from. Could you explain further or maybe provide an example?

Katerina: Yes, yeah. For example, you know that when your child goes to school in Canada, the teachers and the school environment encourages freedom and freedom of choice, freedom of religion, freedom of everything, right? And sometimes when there is too much freedom and no limits, there is a risk of going off the limits, right? I cannot, I do not have the authority to discipline my son in Canada in the ways I might discipline him in my country, and so I have to hope that he will be wise enough to make wise decisions. Part of this for me will be adjusting what I do so he knows of the risks and thinks before he acts. So we need to talk about these risks. But I just, I'm just thinking, what his friends would be like or what the circle he's friends with would be like, that it might influence his decisions in future. In Moldova, for instance, he probably would be spending time with friends similar background to him. Similar parents, that sort of thing. And here it's harder to control who he spends time with and what or who influences his decision making, right? If his friends are from so many countries and cultural background, it's difficult to know what they're like. Add to this the freedom young people are awarded in this country and I fear it could be of big risk to him (IFCA025).

In the above quotation, Katerina might be primarily understood as criticizing the freedoms offered to youth in North America and longing for a culture where she has full discretion over the ways she chooses to discipline her son. What's more, this understanding would exist in line with a predominant picture constructed in the immigration literature which assumes immigrant parents often move from collectivistic or communitarian cultures where interdependence, hierarchy and obedience are emphasized, to an individualistic culture where independence, egalitarianism, and self-efficacy are dominant (Kim & Wong, 2002; Nguyen, Messé & Stollak, 1999; in Shan, 2014). As a result, depending on their countries of origin, immigrant parents are often portrayed as authoritarian, controlling, and more inclined toward the

use of physical discipline than are their western counterparts, who are largely presumed to be focused on upholding the individual rights of the child (Shan, 2014).

However, that portrayal of immigrant families is problematic on multiple levels. First, it depicts immigrant families as “other” in relation to the presumably normative (and more progressive) North American family unit (Tyyska, 2009). Furthermore, by lumping immigrant families into such a homogeneous category, we not only take a less than critical stance on the dynamics of other societies’ cultural practices, but we also assume that every family from a given society behaves in a similar fashion (i.e., that the parenting practices and values of people from the same “group” look the same).

A more complex understanding of Katerina’s concerns considers the heightened sense of fear often associated with reconstituting family life in a new (and distinct) cultural and institutional context. For instance, Katerina specifically highlighted that she believed the school environment in Canada encouraged “freedom of everything,” and it is possible to infer from her account that not knowing how to guide her son within the context of this unbounded level of freedom (so that he does not veer towards deviant behaviour), is ultimately what was troubling her. In other words, it is not simply that Katerina’s parenting values were ultra authoritative, but rather, like many of the immigrant parents in this study, that she worries about negotiating the limitless bounds established for youth in western society. Creese (2012) lends insight to this line of thinking by highlighting the tensions that often exist for immigrant parents whose parenting practices and values are undermined by the “hidden curriculum” of Canadian public schools which teach “models of interaction between children and adults that stress equality and individualism more than respect, deference, and authority” (p. 15-16).

Katerina's account raises the question of the extent to which assumptions about shared ways of doing figure into people's parenting practices (especially in countries where residents assume a higher level of homogeneity). For instance, Katerina highlighted her understanding that in Moldova her son would be spending time with children from "similar backgrounds" with "similar parents" and therefore she would not have to worry over him to the same extent either because she felt she would know what he was being exposed to by spending time with friends and their families, or because she would know exactly what to worry about which would allow her to forbid certain friends or compensate for certain behaviors within her home. Canada, however, offered a vast field of unknowable home cultures and practices which, combined with the freedom message from schools, made the job of parental surveillance much more difficult.

The ways in which immigrant parents deal with the discrepancies between pre-and post-migration school cultures, expectations and curriculum, varied significantly. While the majority of the parents in this study took it as their personal responsibility to fill the gaps they saw in Canadian schooling with extra work at home, the ease with which this was accomplished varied as greatly as the individual circumstances of participants. In other words, because of irregular work schedules, the energy it took to actively look for a job, classes in the settlement sector, and the demands of younger children, parents had different amounts of time and energy available to complete extra hours of homework with their children (an activity that can feel even more onerous when this work is not considered necessary or helpful by the teacher). As a result, some parents altered their expectations regarding what and how their children should be learning after they had lived in Calgary for some time.

In the following quotation, Wanda (introduced above) discusses how she helps parents achieve the abovementioned shift in expectations in her work as a counsellor at a local immigrant-serving agency – even though she finds this advice difficult to apply in her own life.

Wanda: Chinese parent are very worried that their kids don't learn much in Canadian school system. So I said, I use my speech, you know, this is a different country. So it's not memorizing, it's not, you have to realize a different way of learning here. I work with this family, they have a daughter **** around son's age. This girl like she, she learn by memorizing because when teacher change the question, yeah, she doesn't get it. So she need to learn how to think about the question, the one teacher ask. In my case I am always so panicked trying to make sure my boy is prepared but he has started saying, "no, I'm intelligent, I can do it, I can do it." So from his school he has learn to think about the question and answer and get good, good result. So I used this speech with ****'s mom and the dad, saying, look, this is a different society. And your kids is going to be here she's going to live here, so, yeah, she have to adapt to different way of learning and you, you can help, right? Don't have her memorize everything at home in night, rather just talk with her about what she is learning, ask her about it in different ways, right? Learn like this. And the dad say, what will your son going to study for the university? Will this different thinking get him to be what he want to be? Very important for Asian families, right? Because they tell their kids you must be this, this great professional. I say, I don't know, but I'm very open minded. Whatever he decides to be, I will happy with him. But really I was just giving my speech because I know how smart son is anyway [laughs]. So I know he will do well. I always tell my boy, I say, I have Master degree, I say, you, at least have university, right? Otherwise, what's the meaning to come here? Right? We lost our job there. And immigrate here, right? I don't want that feeling, you know. Yeah, here, even high school you can find job, but is not the purpose to leave all your family there, right? Yeah. But I don't tell client about problems I only use my positive family example [laughs] to help them, right? Because the negative won't help them. I just say, if you want daughter to do well then you have to change expectation. But it's difficult because the systems are so different. (IFCA017)

While Wanda saw the value in immigrant parents altering their expectations around children's learning in order to fit with new school expectations, her own experiences had helped her to recognize the difficulty in this. However, unlike the variability in newcomers' perceptions of "best practices" in learning, one area in which immigrant parents in this study consistently

ranked Canadian school practices more favourably than those of other countries was in discussions of children's health issues and treatment.

7.5 Children's Health Issues and Schooling

Conversations about children's health were understandably quite emotional for parents, especially in cases where children were struggling with serious issues. In cases where children's mental health was the main topic of concern, parents were quite adept at comparing how these issues had been handled at the school level both pre-and post-migration. Danny—a father of two children aged 9 and 10 from South Korea—offered one such example of this.

Jeanna: Let's talk a little more about your children and their schooling. You said that one of the reasons you came to Canada was so that your son could get more one-on-one attention in the classroom, because he has struggled with ADHD. So how have things been for him here?

Danny: Uh, he is more, more accepted here. Yeah. In South Korea the, in South Korea the school life means lecture like university students. From the grade one, they have to study for four hours. Yeah. They don't have any lunch time. They don't have any cookie time. They don't have any break time. Yeah. They just listen. They have to just listen. Those people. Yeah. Korean, I think Korean education system is similar to military system. So it's not, it's not easy. They just always tell him to be still. Be good. He don't listen. And like I told you I know my son need more care from school teachers because hard for him to act the same, be the same as other kid. But in my view, in my opinion, schools and teachers here in Canada are better to deal with differences amongst students. They uh, um, more accepting of difference I think so embrace rather than try to stop difference. So I don't think there are barrier here for him to play with other kids. At first I'm, my son and my daughter discouraged due to their poor English. For, as time passed by, they get some confidence about their English, they don't have any problems with their school life.

Jeanna: From your experience, why do you think teachers here are more willing to accept or accommodate difference in the classroom here?

Danny: Uh, interesting question. Well what I can say is at first time I registered my children in school here and I reported to school about son's condition. Then his teacher and some counselor very take care of my son and ask many questions about how he learn best, about parts of his day so what he like what he don't like. So school take some care with this and very helpful to my son and to son's school life. In South Korea it doesn't work like this. They don't ask these type of questions because if you are not able to act as other children then considered fault

of the child. So don't look for underlying cause, just bad child. Yeah. So I think this is cultural thing but then more important how school handling it also. So for son he didn't want to tell about his school life. But in Calgary, sometimes he tell about his school life, he means he has some confidence or he has something to talk about so we take this as very positive improvement from before.

Jeanna: So in South Korea he never wanted to talk about his day, or about things that had gone on at school?

Danny: No never. Yeah. Because I think the school was like a hell to my son.

Jeanna: Like a hell.

Danny: Yeah (IFCA023).

As previously explained, participants in this sample came from multiple countries—a strategy that was chosen with an eye towards interviewing immigrants with diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds—and had experience with a variety of social and institutional contexts. As such, the goal of the analysis is not to generalize from this sample to a broader population, but rather, to develop explanations that broaden theoretical understandings of the process of re-establishing work and family life in Canada following immigration. Thus, while it is impossible to conclude from the data whether Danny's interpretation of how his son's health issues were handled in South Korea represents the norm in that country, such is not the goal of this analysis.

It is interesting, however, to thematically consider participants' experiences of health issues in Canada, and to reflect on how they were being handled within a specific institutional context. To this end, Lian—a mother of one child age 16 years from China—described her daughter's experiences of ADHD in two school systems, a story that links in both interesting and important ways to Danny's account.

Lian: My daughter has ADHD but this is something that her, her teachers in Hong Kong they don't really recognize that. Sometimes they just always complain her and say she don't concentrate. Or when the teacher ask her to sit usually they will sit very quietly, don't move, but sometimes she can't control by herself. She just do this, do this [moves around]. I just talk with her teacher, just say she got a little bit problem, just ADHD, I know about this because I have been

nurse for very long time. So maybe just, I hope if I tell them about this they can accept her. Maybe give her some more time. Okay, the teacher said okay, but they treat her as, I don't know how to say. Because my daughter is just complain, "why you told the teacher I got some problem? Why you told them? They treat me as retarded child." So she's so angry to me. I'm so sad because I just want the teacher just give her some time, don't more complain her because she's not a naughty one. But just, she just can't control sometimes when she lines up. So but the teacher not know how to deal with this. So daughter said, "they treat me as a retarded child. How come? I'm not this way." So she's so angry and she's so unhappy during her studies there. So we decide come here. I hope somebody can accept her and maybe she, I hope she can enjoy her study. This is my hope before coming.

Jeanna: How have things been for her here? Has there been much difference?

Lian: Oh, she's no problem in here because I think the other children more spirit than her [laughs]. She's not the worse one. And she, all the subjects are good. She's in the high school and have honour roll. So she's okay. The teachers good here to teach her differently without drawing too much attention. So sometime she have different assignment but not anyone in class know unless she told them. So it was individual. Maybe she would do longer assignment and when class do test she just work on something, other student don't know because she there same time, so fit in well, no problem. We, it change everything for her. She have some friend and really did very well with this. It made all the difference in daughter's life. So we are so happy (IFCA022).

Over the past decade, the importance of implementing school-based mental health services on a broad scale has been outlined and emphasized in academic, policy, and practice contexts across Canada (Manion et al., 2013). Moreover, such policies have largely been enacted to promote the positive mental health and integration of all students (e.g. by promoting the social skills and self-concepts of all students), rather than focusing on singling out those with identified mental health or behavioural problems (Manion et al., 2013). Thus, attending to the mental health needs of Canada's children and youth has been worked up as a social problem in need of attention, and it is now largely accepted that schools are an excellent place to intervene and offer the support that is needed (Millar et al., 2013).⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Existing research in education now suggests that schools have become the primary mental health system for students in Canada (Millar et al., 2013).

It is arguable then, that the type of care and attention that Danny and Lian reported their children obtained in Calgary public schools reflects the implementation of the abovementioned policy approach at the ground level. Danny's approach diverges in significant ways from school policies that promote obedience and uniformity, or from situations where the mental health and overall well-being of children and youth have yet to be worked up as problems in need of attention at the level of schools, since this has real implications for the allocation of funding towards enhanced teacher-training, mental health programs and initiatives.⁵⁰

As can be seen in the narratives provided throughout the first half of this chapter, the extent to which immigrant parents deemed the post-migration education of their children more favourable than their pre-migration experiences depended heavily on individual circumstance and experience. For example, whether children excelled or struggled with pre-migration schooling greatly influenced many parents' hopes for their children's post-migration education. Similarly, while some parents felt strongly about helping their children maintain certain habits from their pre-migration education (e.g. such as the memorization of times tables, and precision in writing) others were more willing to fully embrace the new curriculum and established standards of learning in this country.

After describing their children's experiences with schooling pre-and post-migration, a number of parents shifted the conversation toward a discussion of how they went about choosing their child's new school post-migration. These stories are interesting because in many cases they provide further insight into parents' goals for their children's education in Canada. Moreover,

⁵⁰ For example, in Alberta, improving the mental health and well-being of children and youth is now a central focus of Alberta Health Services (AHS) initiatives. In 2006, AHS announced that \$39 million over three years would be directed towards supporting the mental well-being of Alberta's children and youth, families and communities, and another \$50 million was announced in 2008. Furthermore, a number of the programs created by this funding occurred as joint initiatives between AHS and ground-level organizations throughout the province, including schools and community organizations (www.albertahealthservices.ca/2748.asp).

these narratives open a window on to how new immigrants renegotiate preconceived notions about the “best” education for their children in ways that fit with new financial and time constraints in Canada.

7.6 Decisions About Children’s Schools and Activities

Prior to her arrival in Calgary, Lucia—a mother of one child aged 12 from Peru—was very prepared in terms of her daughter’s schooling. For example, unlike the majority of parents in this study, Lucia contacted school administrators in Calgary about the curriculum offered in their schools, secured a place for her daughter in an English-Spanish bilingual school, and rented a house two streets away, all before leaving her home in Peru. The following quotations offer Lucia’s account of this process, including the thinking that went into her pre-migration decisions about her daughter’s schooling, and the post-migration developments that ensued.

Lucia: Before coming I checked CBE, Calgary Board of Education. I checked, I love to have the results of each school so I chose the one she is attending now. The house we live in, I chose too because of its proximity to the school. I talked to the principal. I did everything in advance.

Jeanna: So you weren’t satisfied with the idea of putting your daughter in a neighborhood school once you arrived.

Lucia: No. absolutely not. It takes so much effort to uproot your whole life, it was not going to be in vain. I did everything before coming, so I knew that you had to live in the area to have the best chance to send your kid to that school, so I look for a house just two streets away from that school, and so that was the decision. First the school and then everything else. So all my efforts, my hopes are on her. It was all set up with the plan of her being successful. And she knows that we did this for her.

Jeanna: Right.

Lucia: But you know, it’s a public school. Yeah. She attended as I told you a private school in Peru. So to make this work in my mind what I did was that I scanned all of the assessment results, the academic assessment results. And at that time I didn’t understand, I mean, because after the result, I say, okay, these are just referential results and they are depending on many other factors. I say, okay, this is just wording. So that’s when I contacting the principal to really ask about

the statistics, how are your kids doing? And now that I am here, I realize it's because the policies, equalities, totally different than my country, where it's very hierarchical. So yeah, now it makes sense that schools could be so close in ranking even if one is public and one is private. So this is very different than my country. But again, as an educator, I know, okay, the variables come from many places. You see? So if there is, okay, the environment at home is not proactive toward education, of course that's, you can see that. So I said, okay, we are going to take this chance on a public school, but I know where our, I know where our focus is and I can make sure that she is excelling. If the school isn't everything we need, we will just, just move.

Jeanna: So how is her academic life working out? Is it everything that you hoped it would be?

Lucia: I hoped before coming for something exactly like we have here, very experiential, very lots of critical thinking. Yeah, so everything has fallen into place. We arrived in March 31, so she went to school April, she started. And did I say that it is a bilingual school? And she was in second grade in Peru but here they moved to third grade. She was just starting third grade. And this school is Spanish, English, but not full of, okay, not with the connotation of American, the US, that is bilingual. No, here it's because all native speakers want to learn Spanish, so she was the only Spanish speaker. So I wanted to ease her transition. So that year that we arrived, 2009, I invested in her English, so I pay I think \$500 for English classes, Calgary Board of Education, because I wanted her to build up her confidence that she could use English.

Jeanna: They didn't offer any complementary ESL classes at her school?

Lucia: They do. And they asked to put her complementary but it's her image, image is very important with learners. You don't believe in yourself, forget it. So I took her to this class, this summer camp, and she, I mean, that was good, because, I mean, in Peru, all the years she was going to summer camps, so when she was younger she went to a circus and music summer camp in a big university and she thought she studied at the university. So all the time exposing her to other settings. So most important for me was that I didn't want her to feel, oh, I have to get pulled out of my regular class and the kids will make fun of me or think I'm not intelligent. Think I cannot participate. So I just spend money. Yeah. If though I didn't have a job at his point I just spend, spend the money. So she hasn't taken any ESL and of course you see all the opportunities in the libraries, she took something Excel classes, some PowerPoint classes, extra, because they had lots of things going on for kids. And all the time we're checking (IFCA030).

Lucia put much time, effort, and financial resources into providing her daughter with the best schooling experience possible as they began their new life in Canada. As previously

described, such efforts exist in line with dominant thinking in western culture that suggests mothers are responsible for cultivating the lives of their children (Lareau, 2003; Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). However, in the idealized western scenario, the return on a mother's investment into her children is expected to be the fulfilment she gets from giving them her care and attention (Prentice, 2009). This is a standard that Lucia somewhat deviates from, as evidenced by her assertion that the effort she has put into orchestrating her daughter's new life in Canada is necessary because "all my hopes are on her."

For instance, rather than simply feeling fulfilled by the knowledge that she had done everything she could to give her daughter the "best start" in life, in her interview, Lucia highlighted the compensation she would get for the time, effort and resources she had put into cultivating the experiences of her daughter's youth (e.g. the opportunity to share in her daughter's future accomplishments). In other words, it is her daughter's academic and professional success in Canada that will make Lucia's efforts now "worth it."

For immigrants like Lucia who ultimately leave their country of origin in order to obtain "the best" educational opportunities for their children, the type of recompense Lucia described above is extremely important and often something that their kids are very aware of (e.g. "it was all set up with the plan of her being successful. And she knows that we did this for her"). Thus, while dominant discourse regarding "good" mothering in western culture emphasizes the selfless act of giving your children everything you can with no expectation of personal gain, Lucia carves out a different way of parenting – one that is in line with the tenets of "intensive mothering" but that also fits with her reality of being a first-generation immigrant with certain goals and expectations regarding the reestablishment of her family's socioeconomic status.

A second theme of interest that runs through Lucia's account of choosing the right school for her daughter in Calgary exists in her discussion of renegotiating her understanding of the discrepancies between private and public schooling. Lucia did not have the financial resources necessary to put her daughter in a private school in Calgary, and this was something that she was well aware of before coming. However, as Lucia described above, enrolling her daughter in a public school was still something that she had to make "work in her mind." Lucia's strategy for achieving this was built primarily around doing research before coming. For example, she emphasized searching through information regarding public schools in Canada and speaking with various school administrators about their programs and curriculum before leaving Lima. Lucia also explained that she relied heavily on her professional knowledge at this time, which told her that the home environment is critical when it comes to supporting children's academic success. As a result, Lucia decided before coming that she would do whatever she could to facilitate her daughter's learning in an attempt to offset the fact that she would not be attending the "best" possible school (i.e., a private school).

Not unlike Lucia, Renato—a father of three children aged 8, 5, and 1 month from Venezuela—also "chose" to put his children in a publicly-funded system in Calgary, suggesting, as Lucia did, that their success would be dependent on what happened in the home rather than the specific school they were attending.

Jeanna: So how did you go about choosing your children's school? Did you choose the one that is closest to your house? Or did you perhaps research different schools and what they offer?

Renato: You know, my point of view, when it comes to that, I don't believe in those measures they do to schools. Because they rely on, I don't know, they depend on the people that are going to schools right now. So people change, schools change. And what makes the student is the student, not the school. So I just went to the Calgary Catholic School Board and I just asked which one's the closest to home and which one is the, the one that offers service for my four-year-

old, which was pre-school. They gave me a name, I went there. And so far so good. Because like I said, the kids will excel or they won't and as parents, we will help to make sure they do. So why go through all this trouble to make sure about which school they are attending? We wouldn't give that kind of power away because we know our kids and what they are capable of.

Jeanna: Did the process of choosing a school in Venezuela look the same? I mean, did you focus more on what you could do in the home than on what particular school they attended?

Renato: Absolutely not [laughs]. My kids didn't go to public system. They were in the private, private system there. But it's different here, financially it would be impossible so why even bother to go down that road? You will just end up feeling bad and also, the public schools here are good ones (IFCA027).

As demonstrated in the accounts of Lucia and Renato, changed financial resources can be a strong incentive for new immigrants to renegotiate their preferences around children's schooling. However, despite increased levels of financial strain, and a general acceptance that school systems in Canada are not as hierarchical as they are in many other countries, renegotiating preconceived notions about schooling does not happen easily for all newcomers. Aisha—a mother of two children aged 2 and 4 from Pakistan—offered one such example of the difficulties that can be involved with this process.

Aisha: I do not want my kids to go to public schools. I want them to go to private schools so that they have much better life. After being here for some time I know that at this moment I cannot afford private schools here in Canada. And of course this is of big concern to me because this September is when my son will begin school. But the thing is that I can afford, in Pakistan there are also public and private schools, and I can definitely afford private education there because I'll be working in my profession there, so I can definitely afford private schooling for my kids and they are, they are even British schools there. And they are much, much more affordable than here. So this is another reason why I have decided to return to Pakistan with my children. Because I do not agree with the options that are available here for their schooling. If I return with them there, and place them in the British private school, they will have every benefit. They will learn about other cultures too. They will be exposed to foreign worlds as well and they have trips to England, Australia, and abroad as well.

Jeanna: Interesting. So you hope to return to Calgary after a few years, will your return be somewhat dependent on whether you can afford the type of schooling that you want for them?

Aisha: Yes. My priority will be private schools, but if I don't have a secure job, but I return because of my husband then of course I know that the public school is there. I don't say they are bad. But I would do whatever I can to have them in the private school here as well though.

Jeanna: Why do you prefer the private school system?

Aisha: Well, why there are two different types of schools? Why there are two systems? If the one is, one is hundred dollars per month and the other is 850 dollars per month, there must be some difference. Would you agree? If those people who are sending their kids to private schools are paying 850 dollars for their kindergarten, there must be some, some good in that school system. I know that people say in Canada doesn't matter which system. But I disagree. If I know absolutely without any doubt that my kids would be in private British education in Pakistan, why would I lessen their experience of education just so I can live here? Is that not a selfish act? But still I do realize that the discrepancy is not as great. But it is the principle also (IFCA020).

Aisha describes the personal struggle and feelings of doubt that can result from not being able to provide your children with the “type” of education and opportunities you feel they deserve, and her account offers a reminder that the decline in socioeconomic status that often results from immigration does not necessarily make it easier for parents to adjust consumerist thoughts in line with their new financial realities. However, similar to ideas introduced in Chapters 5 and 6, one way that parents are able to negotiate such tensions is by focusing on the level of social and intellectual capital their children will gain from the immigration experience, and the ways in which they might benefit from this in the future. For example, a number of participants emphasized that completing their schooling in Canada (despite their socioeconomic status while doing it) would mean that one day their children would have the flexibility to live and work wherever they chose. Renato—(introduced above)—best illustrates this theme.

Renato: So even, when it comes to universities, I compare them really good. Our universities in Venezuela are really good, but the problem happens if you decide that you want to leave Venezuela for some reason. So say you come from

Venezuela and then you want to leave and go to Canada or Europe or US to work and live with your family. Well if you come from Venezuela you had to really, you have to really demonstrate what you are worth. You have to do many exams, and prove yourself over and over again, prove your skills. It isn't because our training is any less, any less than what you have here, but this is just the way things are in our world. I've just gone through this and thankfully I was able to prove, to prove myself. Many people just as good as me end up not doing this for whatever reason. So this is what I focus on, this type of future for my kids, and this ability to move freely as you wish, as you should. So I know that if they've studied in Canada, they will not really have to go through this same process that I've gone through. And so my kids will have this ability of movement that was more difficult for me and their mother. They can work worldwide. So we see this as a special gift that we are giving to them. We will do the work of coming here and everything that goes with that, so that you can be free, have freedom of movement when you're older (IFCA027).

Contemporary immigration sees many highly skilled immigrants bringing their families with them in part to expose children to a different culture as a preparation for working and living in a global world (Castles & Miller, 2009; Eich-Krohm, 2007). Like Renato, a number of participants exemplified this by connecting their immigration process to the idea of fostering their children as “global citizens.” Aisha stood apart from the larger group of participants in her assertion that she would best be able to cultivate social and cultural capital in her children by encouraging them to travel and think about other cultures from her home in Pakistan—where money and access to opportunities presented much less of an issue. However, it is possible that others in this study had similar thoughts but refrained from vocalizing them since, unlike Aisha, no one else reported having decided that they would soon be returning to their country of origin.

7.7 Teenagers and Migration

Oftentimes parents' ability to focus on their kids' future post-migration (rather than on their immediate circumstances) is eased by the fact that their children are young and therefore the journey ahead—including the personal and financial resources it will take to see children well adjusted—feels long before them. But what happens when parents immigrate with teenagers in the home? Research on migrant youth points out that adolescents and teenagers may

have a more difficult time with the migration process than younger children because they often leave an established network of friends in their country of origin (Suarez-Orozco, 2001), and find it more difficult than younger children to develop new peer relations, learn the official language, or fit into established social and cultural patterns (e.g. see Anisef & Kilbride, 2004; Watt & Roessingh, 2001; Kilbride, 2000).

Vivian—a mother of two children aged 14 and 18 from China—described the difficult time her eldest son had upon first entering the school system in Calgary.

Vivian: When we first come, my son in grade 10 and the transition for him into school was very very difficult for him. My son he think many teachers is fine, but just some teachers, like one of his English teacher, just he think he's very bad because even kids sleep and the, in the class, even during the, during the test, they sleep in the class, you sleep, there's four down on the floor sleep and teacher doesn't say anything like that! And sometimes there's other kids, go to washroom, then half hour, one hour, didn't come back, teacher doesn't say anything, this kind of thing. But uh I talk to someone he work in school, yeah, and he said, he hear different story from teacher too, because teachers say right now kids son's age don't want to learn anything. Not interested so how do you teach? So it's hard to teach them is what he said. But son find it hard when we came to make friend, to uh, to fit in with peer because in China he not used to this type behavior so he doesn't know how to act here. Student his age in China is uh, is always working very hard to get in teacher favor. Uh, favor. Make sense?

Jeanna: Yes.

Vivian: Yeah. Ok. So He find it very hard time to make any friend and he find the English difficult too. He miss his friend in China terribly. Very unhappy here.

Jeanna: Did you feel comfortable as a parent in the school? I mean, did you ever talk to any of your son's teachers about how he was struggling?

Vivian: I don't feel this way, no. I never talk to any his teacher, actually. I don't think I can at this point, but easier to see somebody, talk to somebody now but that won't help because he finishing the school. But he find his way after some time. He work on his English and find some friend. Learn who to talk with in the class and that sort of thing. But I think much easier when you're younger, don't take so long because other son did very good (IFCA009).

Like Vivian, many of the Chinese participants in this study described the hierarchical structure of schooling in China as both rigid and intense, which can lead to an extremely

competitive environment amongst students (see Chapter 4 for more on this). In line with this, existing research has shown that switching a teenager out of this type of environment into a Canadian high school can cause feelings of shock, disconnection and uncertainty about how to behave (Xiaoqiong, 2008). In short, teenagers may want to do well in their new classes, but as in the case of Vivian's son, may also worry about how they will appear to their peers in the host society (Tyyska, 2006).

While Vivian explained that she didn't feel comfortable intervening in her son's school life when they first arrived in Canada, other participants described the strategies they used to help their teenagers adjust post-migration. The two themes that were most common amongst participants with regard to helping their teenagers were: 1) buying teenagers objects that helped them to "fit in" and/or make friends; 2) enrolling teenagers in extracurricular activities they believed would help them integrate. Tira—a mother of two children aged 18 and 24 from Syria—provided an example of the former.

Tira: Okay, I think even like the first year was so hard on him [son]. He was in high school and then when he came here he was like 15 years old. So like in the very difficult age of like he's teenager and then first year, he didn't have friends. So I think he was going through a very tiny depression, that's what I thought. Nobody, like no teenager want to be beside his mom telling her stories because he didn't have friends at that time. So we didn't know what to do or how to help because really he didn't want my help. So the year after, our second year, we bought him a car, and then when you start having car you start getting more friends. So even like, myself, at this time don't have a car. I would go using public transport, but I'm okay with that because I feel he needs it more than me because it helps him to fit in. But I always have my book because I'm studying for the exam at this time so I can read like whenever on the bus, it's a chance to read. Okay, so when he had his car and he started gaining more friends, this was grade 11, but still his situation was not stabilized because he's still like, you know, looking at everybody and wanting to fit in, so he feel that he needs to share their hobbies. Like going out, drinking, or some of them were like smoking pot, and I was so scared that he would quit his study, because we're so, like feel that's so important to continue on to university. But if I force him into the house on the weekend then he will lose his friends, right? So what can I do?

Jeanna: Right. That sounds like it was a difficult time.

Tira: Yeah, yeah. It is difficult for me. Like, in Syria I know all his friends, I know the schools. If he's late, where one place I can just call or go. But here, I don't know his friends from school. I don't know how their families are. Some of them, their family's smoking too. Like, you know? So I was so worried. And then I was thinking, okay, like he cannot make it, like will not be able to make it to university. But then grade 12, it seems like it was going back to stabilization. So he was like starting feeling, okay, like university and study and you know, and because my daughter is a doctor and she got her certificate from the States. She did upgrade her exams. She finished in Syria. She came with us and she kept two years going back and forth until she finished in Syria and then exams to upgrade, like pharmacist, three exams and then she is a practising physician now in the States. So he sees his sister and he knows it takes much work. So he has her to look up to. But really we had to like allow him to go through this period of doing things that we did not approve, because for the first time since coming he was happy, he have some confidence back. But I'm just happy that now this like, seem to be out of his system and he is refocused (IFCA024).

Similar to a number of parents in this study who purchased popular items for their children and teenagers in the hopes that these objects would help them “fit in” easier with their peers (e.g. Apple computers, brand name clothes and shoes, smart phones etc.), Tira decided to buy her son a car to take to school—which she explained is well within walking distance from their house—while she took transit throughout the city. Having a car—something that not all of his classmates had—meant that Tira's son would likely get noticed by his peers in a positive way.

A second way that parents in this study assisted their teenagers' integration was to suggest certain extracurricular activities that they felt would both connect with their kids' strengths and encourage the development of new friendships. John—a father of four children aged 5,8,11 and 16 from Nigeria—provided one such example of this.

John: After we were here for a few months I see that my, my son, my oldest son is having some difficulty adjusting. More so than the other kids he is having difficulty. So you know, what I did was, I suggested, strongly suggested [light laugh] that he find some meaningful way of volunteering. So now he attends and also volunteers with the Calgary Bridge Foundation because they have a very good organization that really helped him. So he volunteers there with his younger sister, which gave them both the opportunity of meeting with other immigrants

and just to make sure that they are well prepared for things, so to help them settle effectively. So and through it my son had got to use some of the talents he has already. So coming through this organization he plays soccer. Because it was too late in the year when we arrive for him to try out for the school team, it was already decided. So he's already, he's in Phys. Ed. in school you know, but this organization really allows him to get into the game and to do something he's good at. Also it gives him somewhere to be on the weekend so he is not sitting idle. So like on Saturday now, he'll be going with them to the, to watch the event, the football event. So and he's also a volunteer with them to help with young kids, you know, who are children of immigrants as well.

Jeanna: Right

John: So that has actually helped him to, to know that look, here, things like sports, and volunteering, really help me to fit in. So he's doing well on that level. And the younger sister already, she's already making some friends. You know, because when we newly came because we joined in June, the school in June, so soon after it was summer so she was able to meet friends through this program because she hadn't made any at school because it was too short. So I think by the virtue of exposure they are doing well. They are more settled, I would say clearly, they are more settled than we are.

Jeanna: Than you and your wife are.

John: Yeah, because yeah they've been in situations where they've had to make friends, and we made this a priority. Whereas it is more difficult for us because we are working at different hours and attending class and then we also are responsible for ensuring their activities, so for the younger ones they need someone to take them to their different groups. If their older brother is not available then of course we do this (IFCA006).

While describing the benefits of his children's participation in extracurricular activities in Calgary, John highlights an interesting challenge for newcomer parents: the time and energy they expend on integrating their children often means that there is little time (and fewer resources) left over to aid in their own integration. In line with John, it was not uncommon for participants to report that they were mainly social in free community gatherings (such as church) and that they rarely had time to join extracurricular activities themselves.

7.8 Familial Settlement in the Context of Time and Financial Constraints

The time constraints and extra financial burden that can be associated with facilitating kids' integration proved to be a source of stress for many of the immigrant parents in this study. While the majority of parents maintained that they would do whatever was in their power to see their children and teenagers securely settled, the added costs, time and energy this required of parents—many of whom were already stretched financially and did not have secure jobs with regular hours—was constructed by many in this study as a stressor on both personal health and the marital relationship. Maria—a mother of two children ages 4 and 6 from Venezuela—offers one such example.

Maria: Mm hmm so yeah my daughter's in ballet, both of the kids are in swimming and skating and they go to the ABC Club, that is kind of, is a city program too which is kind of after school. And this is just right now, they have other activities depending on the time of year and then also driving to friends or they want to go to park, museum, science centre. They are always busy, always want to be going.

Jeanna: Are their schedules difficult for you to manage? I mean you and your husband are so busy already. How are you managing all of the extra activities?

Maria: Oh, it has not been easy. Because I mean, um, Saturday mornings, like my schedule is for them, so it doesn't matter what I have to do, maybe I had things to do, but I, I know, and sometimes when I worked Friday nights, I'm so tired, but still I get up and just go with them. And then a lot of the times I'll work Friday night and then again on Sunday, but they have gymnastic on Sunday. So okay, Sunday, so my husband is the one who take them to, because I work. But yeah, at least most Saturday morning we are together. Even if we are taking them for activity usually we are all together so we try to make the most of that.

Jeanna: So Saturday morning is your family time because you work in the evenings and on Sundays, and your husband works in the day during the week. That's very busy.

Maria: Yeah, yeah, yeah, because, but I feel like it's, um, I had to do it. It's like um, my responsibility, like um, I don't want for them to be lonely because I'm personally when I grew up in my country, we didn't have those kind of programs and so I found that maybe I'm sometimes I'm shy, so I don't want them to be like me. I want them, okay, I want them to be somebody like you, like you [laughs].

Like, you know, this outgoing person is going to be, if they have the others things that I had, like those values, those things, plus those social skills, they are going to be a winner, you know? They're going to do very good because those things are important too, those social. So probably for me, sometimes hard, I have this values but I don't have that other part. And when we came here I saw this in my daughter, she is so shy she don't have any confidence. So this is the best option. This is what I can do for her, right?

Jeanna: Yeah.

Maria: So, but, but I think we can do something to you know, improve those. You can be shy but if you maybe you know, at least, you have to know how to manage those things. And their activities are helping with that. But the one thing is that, we haven't had too much family time. Especially with my husband, you know? My husband and I, is just not much time. And we are both getting tired of it. But you know, we know because we know it's a sacrifice. But for, just for short time maybe we knew it that, that we had to do it. And he said also, if you want to get a professional job, you have to, he knows that I had to go out and you know, work, do something. But it's just with completely different work schedule and everything it's hard. And we've been here for some time now so we're ready for a change (IFCA002).

Maria and her husband had lived in Calgary for five years at the time of interviewing. While their daily life was no longer burdened by financial worries—her husband now had full time work as a mechanical engineer—her family life remained strained by the time crunch associated with mismatched work schedules and her children's extracurricular commitments. At a later point in her interview, Maria explained that while she didn't *have* to work, she continued to do so because it provided her with the opportunity to make friends, and more importantly, to work on her English. Maria also explained that she continued to work at night so that she could complete online courses during the day while her children were out of the house. The “trade-off,” however, was that Maria was extremely tired and rarely had any time alone with her husband. While Maria maintained that the couple tried to “make the most” of their Saturday mornings together, she often imagined the day when their schedules would no longer conflict.

While Maria found a way to work, complete online courses, and take care of her children during the day, juggling this level of responsibility and commitment was not possible for all of the participants in this study. Lidia—a mother of one 5-year-old child from Poland—described her worries over not being able to “do it all.”

Jeanna: Is your daughter in any kind of extracurricular activities?

Lidia: Not now. I would like to put her somewhere. She likes swimming and different things, so I’m thinking to do that. Maybe soon. But not now, no, because really in truth I don’t have time to find anything. And also, you know, it’s hard to, to sign her up for anything when you, your job is like you don’t know every week how you’re going to work. So, usually the activities are every week, or twice a week, you have to take her there, pick her up. It’s kind of, you have to have more of a regular schedule. So at that moment, it’s just not going to happen. But of course I feel bad about this.

Jeanna: You feel bad that she isn’t in any activities?

Lidia: Yeah. Really bad. Because I know that this would be good for her development so of course I feel some stress for this. But it’s just hard to do it all. Maybe in two months when I finish the school yes, but not now (IFCA015).

Both Maria and Lidia emphasized struggling with the time constraints associated with caring for children while also attempting to re-establish a professional career, provide financially for their families, and complete upgrading classes. However, as mentioned above, for other participants—most often those with older children and teenagers—it was the extra financial burdens associated with ensuring their kids were well settled that brought about the most stress in daily life. For instance, Vivian (introduced above), explained that she was having a very difficult time supplying her son with the types of clothes, spending money, and electronics that his friends—who were also mostly Chinese immigrants—enjoyed and deemed important.

Vivian: uh my son make some friend in the school but mostly all his friend, Chinese, yeah. So you think this would be easier for him but no because many Chinese who immigrate have a lot of money, so the kids have money too and they expect all Chinese have same amount of things. All Chinese the same, right? So what happening is they always compare to each other, yeah, what I get, what

clothes they wear, like that kind of thing. So it affect my son so much, because I, I'm not rich people. I come as skilled immigrant with tech, technical job, but it's not like a rich family, like I don't come from rich family with much money. So give me pressure too, so when he want buy something, he want to buy some more expensive one, not just regular, yeah. So I feel it's hard to afford him, yeah, I feel this way, because it's really affect him yeah, and lots of his classmates, even at home, don't make anything, just always go outside, go out to eat, they have money, and the one kid he say, always have five hundred Canadian cash, in his back, his backpack, all the time,

Jeanna: Wow.

Vivian: And he go to eat, four people eat two hundred dollars, just like that. These kinds of things, so this kind of thing I think is not good for kids, but I cannot say "don't make friends with those kind of kids" because if I say that, it's just, "oh you just think rich people are bad people," yeah, but he compare, and if, and if we, even if you don't compare, but people just uh, look at you, wear cheap clothes or look, like his i-pod or something they think, they just look down on you, kids have same things, like all that through, yeah, I think, yeah, so he want to make friends, so he want to, not so high, but at least uh catch up with them, that's yeah, driving me crazy, [quiet laugh] yeah (IFCA009).

Many of the immigrant parents in this study mentioned that upon first arriving in Canada, their children and teenagers found it easier to make friends with other immigrant youth or those with similar ethnic and cultural backgrounds. While this scenario would undoubtedly make some situations more comfortable for immigrant youth (e.g. shared language and cultural understandings), existing research shows that it can also lead to within-group comparisons (as Vivian described) and stalled patterns of integration (e.g. Berry, 2005). Interesting work has considered the characterization of Asian immigrants as a "model minority" wherein the presumed intelligence, self-sustainability, and material worth of Asians creates a hierarchy of desirability in the immigration process (Kwan-Lafond, 2012). Vivian's account offers insight into one way that such social constructions might play out at the level of immigrant youth (e.g. via comparison and expectation), since such labels and "positive" stereotypes are implicated in a

process of racialization that attaches meaning, but also limits and bounds, to how groups of people are both perceived and permitted to express themselves in the host society.

7.9 Perceptions of Governmental Support

While many of the immigrant families in this study discussed struggling to make ends meet both financially and with respect to time, the majority of participants also described being extremely grateful for government breaks or incentives that helped with the daily costs associated with facilitating children's integration. Amongst the most popular incentives participants discussed were the discounts offered by the City of Calgary to support the activities of low-income families. Lucia (introduced above) best illustrates this common theme.

Lucia: The first year it was more difficult to put her [daughter] in activities because of language. She didn't have the language. And I didn't want her to feel stranger, or odd. So I knew that I had to invest in her as a person and as a mom. And then the following year she's been, last year she went to sailing, she went to art, she went to two varsity summer camps. So it's all year round she's busy. So this year we're planning, she's going to take French. Yeah.

Jeanna: Do you find these types of activities financially difficult?

Lucia: Well yes. She has expensive tastes [laughs]. But I was, I mean, I got the, there's a card, so I got financial assistance for a lot of these things. So for example, when you're low income, in this City, I mean, they try to make things fair for equality reasons, okay, they offer you the chance. So I could take, okay, the whole courses would cost about \$700 but I would pay only \$200 or \$300.

Jeanna: How did you find out about the types of subsidies available?

Lucia: Online through Calgary Recreations Centres. I saw fee assistance. And you get that. So you can continue going to the swimming pools, so instead of paying \$12 both of us, we just paid \$2.35. Then you have access to all the summer camps things, so last year she went sailing at Glenmore. That was a nice thing because again, I need to build her self-confidence because I know that she's not like other kids. Then again, she was brave, she did that, and even when the summer was raining she went. So this society helps me. It's very different than what we're used to (IFCA030).

While Lucia and others in this study benefitted greatly from the breaks offered to low income families by the city and province, Gabrielle—a mother of two children ages 8 and 10 from the Philippines—who also accessed the program discounts offered by the city, brought up important points regarding why some immigrant families may not have the opportunity to benefit from such incentives.

Gabrielle: I got the financial assistance program from the City of Calgary. I need only to pay, I don't know, \$10 for swimming lessons.

Jeanna: Did you have to apply for that online?

Gabrielle: The [Women's] Shelter applied for me. Once I was there, the resources opened up to me, and there's so many resources I had never even knew about that are available for families like ours. So now I don't keep these things to myself, if there's a resource I've learned, it's me, it's my responsibility to share that with others. Because we were here and didn't know. I thought just, oh I cannot afford the things, like the programs you want to be in. But then once I meet the people at the shelter, I realize that, Oh there is lots we can afford and do. So now I am always looking for new things. And I think, I believe the sooner you adopt your new country, your new city, your new home, that's the better for you. To really become part of your new home it's important to look for how you can get help. So some people like me just won't know about these service and then others are here but they want to maintain some appearances, because they, they want to be accepted so they feel they need to do everything with no help. No assistance. And I understand it's a little harder for them because this was like me too [laughs]. But if you really want your children to be involved, it's important to seek out whatever opportunity is available (IFCA013).

While the settlement sector can be a great resource for new immigrants to learn about programs and services that are available in their communities, the majority of the participants in this study described accessing settlement services more as a last resort after job searches came up short, than as an initial point of contact or resource to aid in family integration.⁵¹ For example, many participants reported that upon arriving in Calgary, they believed their

⁵¹ The one caveat in this sample was when English language training was required. However, the majority of the participants did fit into this category.

experience and credentials would be enough to secure a job in their professional field, and thus, accessing the services of the settlement sector was considered unnecessary or a “waste of time.”

However, like Gabrielle who explained that it was only once she became hooked into the institutional interface of the Women’s Shelter that the programs and incentives her family was eligible for in Calgary became known and available to her, many participants recalled in hindsight having missed out on programs that would have been beneficial to them in the early days of settlement. Interestingly, a number of the participants in this study also discussed eventually learning about relevant programs and services through chance encounters, friends and acquaintances, and expressed regret for not having a more in-depth knowledge of the settlement sector in Calgary prior to immigrating.

The abovementioned finding links to one of the underlying themes of this chapter: participants were far more likely to emphasize their own personal responsibility when it came to re-establishing work and family life in the post-migration context than they were to suggest that they were deserving of aid or assistance. This theme was extremely salient in participants’ approaches to their children’s education, but also in regard to the expectations they placed on the government and settlement sector. An interesting focus for future research would be to explore in greater depth whether skilled workers are more likely to go unassisted in their post-migration efforts than other “types” of immigrants (and if so, why), and whether and how this might affect the experiences of their dependent children and teenagers.

Chapter 8: Discussion and Conclusion

8.1. Introduction and Chapter Highlights

The skilled immigrant parents in this study provide complex accounts that offer a detailed depiction of their perceptions and practices of reconstituting work and family life in the context of downward mobility, deskilling, and the new social and cultural environment that accompanies migration. Given the changed social and economic context in which these parents were now organizing their day-to-day lives, they were often left to negotiate increasing financial constraints and shifting standards of appropriate childrearing against their desire to reproduce and maintain a certain quality of life for their children. The tensions that are produced from these competing demands had implications for multiple dimensions of participants' post-migration lives, including the management and creation of familial support networks, shifting understandings of acceptable work, schooling, gender relations, and new parenting practices.

In an effort to develop the most comprehensive understanding of participants' negotiations of the actualities of work and family life post-migration, this dissertation commences with a review of the conditions surrounding their lives in the pre-migration context. As demonstrated in Chapter 4, participants in this study did not emphasize a single factor that pushed them to consider immigration to Canada. Moreover, the reasons participants offered for their decision to migrate were multifaceted, as were the feelings and emotions individual family members experienced leading up to their intended departure.

Specifically, in their retrospective accounts, participants provided four main reasons for their decision to pursue immigration to Canada: 1) children's education and future career opportunities; 2) situations of violence and corruption; 3) a culture of overtaxing work; 4) spousal relocation. Each of these factors was constructed by participants as having an organizing

effect on their actions around international relocation. Moreover, the process leading up to a participant's decision to immigrate often appeared to affect their feelings around immigration as well as their hopes for their post-migration lives. For example, in situations where children's schooling was the main reason a participant emphasized when speaking about their decision to immigrate, participants were more likely to voice strong expectations around children's post-migration integration, and many described attempting to establish a high level of involvement in children's progress and development. Similarly, in situations where participants suggested that immigration decisions were made in large part because of the burdens associated with overtaxing work, there tended to be a somewhat more open and relaxed approach toward the organization of day-to-day life and responsibilities in Canada.

Equally important is the fact that Chapter 4 offers insight regarding how the process of applying and waiting for acceptance to immigrate to Canada affected the pre-migration lives of participants. A number of participants reported putting life events on hold (e.g. having children) in anticipation of their intended departure, while others refrained from spending money on themselves or spent considerable amounts of time attempting to prepare children. Furthermore, while some participants waited years for their applications to be accepted, others reported the process taking only a matter of months; they thus had little time to ready themselves or their families. No matter the length of their individual immigration process, however, the large majority of participants mentioned that more transparency in immigration in terms of things like wait times and application status would be extremely helpful in regard to planning their lives.

Chapter 5 of this dissertation shifts to consider participants' strategies for re-establishing work and family life in early settlement. Specifically, participants' financial trade-offs and the negotiation of familial expectations are explored. Moreover, this chapter offers insight regarding

how social networks might be created and accessed during settlement, gender differences in this process, and the ways in which newcomers with minimal ties in the host society might work to buffer this situation upon arrival (e.g. by viewing other immigrants and visible minorities as part of a group of people with similar interests, needs and expectations). Related to this is the finding that participants who lived in communities not heavily populated with other immigrants (whether by choice or circumstance) reported having a more difficult time creating both strong and weak ties during settlement. Along these same lines, the large majority of participants reported that the bulk of their friends in Calgary were other immigrants, and a smaller number revealed that they had not socialized with a “Canadian” since arriving months or even years before.

As mentioned above, this chapter also explores the financial trade-offs that participants made in early settlement and their attempts to protect their families from the effects of class decline they were experiencing during this time. Along these lines, a number of participants reported taking on as much debt as they were eligible for in early settlement or spending through all of their savings, in an effort to provide their children with the commodities and experiences they deemed important. Interesting here is the fact that many participants explained feeling as though this type of spending was justified in early settlement given their perceived levels of social and intellectual capital and professional work experience.

The level of knowledge participants had acquired prior to immigrating in relation to the social and economic situations they would be faced with post-migration played a crucial role in shaping financial management strategies and spending habits upon arrival. For instance, those with the greatest level of knowledge about the hardships associated with reconstituting work and family life in this country were more likely to spend frugally upon arrival or take a “survival”

job to support their family while applying for positions in their professional field. What's more, the majority of the participants who reported having an enhanced understanding of the realities they would face during settlement attributed this to conversations with family and friends already living abroad. Similarly, many participants spoke in their interviews about the need for more comprehensive pre-migration services in order to better prepare prospective immigrants for the challenges they would soon be facing. A large number also reported that their acceptance into the skilled worker stream of immigration had a contradictory effect in that it offered false hope that their skills and expertise would be valued in the Canadian labour market.

When participants were unable to acquire a job in their professional field upon arriving in Canada, they were apt to construct their inability to do so as a personal failure. Taking part in courses in the settlement sector eventually helped many to understand some of the external factors likely contributing to their difficulties (e.g. resume standards, emphasis placed on Canadian work experience, and recredentialing requirements). However, what is most interesting is that while participants largely anticipated many of the social and cultural differences they would face in Canada, how the immigration process would affect their participation in the labour market, as well as their relative class status, was something that the majority explained they had not attempted to prepare for prior to coming, mostly because they hadn't anticipated these things.

Chapter 6 shifts once again to consider the unique experiences of men and women in the post-migration context, and whether and how participants (re)negotiated deeply held personal and cultural values and preferred practices in response to their new social, cultural and economic position. The findings of this chapter demonstrate that female participants showed a higher level of concern about how they would be perceived in the labour market by Canadian employers than

did their male counterparts. Moreover, female immigrants were more likely to “retreat” into the home and caregiving work in the face of post-migration struggles. Interesting here is the fact that negative discourses that stereotype immigrant women as “unemployable dependents” are prominent in our culture (Castles & Miller, 2009). Combined with what Man (2009) suggests is an “upsurge in racism” at the level of employers, immigrant females may have a higher level of difficulty acquiring meaningful employment in the post-migration labour market.

Furthermore, dominant western parenting discourses that suggest “good” mothers put large amounts of time and energy into raising their children (see Quirke 2006; Walzer 1998; Hays, 1996) may affect immigrant women’s perceptions of their role in seeing their children settled in Canada (e.g. as in the narrative of Cindy who decided to “do as Canadians do” and have “Mother at home taking care of daughter, father at work” (IFCA018)). However, it is important to note that in contemporary discourses, middle-class mothers are now expected to contribute financially to the family (by choice or necessity) *and* engage in intensive mothering practices (Butler, 2010). In Canada, the state has played a crucial role in structuring the conditions of social reproduction to fit with labour market regulation (Bezanson, 2010; see also Bezanson & Luxton, 2006).⁵² For instance, trends toward privatization and regionalization of social spending have meant that the challenge of balancing motherhood and paid work is now largely framed as a “personal trouble” that is subject to “private solution” (Daly, 2004:13). While the mothers in this sample were more likely to describe their understanding of “Canadian mothering” as being closely related to full-time childcare, this was often a perception that participants brought with them from their country of origin, and it is possible that over time this

⁵² For example, neoliberal policies and practices in Canada tend to endorse the model of a dual-income family by “decommodifying” domestic and care work and supporting “family friendly” policies that encourage women to balance domestic responsibilities with labour market involvement (e.g. flexible work hours and onsite daycare services) (Bezanson, 2010).

understanding might shift with changing circumstances or the further development of western cultural knowledge.

In addition, the experiences of the women in this study who described struggling in various ways to re-enter the labour market offer a reminder of the importance of supporting the unique needs of female migrants. Some of the suggestions participants offered regarding meaningful ways to implement this type of support include: the provision of free childcare for women taking courses in the settlement sector or interviewing for positions, accessible childcare to those who are working, dispelling stereotypes about immigrant women at the level of employers (e.g. Sophia described how she felt her headscarf caused interviewers to immediately peg her as ultra-traditional or to assume that her English was poor), and offering pre-migration courses on the realities of reconstituting work and family life in Canada so that immigrant couples might arrive with a deeper understanding about how they can support one another to be successful in their individual and family goals.

Connected to the final point above is the finding that when men in this study came into the immigration process with little prior knowledge or preparation regarding the challenges they might encounter towards preconceived notions of masculinity and “good” fathering, they or their partners often described instances of elevated struggle. Chapter 6 demonstrates how participation in the settlement sector helped some participants to better prepare for the negotiation of family roles and practices in Canada by introducing frameworks that could validate changes within the post-migration family (i.e., when participants were able to “hook” into a framework that offered a more flexible conception of mothering and fathering than those that are traditionally available, they were more likely to demonstrate flexibility around previously held gendered practices and values).

In relation to the above, a number of participants discussed how they came to value an increased level of closeness with their partner post-migration (e.g. as in the case of Danny who described the joy he found in face-to-face communication with his wife), while many others emphasized the ways they had come to value a higher level of involvement in their children's care (e.g. Sumit discussed his enhanced ability to care for his daughter and his feelings of happiness in regard to this). In the majority of such cases, participants emphasized their increased presence in the home (and often their lack of paid help) as offering them the opportunity to develop both enhanced nurturing and communication skills and a better understanding of the emotionally compelling practices that could be associated with their family relationships. Moreover, a good number of participants highlighted that while being blocked from re-entering the labour market on a full-time basis was difficult both financially and in terms of their professional identity, increased involvement in family life was a consequence of this hardship that they were extremely grateful for.

In the fourth and final data chapter, participants' understandings of the strengths and weaknesses of children's post-migration education and development, as well as the work they did with respect to schooling, are explored. An interesting finding of this chapter is that increasingly after coming to Canada, participants in this study attempted to become more involved in their children's schooling, but a number of participants struggled to achieve this for a variety of reasons. One interesting explanation explored in the chapter related to conflicts between home and school expectations as to what school teaching and learning practices should involve (especially in terms of work done outside of school hours), while another has to do with parents' lack of confidence in engaging teachers and school administrators. In cases where the curriculum or approach in children's schools was different from what parents had anticipated or

expected (e.g. little to no homework), many came to see it as their personal responsibility to help children excel past the point of what was being learned during school hours. However, in many cases this presented overtaxed parents with the problem of finding the time and energy to meet their own expectations, and it was not uncommon for parents to eventually defer to the school in regard to their children's educational needs.

A second important finding in this chapter is that the ways in which participants in this study viewed the post-migration education of their children was greatly affected by their pre-migration experiences. For example, when children struggled in the context of pre-migration schools (e.g. as in the case of children with diagnosed mental health disorders or those who were in extremely competitive environments), parents were more likely to place less emphasis on what and how much was being learned post-migration, in favor of focusing more on the overall outcomes and integration of their children (e.g. whether they were making friends and being included, the development of personal qualities such as public speaking and group work skills, and the ability to think critically).

The above finding offers an important reminder to future researchers regarding the significance of considering aspects of immigrants' pre-migration lives when studying immigrant populations in the host society. So much of what immigrants think and do in Canada is naturally connected to the lives they led and the values they held prior to immigrating. While this dissertation ultimately demonstrates the flexibility and fluidity that many newcomers establish in their post-migration lives, I would argue that immigrants' pre-migration stories offer crucial contextual information that cannot be neglected if a researcher's aim is to understand aspects of post-migration actualities as fully as possible.

8.2 Overall Contribution

The overall contribution of this dissertation is threefold. First of all, it helps to bridge two areas in the immigration literature that are often researched separately or through a framework of cause and effect: paid work and family life (e.g. see Roche & Engsminger, 2007; Pong, Hao & Gardner, 2005). As this dissertation shows, paid work and family life were wholly interconnected in the post-migration experiences of the participants in this study, especially given that each participant had at least one dependent child living in their home in Calgary. For example, the majority of participants reported being faced with quite complex negotiations around work and daily activities (whether individually or in the couple context) largely because the organization of daily life and responsibilities they had established in their country of origin was no longer possible in the Canadian context (e.g. whether because of situations of precarious employment or unemployment, a lack of support from extended family and kin, and so on). The competing demands of paid and domestic work, including how these unfolded in participants' pre-and post-migration lives, and the strategies that were employed in their accomplishment, are central to this dissertation. This research therefore moves beyond the point of considering the effects participants' economic status had on their parenting practices, to consider the numerous ways that economic realities were negotiated within the family context, and participants' sense of meaning around this.

Along these lines, the central argument of this dissertation is that it is not simply an immigrant family's socioeconomic status that contributes to the organization of immigrant family life and experience during the settlement period. Rather, it is a constellation of factors such as gender roles and practices (and immigrants' willingness to alter such beliefs and ways of being), immigration status, level of involvement with the settlement sector, existing connections

to kin and family acquaintances upon arrival, and experiences at the social and institutional levels (e.g. at the level of schools or employers) that contribute to how immigrant families integrate and organize post-migration. Shan (2014) makes a similar argument in suggesting that class status (which necessarily impacts how immigrants bring up their children), is not solely defined by an immigrant's relative economic status in the host society. Moreover, Shan suggests that future studies should work toward further understanding how immigrant parents manage situations of transient poverty in the post-migration context, especially in terms of the practices and resources they rely on to establish a certain quality of life for their children.

Shan's (2014) call regarding the necessity of future research to focus on the multifaceted nature of post-migration parenting links in specific ways to the second overall contribution of this dissertation. Throughout each of the four data chapters, I have attempted to provide a detailed depiction of skilled immigrants' accounts of negotiating (and renegotiating) competing demands, ideological presuppositions, new embodied practices, and institutional processes in the pre-and post-migration context. Moreover, I have provided information regarding their interpretations of how such lived experiences have influenced their day-to-day lives in Canada, specifically in terms of their parenting practices and understandings. A central way that this is achieved is by extensively examining the choices and trade-offs participants made in their attempts to establish a certain quality of life for their families in Calgary, as well as the reasoning behind their decisions.

Furthermore, wherever possible, participants' post-migration decisions were fleshed out in the context of their pre-migration lives. This is important because it demonstrates the extremely interconnected nature of these two life phases. The pre-migration experiences of immigrants, as well as their immigration status, are factors that are regularly overlooked in

immigration research (Shan, 2014). However, this dissertation demonstrates the influence that such factors can have in immigrants' post-migration parenting practices and values.

Finally, this dissertation demonstrates the great versatility and flexibility that many immigrant families exhibit as they reorient to their new social and cultural surroundings in Canada. Specifically, it shows that the skilled immigrants in this study were largely open to trying new ways of organizing family life post-migration in an attempt to both settle their families and make headway in the labour market. This is an extremely important finding on two levels. First of all, the high level of adaptability immigrants portrayed in their orientations to re-establishing family life in Canada offers an important reminder that immigrants are not essentially "traditional" with regard to employment and family patterns (Tyyska, 2003, 2007). In fact, in the large majority of cases where participants or their family members were resistant toward more egalitarian change in their post-migration lives, important external factors were often at play in their decision making (e.g. the inability to get recredentialled, the process of deskilling, experiences of racism and discrimination, and so on).

Secondly, participants' openness toward change in both their perceptions and practices of family life may have implications for the direction that expectations about family life in Canada take in the future. For example, as noted in Chapter 2, gendered expectations about what is considered "normal" for women and men may change over time as the practices of individuals change (Ranson, 2010: 25). Important here is the fact that immigrant families don't just learn from or resist Canadian parenting discourses and practices, but they become part of the population of Canadian families who are shaping and displaying trends of change. This is an important consideration for future researchers who are interested in opting as Ranson (2010) and

others did, to look at gender relations in families explicitly contravening prevailing expectations about men and women, mothering and fathering.

In light of the above, it is extremely important to support new immigrants as they work to negotiate the changed conditions of family life in the Canadian context. As I argue in Chapter 6 of this dissertation, one way of achieving this is by making cultural and professional frameworks available to new immigrants who are working to re-establish preferred versions of parenting, family practices, and values in ways that fit with their shifting social and economic circumstances in Canada. This is an important contribution to the literature because it shows that having meaningful resources to tap into (e.g. such as alternative versions of masculinity) can help to validate or even normalize processes of great change in the organization of immigrants' daily lives that are often important for successfully balancing paid work and family life in this country.

8.3 Meaningful Supports for Immigrant Families

During their interviews, participants in this study described programs, incentives and supports that they had found useful in helping their family to settle in Calgary (e.g. Lucia and Gabrielle emphasized program discounts offered by the city) as well as situations that caused them particular struggle (e.g. Laya described having no contact person to follow up with at Immigration Canada), or where they felt that additional resources were needed to better support immigrant families (e.g. Tira emphasized the need for more inclusive programs directed at immigrant men). While many of the supports participants discussed throughout their interviews are noted in the various data chapters, it is worth highlighting some of the additional topics that participants introduced.

Because each of the participants in this study had some level of affiliation with the settlement sector, many discussed what they felt to be the pros and cons of settlement services in Calgary, with suggestions for how services could be improved to better support immigrants and their families being an important focus for the majority of participants. Specifically, a number of participants problematized the level of power they felt the employees of immigrant serving agencies had over their individual settlement experiences (e.g. because they were in charge of helping pupils in their classes to network, initiate valuable mentorship relationships, set up important work placements, etc). In such cases, a few participants noted that an increased level of transparency between the obligations of settlement sector employees and those enrolled in their classes would be extremely useful in helping them to navigate (and understand what to expect from) the settlement sector-student relationship.

In addition, participants suggested that while settlement sector services were well equipped to meet the basic needs of new immigrants (e.g. providing food or used furniture), there is a real need for opportunities to simply talk with someone in the settlement sector who will listen to their worries and frustrations and offer insight or helpful information. In fact, two participants in this study who had jobs in the settlement sector at the time of interviewing (Wanda and Rosa) described the need for this type of service, suggesting that they see new immigrants coming into their organizations on a daily basis who simply need to vent, touch base, or make casual inquiries about navigating Canadian processes and protocols that are new to them or that they are having difficulty with (e.g. acquiring cheques, understanding a cell phone contract, information about renting and rental contracts, and so on).⁵³ While these types of

⁵³ A number of participants mentioned during or after their interview that they were drawn to participate in this research study because my recruitment email mentioned that they would have the opportunity to discuss what settlement had been like for their family in an open dialogue setting. In other words, the pull to talk with someone about their experiences, including the joys and frustrations of immigration, was strong.

services do exist in Calgary, new immigrants are often required to formally commit to a six-to eight-week instructional program where topics are more or less centred on a specific theme (e.g. employment or family integration) and openly discussed in a room with other participants.

Finally, a number of participants pointed out that improved pre-migration services, specifically those that offer insight about the stresses and strains of transitioning to life in Canada, would greatly help new immigrants ready themselves and their families for international migration. For example, Gabrielle explained in her interview that she felt her partner was not prepared for the post-migration “learning curve” (IFCA013) that he was faced with in Calgary (e.g. in terms of work and cultural differences that challenged his preferred practices of masculinity) and she felt that this was a large reason why he turned to alcohol and physical and verbal abuse. While a few participants in this study mentioned that they had paid privately for information about immigrating to Canada prior to departing from their home countries (e.g. via an “immigration agent”) and others mentioned having completed pre-migration courses through the Canadian Integration Immigration program (CIIP),⁵⁴ the large majority of participants described being unable to find or access what they felt was clear and concise information about relocating their family to Canada prior to immigrating.

8.4 Study Limitations

It should be noted that only one person from each immigrant family was interviewed. The information and interpretations provided by participants thus represent one telling of family settlement where multiple accounts and explanations may indeed exist. While including the

⁵⁴ The Government of Canada provided funding for the development and implementation of CIIP as a way of preparing newcomers for “economic integration” while still in their country of origin. In short, the mandate of this program is to provide free pre-departure orientation to federal skilled workers, provincial nominees, and their spouses and adult dependents, while they are still overseas during the final stages of the immigration process. As it currently stands, CIIP offices are located in China, India, Philippines and the United Kingdom (see <http://www.newcomersuccess.ca/index.php/en/about-ciip> for more information on this program).

perceptions and accounts of each member of a participant couple (where applicable) would have offered the opportunity to provide a more complete picture of the underlying processes of change, conflict, joint or independent strategies and practices, and power dynamics that characterize the areas of family life that are focused on throughout this dissertation, as explained in Chapter 3, this type of data collection was not possible within the parameters of this research study.

In addition, the accounts of the participants in this study represent the experiences of skilled immigrants who have been in Canada for six years or less. While this range allowed me to explore similarities and differences between those immigrants who had newly immigrated and those who had been here for a number of years, including the perspectives of skilled immigrants who had lived in Canada for longer periods of time (e.g. 10, 15 or 20 years) may have offered further insight into processes of change and stasis within participant families. For example, as explained in Chapters 5 and 6, it was common for participants in this study to focus their accounts around what the future *might* hold for both them and their children, and thus in some instances to move away from the actualities of their current realities (e.g. even Maria who had been in Calgary for six years at the time of interviewing spent a considerable portion of her interview describing what she hoped life would be like once she acquired a job that aligned her work schedule with that of her husband). However, while including the accounts of immigrants who had been in Canada for longer periods of time may have offered the chance to more fully explore whether and how the hopes and expectations of participants during settlement were realized, this would also likely have shifted the focus away from the critical period of transition in the early years following migration.

In addition, because each of the participants in this study was (or had previously been) hooked into courses in the settlement sector that are mostly geared toward helping new immigrants find jobs, the data for this sample largely provided insight into the experiences of skilled immigrants who were receiving some form of labour market or recredentialing information or assistance from settlement staff trained here in Calgary. While the experiences of immigrants who had not had any involvement with the settlement sector were offered on occasion through participants' accounts of their partner's experiences, I did not directly speak with anyone who had not had some affiliation with the settlement sector, and therefore can only speak in very general terms about the differences between the experiences of participants who had received help and assistance during settlement and those who had not.

Finally, because my sample is made up of participants who were either currently in or discussed having been in heterosexual relationships during the pre-and-post-migration periods, the data for this sample do not offer insight into the experiences of gay and lesbian immigrant couples who are attempting to re-establish family life in the Canadian context. I think that when studying families it is extremely important to work towards capturing the highest level of diversity possible, especially given the increasing level of fluidity that exists in contemporary family structure and relations. Incorporating the experiences of immigrant families that have been formed around same-sex partnerships is thus both an interesting and important focus for future research studies.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender singles and couples immigrate to Canada in both the family class and skilled worker categories of immigration; however, I found very little published research that focused on the experiences of these individuals and families during settlement (especially in the Canadian context). This is an area of research that I am very interested in exploring further in future research studies.

8.5 Future Research

Overall, this dissertation has taught me that most skilled immigrants come to Canada with the hope of bettering their personal and family situations. Generally speaking, the immigrants in this group took pride in the fact that their acceptance into Canada was based on the hard work and accomplishments of their pre-migration lives, and their greatest hope was simply to see these achievements put to good use in the post-migration context. As a society, it is thus essential that we comprehensively support the efforts of skilled immigrants to integrate into all aspects of Canadian life, especially given that the rate of skilled immigrants to Canada is set to be increased in 2015.⁵⁶

This dissertation demonstrates that one of the best ways to begin to achieve this integration is by speaking with skilled immigrants about their needs, the barriers they have faced in this country, and the services that have been most helpful to them. As noted in Chapter 2, outcome measures used to assess settlement programs do not necessarily get at all the things that matter to immigrants, and it has been argued that services offered by different community organizations can overlap in non-useful ways (Reitz, 2012). Since I did not personally do any research into the way the settlement sector is organized or the institutional factors shaping the way programs can be developed and delivered, I am only able to bring forward immigrants' understandings and experiences of the immigrant serving sector in this research. However, one thing I have learned is that speaking with immigrants about their experiences in the settlement sector offers a rich starting place for both service providers and researchers concerned with how services might be improved to better meet the needs of newcomers.

⁵⁶ In April of 2014, the Federal Government of Canada announced that they will be moving ahead with a new immigration system in January, 2015 that will offer "Express Entry" to qualified immigrants in the skilled worker stream of immigration as a way to fill open jobs in Canada. As part of this new system, it is projected that an increased number of permanent resident visas will be offered to skilled workers, and fewer workers will be admitted to Canada through the temporary foreign worker program (Mas, 2014).

Although it was not the direct focus of my research, participants in this study spoke about their desire for improved opportunities to engage in a mentorship relationship with an immigrant in their field (especially one who had successfully re-integrated into the labour market in their chosen profession). I was also told about the need for culturally sensitive programming, and additional programs that would engage immigrant men outside of the context of “self help.” Furthermore, the majority of participants in this study claimed that having an enhanced understanding of reconstituting work and family life in Canada prior to coming would have been extremely helpful in their attempts to ready themselves and their families for the journey ahead. There is a significant need for additional research studies on the pre-migration services offered to prospective immigrants in their country of origin. This dissertation offers insight regarding many of the issues that newcomers face during settlement, and the findings offer a starting place regarding the types of information that might be useful in the pre-migration context.

This research also raises the question of how skilled immigrants with no affiliation to the settlement sector are faring in terms of their efforts to integrate their families and rejoin the paid labour force in Canada. Moreover, it would be quite interesting to take up the notion of “personal failure” with such a group, since many of the participants in this study came to renegotiate feelings of personal blame around not being able to obtain a position in their professional field only after attending programs that furthered their understanding of the social, cultural and institutional forces at play when competing for jobs in Canada.

Finally, as noted in the previous section, separately interviewing members of an immigrant couple would offer a more comprehensive picture of the experiences of immigration for skilled workers and their partners – especially in terms of gendered experiences and

dynamics and how these play out at the level of household relations. Some of the most insightful accounts offered in the participant interviews of this study involved participants' retelling the unique experiences, actions and decisions of their partner during settlement. While time and circumstance did not permit me to complete follow up interviews with participant family members, future researchers might take up the narratives of participants in this research as a starting place for formulating interesting and important research questions for couples attempting to establish their day-to-day lives in this country.

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Appendix A: Post Interview Information Sheet

Dear Participant,

Many thanks for taking part in our study of families. Your participation will help us to better understand what it means to be a member of an immigrant family in Canada today. The purpose of this part of the study is simply to collect some additional demographic information about you and your family. As with all of the information you have volunteered throughout this research process, your responses to these questions will be kept confidential – only the researchers on our team will have access to the information you provide. Please skip any question that you do not feel comfortable answering.

1. In what year were you born? 19_____
2. In which year did you apply to immigrate to Canada? _____
3. Who in your family was the principle applicant for immigration? _____
4. In which year did you move to Canada? _____
5. Thinking about the children who live in your household ... How many are:
☐ 0 to 5 years old? _____
☐ 6 to 12 years old? _____
☐ 13 to 17 years old? _____
☐ 18 years old and over? _____
6. If you are currently employed, what benefits do you have through your job? Please check all that apply.
☐ Life insurance
☐ Health insurance
☐ Dental insurance
☐ Disability insurance
☐ Employer-sponsored pension plan
☐ Paid vacation/sick days
7. If your spouse or partner is currently employed, what benefits does he/she have through their work? Please check all that apply.
☐ Life insurance
☐ Health insurance
☐ Dental insurance
☐ Disability insurance
☐ Employer-sponsored pension plan
☐ Paid vacation/sick days

8. When you think about your current financial situation, what, if anything, worries you? (check all that apply)

- ☐ Don't have enough money
- ☐ Not finding a job
- ☐ Losing job / job instability
- ☐ Affording health care
- ☐ Saving enough money for retirement
- ☐ Paying for children's education
- ☐ Paying for credit card / loan debt
- ☐ Nothing
- ☐ Other, please specify _____

9. In your opinion, what would be the very lowest monthly income that your family would need to have in order to make ends meet? _____per month

10. Is the total monthly income of your family higher, lower or more or less the same as the above figure?

- ☐ Higher
- ☐ Lower
- ☐ More or less the same

11. Which category best describes the total income from all sources of all the members of your family in the past 12 months?

- ☐ Less than \$30,000
- ☐ From \$30,000 to less than \$49,999
- ☐ From \$50,000 to less than \$69,999
- ☐ From \$70,000 to less than \$89,999
- ☐ From \$90,000 to less than \$109,999
- ☐ From \$110,000 or more
- ☐ Don't know

Appendix B: Pre-Interview Prompts

Dear Participant,

I would like to thank you for participating in our study. Your input is helpful and much appreciated. With your help, we would like to find out how immigrant families are faring in Calgary and what their day-to-day life is like. Topics we are interested in include your daily routines and family life, your hopes and worries regarding your family's future, your neighborhood, your employment, as well as your opinions on the process of settling in Calgary.

As discussed when we spoke on (date), I would like to formally confirm our appointment for a 60-90 minute interview on (date). This interview will focus on the topics outlined above and will help us greatly to explore these issues in detail. Below is a list of very broad questions related to the topics we will explore when we next meet. It is our hope that these questions will help to familiarize you with interview topics of interest and increase your overall level of comfort with this process.

Please note that you are not required to answer these questions in writing or prepare a formal response of any kind. These questions are merely examples of topics that may come up as we discuss your family life.

Family Life:

- Describe what your family life has been like since coming to Canada. What have been some of the positive aspects of this transition for you and your family? What have been some of the difficult aspects of this transition for you and your family?
- Thinking about your family life before coming to Canada, in what ways are you trying to do things the same/differently as a family today?
- What does a typical weekday look like for your family?
- What do you see for your family over the next five years?
- In your family, who is responsible for scheduling and organizing family life?
- In your opinion, what makes a good parent today?

Kids Schooling/activities:

- How old are your children? Do they attend school in Calgary? What grades are they in?

- What are the teachers like at your child's school? Do you feel welcome as a parent in that school?
- How did you go about choosing this particular school for your child?
- What sort of activities is your child involved in? Why did you choose those particular activities? Do you feel that these kinds of activities are important for children? If so, what do you think he/she gets out of it/them?
- Do you put a limit on the number of activities your child is involved in? If so, why?

Neighbourhood:

- What are the best and worst things about your neighbourhood?
- Do you think this is a good place to raise children? Why/Why not?
- Do you feel safe in this neighbourhood? Do the neighbours help each other?

Parents Employment:

- Are you currently employed? If so, tell me about your workday and work hours. For example, do you have flexibility in your workday?
- How easy is it for you to balance work and family responsibilities?
- If you are a stay-at-home parent, tell me about the decision making process in terms of you deciding to stay home. Were you also a stay-at-home parent before coming to Canada?
- Do you feel as though you can afford to spend what is necessary to provide reasonably well for your family? How has your ability to provide economically for your family been impacted since coming to Canada?

Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact either Jeanna Parsons Leigh at (***) ***-**** or by e-mail *****@ucalgary.ca. Alternatively, you can also contact Dr. Liza McCoy at (***) ***-**** or by e-mail at *****@ucalgary.ca. For general concerns not directly related to the interview or the questionnaire, feel free to contact Dr. Anne Gauthier via e-mail (*****@ucalgary.ca), who is overseeing this study.

Thank you very much for volunteering your time.

Sincerely,

Appendix C: Interview Guide Immigration and Family Life INTERVIEW GUIDE

Sept 15, 2011

*Note: HAVE THE PARTICIPANT SIGN **TWO COPIES** OF THE CONSENT FORM. ALSO MENTION THAT SHE OR HE CAN CHOOSE **NOT TO ANSWER ANY OF THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS***

Warm up

Family demographic information: Married (how long)? Children (how many/how old?)
Country/City of Origin? Education/Employment prior to immigrating?

Can you tell m a bit about what family life was like for you before coming to Canada? →Flow of day-to-day life?

How did the idea of immigrating to Canada initially come about? Whose idea was it? What were the circumstances that led to the decision? Was it a difficult decision to make?

What kind/sources of information did you have about life in Canada before you came?

→**Transition to talk about daily routine and family life in Canada**

1. Describe what your family life has been like since coming to Canada

-What does a typical weekday look like for your family?

PROBES: Details of day, morning routine, who brings kids ~~to school, after-school care~~ arrangements, flexibility of work schedule, extra-curricular activities, homework (supervision arrangements, involvement) monitoring, family meals (Are there any? Who prepares them?)

If applicable, probe about the partner's involvement if this information is not provided. Also, ask about the partner's work hours and flexibility (e.g. standard workday? shift work? flexible schedule?).

2. Are there grandparents or other family members who help out? How about others in your neighborhood? (family friendly neighborhood?)

3. How satisfied are you with the current organization of your family life?

-Is there anything you would change about it? Tell me about any time of the day that is particularly stressful for you. How about times that are particularly pleasant?

4. What have been some of the positive aspects of the transition of coming to Canada for you and your family?

-What have been some of the difficult aspects of this transition?

Work/Family Balance:

5. Are you currently employed? Actively looking for employment?

-Tell me about your typical work day and hours. For example, do you have flexibility in your day? Who is the main caregiver for your child(ren)?

6. How easy is it for you to balance work and family responsibilities?

IF Employed

-What are some of the things that your employer could do to make it easier for you to balance your work and family responsibilities?

-If you could change your work and family responsibilities what would you change? Why?

-How does your job affect your family life? More specifically, does anything about your job affect the way that you are raising your children?

IF stay-at-home parent

-Tell me about the decision making process in terms of you deciding to stay at home. Were you also a stay-at-home parent before coming to Canada?

7. Did either you or your partner stay at home after any of your children were born? Why or why not? Discuss the decision making process.

-Did you get any support from your employer/government/support network during this time?

-Is your partner currently employed/actively looking for work/stay-at-home parent? Discuss.

-If you are not currently employed discuss any plans you have for re-entering the labour force.

8. How do you perceive your role as a parent? How has this changed since immigrating to Canada?

-Describe your level of involvement in your children's lives pre/post migration

-What are some of the major similarities and differences in terms of how you parent?

-Discuss parenting values

Children's Schooling

9. Tell me more about your child's school: which school does he/she attend?

- What grade is your child in?
- How does he/she get to school?
- Is it a neighbourhood school? Private?
- Describe significant interactions you've had with your child's teacher.
- Do you feel welcome as a parent in their school?

10. How did you go about choosing this particular school for your child?

- If you could change your child's school, would you? Why/Why not?

11. Tell me about your child's academic life.

- What are your child's grades like?
- Are there any specific academic issues?
- Behavioural issues?
- If there are concerns, how have you been dealing with them?

11. How far do you expect your child to go in terms of his/her education?

- Do you expect to get any help from grandparents or other family members to help provide for their education?

Child's Extra Curricular Activities

12. How do you choose the activities you put your child in?

- Do you feel that these kinds of activities are important for children? What do you think he/she gets out of them?
- Do you put a limit on the number of activities your child is involved in? If so, why?
- Are their activities offered through the school or through a private organization?

Child's Future

13. What do you wish/hope that your child will achieve in the future?

- How are you helping your child achieve that vision of success?
- Are there activities or things your child is doing now that you think will help them be successful in the future? Are there activities that you'd like to see your child participate in that they aren't currently doing? Why/Why not

14. What worries you most about your child's future?

- Would this be different for a son vs. a daughter?

15. What risks do you think your child may be facing in Canada that could jeopardize their success in the future?

- Why do these risks worry you?
- Do you think these risks face all children equally?
- Are there things you are doing to help your child avoid these risks?
- How do the risks your child s facing in Canada compare to what they faced in your country of origin?

→Let's turn now to the final section of the interview.

Financial Situation, Expenses, and Standard of Living

16. Tell me about your financial situation and meeting basic family needs.

- How has your ability to provide for your family been affected since coming to Canada?
- Did you feel more financially secure before coming?

17. Do you feel as though you can afford to spend what is necessary to provide reasonably well for your family?

- If no, what needs do they have that you are unable to afford?
- Do you have to adapt your expectations regarding what your children should have to fit with your financial situation?
- Do you have to adapt how you parent (values, practices etc) due to financial constraints?

18. Do you fear that financial and/or time constraints may negatively affect your family in the future? What will you need to cut in your budget?

- Discuss sense of job security.

CONCLUSION

Finally, I have just a few questions about your sense of your family's well-being.

19. Do you think that families like yours get a fair break in the amount of support that you get from the government? Tell me more about that. What do you think the government could do better?

-What, if anything, might be changed to improve your family's situation?

-What do you see for your family over the next five years?

20. Is there anything that I have missed that you think would help to explain what life is like for families like yours?

Appendix D: Talking Points for Short Presentation to Prospective Participants

Good morning everyone,

My name is Jeanna Parsons Leigh and I am a PhD candidate in the department of sociology at the University of Calgary. I recently received ethics approval from the university to undertake dissertation research exploring how immigrant families are faring in Calgary today and what their day-to-day life is like. Specifically, I'm interested in how the process of coming to Canada has affected the daily lives of immigrant family members. Of interest are topics such as what family life was like in your country of origin (and things you may be trying to do the same or different as a family in Calgary), your children's education and extra-curricular activities, your hopes and worries regarding your family's future, and your experiences of financial planning and employment.

The main purpose of speaking with you today is to inquire about whether you may be interested in participating in this very important research. Specifically, I'm hoping to interview anyone who came to Canada as a skilled worker in the last six years and has at least one dependent child living in their home.

If you meet these criteria and are interested in participating further, you would meet with me for a 60-90 minute interview at a location and time of your choosing. Interviews will be conversational, offering you will have the opportunity to share the joys and struggles of your family's daily life in ways that are meaningful to you. I would like to stress that any information you share with me will be kept confidential. You will also have the opportunity to select a pseudonym to be used in the place of your real name and other identifying information you share (e.g. children and spouse's name etc) will also be changed in transcripts and papers.

It is my hope that this will be an enjoyable experience for you and I will do whatever I can to facilitate that. If you're interested in participating or in learning more, please write your name, email address and/or phone number on the sheet that I will soon be passing around and I will contact you promptly.

Thank you!

Appendix E: Recruitment Flyer



Immigration and Family Life: How is Your Family Faring?

Researchers at the University of Calgary are looking for people who have immigrated to Canada as skilled workers, and who have at least one child, to participate in a study that gives you the opportunity to share the joys and struggles of your family's daily life.

We are interested in the well-being of immigrant families today, especially how parents balance parenting responsibilities, financial concerns, and plans for their children's future while transitioning to life in a new country. The participation of families like yours is crucial, as your thoughts on issues such as education, financial planning, and children's extra-curricular activities could help schools and community organizations with program enhancement and development opportunities for immigrant family members.

If you are interested in participating further please contact Jeanna Parsons Leigh at @ucalgary.ca for more information.



Appendix F: Recruitment Email

Hello,

My name is Jeanna Parsons Leigh and I am a PhD candidate in the department of Sociology at the University of Calgary. I am currently completing a research study with a focus on exploring the family life experiences of people who have immigrated to Canada in the last six years in the skilled worker category and who have at least one child. I would like to take this opportunity to tell you about my research project in the hopes that you might consider participating in a 60-90 minute interview.

My research broadly explores how immigrant families are faring in Calgary today and what their day-to-day life is like. More specifically, I am interested in exploring the various ways in which the process of coming to Canada has affected the daily lives of immigrant family members. Of interest are topics such as kids' schooling and activities, parenting strategies, financial planning and employment. Participants in this research are given the opportunity to share the joys and struggles of their family's daily life in an open dialog setting, and all information is kept completely confidential (pseudonyms are used in place of participants actual names and names of children, places of work, etc. will be changed).

It is my hope that these interviews will be a mutually beneficial experience and I will do my best to facilitate this. Please feel free to get in touch with me at your earliest convenience to set up an interview appointment. I can be reached via Email at ***** or by telephone: *** *** *** (home) *** *** ***** (cell). Interviews can be set around your schedule and in a place that is convenient for you. An honorarium of \$20.00 cash will also be paid to each participant upon interview completion.

I look forward to hearing from you soon!

Jeanna

--

Jeanna Parsons Leigh
PhD Candidate
Department of Sociology
University of Calgary
2500 University Drive NW
Calgary, AB
T2N 1N4



Appendix G: Consent Form CONSENT FORM

Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email:

Principal investigators:

Jeanna Parsons Leigh, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Arts, Department of Sociology, *****@ucalgary.ca

Dr. Anne H. Gauthier, Associate Professor, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Sociology,
*****@ucalgary.ca

Dr. Shelley Pacholok, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of British Columbia Okanagan,
*****@ubc.ca

Title of Project:

Families in the Middle: A Cross National Study of Parenting and Family Life in Canada and the United States

Sponsor:

Canada Research Chair Fund, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

Purpose of the Study:

The focus of the research is to uncover the daily realities of Canadian families. Your participation will help us understand how families organize their time as well as the challenges they face.

What Will I Be Asked To Do?

Your participation in this study involves taking part in an interview scheduled to last around 60-90 minutes. Your participation is voluntary. You may refuse to participate altogether, you may refuse to answer specific questions, or you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. At the end of the interview you will be asked to indicate if you wish to be interviewed again in the future if the research team decides to do follow-ups. Participation in a future follow-up is also voluntary.

What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?

[Type text]

Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to provide basic demographic information such as your age, marital status and educational level as well as some information about your standard of living. This information will remain confidential.

For research purpose, we would like to audio-tape your interview (this would ensure greater accuracy of the written transcript of the conversation). You can however refuse to do so without any negative consequence to you. Please put a check mark on the corresponding line that grants me your permission to:

I grant permission to be audio taped:

Yes: ____ No: ____

Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?

The risks involved in participating in this study are no different than those encountered in everyday life. There are no direct benefits to participating in this study apart from contributing to scientific knowledge.

What Happens to the Information I Provide?

Participation is completely voluntary and confidential. Although disclosure of your identity is a possible risk, every precaution will be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of any records generated by this research. No one except the principal investigators and the research team will be allowed to listen to the interview audio file. The audio files will be saved on a secured password protected computer only accessible by the researcher and the research team. They will be deleted three years after the completion of the study. The anonymized data will be kept indefinitely to allow for future research (where the term 'anonymized' data refers to the written transcript of the interview stripped of any personal identifier such as name and street address).

Who will have access to the data?

The data collected in this project will be shared only with the members of the research team (listed below). Note also that an anonymized form of the data may be used by graduate student researchers or by other researchers in the future, either in tandem with the current research team or independent of it, for their own research and analysis purposes.

Jeanna Parsons Leigh, student, Department of sociology, University of Calgary

Jamie Budd, student, Department of sociology, University of Calgary

Tara Snape, student, Department of sociology, University of British Columbia Okanagan

Laura Napolitano, student, Department of sociology, University of Pennsylvania

Sigrid Luhr, student, Department of sociology, University of Pennsylvania

Ninon Lalonde, student, Department of sociology, Université de Montréal

Amie Mclean, student, Department of Sociology, Simon Fraser University

Roberta Riversen, Associate Professor, School of Social Policy & Practice, University of Pennsylvania

Liza McCoy, Associate Professor, Department of sociology, University of Calgary

Frank F. Furstenberg, Full professor, Department of sociology, University of Pennsylvania

Signatures (written consent)

Your signature on this form indicates that you 1) understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) agree to participate as a research subject.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name: (please print) _____

Participant's Signature _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Name: (please print) _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

*Dr. Anne H. Gauthier,
Department of Sociology /Faculty of Arts
Telephone: *** ***, email: *****@ucalgary.ca*

Or

*Dr. Liza McCoy
Department of Sociology/Faculty of Arts
Telephone: *** ***, email: *****@ucalgary.ca*

If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact the Senior Ethics Resource Officer, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at (403) *** ***, email *****@ucalgary.ca.

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.