6 The problem of 'human capital': Gender, place and immigrant household strategies of reskilling in Vancouver

Gillian Creese, Isabel Dyck and Arlene Tiger McLaren

6.1 Introduction

During the past few decades, immigration policies across Europe have become more restrictive, with family-related migration as the most accessible and feasible mode to enter a country (on marriage migration in the Netherlands see Suksomboon this volume). In her chapter on Switzerland, Riaño (this volume) notes that the ratio of family-related immigration to labour immigration is high due to the fact that the government has traditionally controlled the latter more than the former. In contrast, as a largely immigrant-receiving country, Canada has increasingly developed an economic discourse that is highly restrictive in privileging the skilled economic immigrant over other immigrants seeking permanent residency. In 2006, Canada accepted 55 per cent of immigrants as economic class (primarily made up of skilled workers), 28 per cent as family class and 13 per cent as protected persons (refugees). The primary aim of the selection process is to admit skilled workers whose human capital will ensure they are flexible and self-sufficient and thereby ready to immediately contribute to the nation's economic goals. Such idealised immigrants are allowed to bring 'dependent' family members with them – spouses (or common-law partners) and dependent children – under strict eligibility conditions (Li 2003, 2004).[1] In 2006, 44,163 skilled workers admitted as principal applicants were accompanied by 61,786 dependants. The majority (70 per cent) of primary applicants were men; 30 per cent were women (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2007), indicating that the selection process is highly gendered.

In common with Europe (see e.g. all this volume Banfi & Boccagni; Bonizzoni, Evergeti & Ryan; Fleischer; Gonzalez-Ferrer), migration decisions to Canada are rarely individual but instead are primarily family and community strategies. Yet, the human capital discourse underlying Canada's selection process renders invisible the family members who accompany the principal immigrant and her or his relationship to social and economic outcomes. Canada's immigration policies and programmes give little recognition of how families contribute to integration and, indeed, tend to portray families as 'burdens' on the state and unworthy of support

(Arat-Koc 1999; McLaren & Black 2005). If mentioned at all, immigrant families are frequently constructed as 'problems' to be effectively managed through state policies. In many national contexts (see also all this volume Van Walsum on the Netherlands; Grillo on the United Kingdom; Riaño on Switzerland), these 'problems' are interpreted through cultural practices said to be incompatible with national norms. Such discourses surface in Canada from time to time. More commonly, however, economic discourses define family members, including wives, as 'unproductive' and hence undesirable immigrants (this negative view also exists in the European context, as noted in González-Ferrer this volume). In giving preference to the economic class, Canadian immigration policy reflects neo-liberal ideology that emphasises economic self-sufficiency as a measure of an immigrant's worth, reduces notions of citizenship and citizens' rights to economic obligations and correspondingly problematises immigrant families (Abu-Laban 1998).

In this chapter we focus on immigrant families where the main applicant entered Canada through the skilled worker programme to examine how 'human capital' is enacted and the conditions under which it may be developed and deployed. We examine the process of enacting human capital by drawing on longitudinal, qualitative data from our five-year study, which included recent immigrants from a variety of source countries. Our previous work has shown how the flexibility of the household unit, and its constituent members, enables immigrants to adopt responsive strategies to changing circumstances over time. Rather than a burden, we have argued, immigrant households may be a central lynchpin to successful integration. We found that gender was implicated in household strategies and the construction of flexibility, especially in the case of women who sustained the daily livelihood of family members who enter and exit a complex array of workplaces and training programmes as they seek to integrate socially and economically in Canada (Creese et al. 2008). Our work supports that of Buzar, Ogden and Hall (2005: 424) who have noted the integral part played by a negotiation of gender roles in a household in producing flexible 'family and employment patterns in the macro economy' (see also all this volume Bonizzoni; Gonzalez-Ferrer; Varrel).

Here we further develop our work to investigate how members of migrating households engage with the local labour market, schools or other community services. Since Canadian employers usually do not recognise the 'human capital' that migrants bring with them, the processes of acquiring new, and transforming pre-existing, cultural and social capital into eventual economic returns are complex and multifaceted. Drawing on Bourdieu (1986), the chapter explores how household members develop and deploy multiple, interrelated forms of capital in the quest for economic security and social integration. This process suggests

a far more complicated and uneven translation of educational credentials, work experience and skills into jobs than human capital discourse acknowledges. We demonstrate that household strategies of 'human capital' can usefully be examined through attention to women's deployment of diverse forms of capital (including emotional capital) as integral to the successful integration of other family members.

The chapter begins with an introduction to human capital discourse in relation to immigrant family households and to other forms of capital explored in the chapter. The study methods are described before we analyse how various forms of capital come into play within the household, how they are related to gender and how they may be transformed into economic capital.

6.2 Human capital discourse and the immigrant family household

Human capital theory is the dominant theoretical approach to the analysis of labour markets in global capitalism (McBride 2000). The core of human capital theory postulates that: 'higher levels of skill and knowledge, achieved through education and training, lead to higher productivity which is expressed in higher earnings for those who possess them' (McBride 2000: 161). Firmly rooted in the neo-liberal paradigm, human capital theory rests on value-laden, Western-market definitions of workers' skills and credentials as formally obtained, institutionally recognised and instrumental to the goal of economic self-sufficiency. The theory envisages human capital as a neutral, linear process whereby individual effort to acquire skills and credentials are appropriately rewarded in the labour market. The individual in this theory is disembodied: unmarked by race, gender, social or cultural capital, or other power relations that shape processes of recognition and economic rewards for 'human capital'.

Canada's point system and its human capital criteria involve an ideological and discursive process in the evaluation of skill for defining who may immigrate, who may migrate under strict conditions or who may not enter the country at all (Colins in Depatie-Pelletier 2008; McLaren & Dyck 2004). In creating a hierarchy of skills, the economic theory of human capital provides a rationale for distinct and unequal entry points of immigrants and migrants into Canada. Differential rankings of occupations and skills are highly correlated with gender and nationality, resulting in discrimination against women and workers from specific developing countries. Since workers (especially women) from the global South are less likely to fulfil 'human capital' criteria of skill than workers from the global North, their entry into Canada is usually temporary; they are allowed to work in the country for a specific employer during a specified period,

after which time they must 'go back home'. Because lower-skilled migrants and their families lack valuable skills, according to human capital discourse, they are unsuitable for landed immigration status.

Within this discursive framework, the Canadian immigration system selects 'skilled' immigrants as permanent residents on the basis of increasingly restrictive 'human capital' criteria. Before 2001, the point system awarded a maximum of 31 points out of 70 to the possession of education credentials and to official language fluency (English or French). The new Immigration and Refugee Protection Act increased points for these two categories to 49 out of 75 to assess the suitability of an applicant for entry to Canada as a landed immigrant (Li 2003). This selection process stresses the embodiment of skills and characteristics that are anticipated to equip the 'independent' immigrant with the flexibility demanded by the labour market.

The point system puts into play neo-liberal principles that reduce human beings to autonomous economic actors and that assume the distribution of work (e.g. level of pay, degree of employment) is simply the result of 'human capital', not of social inequalities such as class, gender and race (McBride 2000). Yet due to gender inequalities, women, generally have fewer opportunities than men to meet the skills criteria (Arat-Koc 1999) and are less likely to enter Canada as principal applicants in the economic class (see also Suksomboon this volume on the notion of 'gendered geographies of power'). The point system discounts the work and skills of those who have other experiences in non-dominant cultures, social classes, age groups and genders. This immigration process obscures the many contributions that non-selected immigrants make in the paid workforce, the home and the community (McLaren & Dyck 2002). For example, immigrant families often initially rely on the labour force participation of wives, categorised as dependants, and only later on that of husbands as well (Ng 1992). Human capital theory, underlying the points system, does not adequately recognise that migration is a family rather than an individual strategy and, as such, the domestic sphere is closely interwoven with labour market activities. Immigration policies and practices that fail to acknowledge the household as integral to the economic, social and cultural workings of neo-liberal economies (Rankin 2003) are unable to account for the dynamic development of 'human capital' in the pursuit of social and economic integration.

In addition, Canadian government policies, based on human capital theory, assume portability of skills: that educational credentials, skills and work experience transfer across national boundaries in a linear, predictable and equitable fashion. The debate in Canada fails to acknowledge the non-portability of skills. In reality, however, skilled immigrants from countries outside of Great Britain and its former 'white dominions' routinely find that the skills, educational credentials and work experience they

bring with them into Canada are not recognised as human capital, having little or no value in the Canadian labour market. As a result, these immigrants are forced to develop diverse strategies of reskilling in an effort to acquire and deploy qualities that will be recognised in the local context. In contrast to neo-liberal human capital discourse that makes these processes invisible, we suggest employing Bourdieu's notion of multiple interrelated capitals to explain the complex, non-linear, gendered, racialised and place-based transformation of various forms of capital into economic security in the context of immigration to Canada.

6.3 Family household strategies and the cultivation of multiple capitals

While the Canadian immigration system selects skilled workers primarily on the basis of their 'human capital', extensive literature suggests that most immigrants are unable to transfer educational credentials, skills and prior work experience readily into local labour markets. (see also Bonizzoni this volume for similar downward occupational and social mobility in the case of family reunification migrants).[2] Since the 1990s, immigrants are entering an increasingly polarised, 'flexible' and precarious labour market (Creese 2007; Galabuzi 2006). Newcomers not only have to negotiate a difficult labour market, many are also involved with schooling at various stages, both for themselves and their children, in pursuit of education and skills that translate into some form of human capital with local currency.

Bourdieu's theory of capitals provides a dynamic account, sensitive to local context, of how situated groups employ, generate and reproduce resources. Scholars have begun to explore how Bourdieu's ideas help explain the process of immigrant resettlement that involves the social devaluation of skills and knowledge within specific hierarchies. Studies show how various types of capitals are evaluated differently in one context than another and how migrants experience the differences acutely. For example, economic capital has a different purchasing power depending on context, and so do the 'exchange rates' of social and cultural capital (Kelly & Lusis 2006). In contrast to the narrow concept of human capital in neoliberal theory that refers to individual skills and qualifications, Bourdieu's theory incorporates these qualities into a broader category of cultural capital, including the embodied 'resources' of gender, class and 'race'. His theory helps to explain how a system of social reproduction of power relations is perpetuated and rendered 'objective' (Kelly & Lusis 2006) and how, for example, upper segments of the labour market exclude highly skilled immigrants (Bauder 2003, 2005).

Bourdieu (1986) identifies three main forms of capital: cultural (modes of thinking, dispositions, tastes, etc.), social (comprising social

networks) and economic (forms of wealth). In addition, symbolic capital is 'manifested in individual prestige and personal qualities, such as authority and charisma' (Reay 2004: 58). For Bourdieu, forms of capital are relational and cannot be understood in isolation from one another. They interact and together constitute advantage and disadvantage as they are closely tied to differentiations in social class and the ability of classes to attain and maintain valued material and social resources.

While Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction has shown the importance of families in the maintenance of class structure, his work also lends itself to a more dynamic analysis in the case of immigration. In negotiating with the labour market and other spheres such as the volunteer sector, community services and schools, our research suggests immigrant family households are involved in a complex process of developing and transforming multiple capitals – and, as we show, gender is integral to these dynamics.

Feminist scholars have critiqued Bourdieu's inadequate attention to gender (and lack of attention to race) and extended his approach to consider how women's care and support activities constitute forms of capital implicated in constructing, maintaining and transforming broader social inequalities. In extending Bourdieu's concept of capitals, for example, Reay (1998) has shown how the gendered practices of mothers involved with their children's schooling generate cultural capital. The middle-class mothers in her study invested heavily in time and mental and emotional labour in their children's education, but mothers with fewer resources and less social power were unable to generate cultural capital to the same extent. More recently, Reay (2004) has developed the gendered notion of 'emotional capital', initially identified by Nowotny (in Reay 2004), suggesting that emotional capital usefully complements the primary triad of cultural, social and economic capital laid out in Bourdieu's theory of practice. Reay (2004: 61) draws on Allatt's (1993) definition of emotional capital as 'emotionally valued assets and skills, love and affection, expenditure of time, attention, care and concern'. Reay's notion of emotional capital more fully explicates Bourdieu's observations on women's predominance in maintaining relationships through the 'practical and symbolic work which generates devotion, generosity and solidarity' (Reay 2004: 57). Adding to this analysis, Gillies (2006) shows how the 'invisible' emotional labour of working-class mothers' involvement in their children's schooling generates emotional capital in keeping their children safe, soothing experiences of school failure and challenging injustice in the context of poverty, vulnerability and failure.

Bourdieu's interest in the possibility of transforming one type of capital to another is key to understanding social inequality and social change. These complex transformations involve the differential value of distinct forms of capital, for example, in the conversion of economic capital (i.e.

wealth) into cultural capital (a university degree at a prestigious institution), or transforming cultural capital into social capital (useful social networks) or economic capital (good jobs) (Bourdieu 1986). In the case of cultural capital, Reay notes that the family is the main transmitter, but its practices take different forms and are highly gendered. While there is not a hard boundary between activities associated with the accumulation and transformation of forms of capital, our own work echoes that of other feminist scholars who note the predominance of women in child-care and the 'emotion work' of maintaining family relationships of various kinds (Corman & Luxton 2007; Kershaw 2005). The women in our study indicated such an emotional and time-consuming investment in their children, supporting them, for example, in their schoolwork, and as they settled into a new school system and made friends. Our study suggests husbands also drew on the emotional capital of their wives, who supported them as they struggled to find work and to re-establish a valued self and social identity following deskilling and downward social mobility.

In this chapter we study the processes by which families enact various forms of cultural, social, economic, symbolic and emotional capital as they negotiate the local labour market. In studying families over time, we can begin to outline the dynamic processes of developing and deploying different forms of capital in an attempt to acquire attributes recognised as valuable 'human capital' in the local labour market, while specifying how these activities are enacted as part of the process of migration that contributes to social and economic integration. In particular, we explore how women's care and support activities at home and in the community and their labour market participation were significant in shaping the pathways of families as they sought economic and social integration.

6.4 Research methods

This chapter draws on interviews from a five-year longitudinal interview study (1997-2002) with members of 25 immigrant households from a variety of source countries, living in two neighbourhoods of Greater Vancouver, a major destination in Canada for immigrants. In East Vancouver, an inner city neighbourhood and traditional reception area for new immigrants, the fourteen households interviewed were from Bolivia, El Salvador, Hong Kong, India, Peru, the Philippines, Somalia, Uganda and Vietnam. In Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam and Port Moody, an outer suburban region known as the Tri-Cities, we interviewed members of eleven households from Brazil, Hong Kong, India, Iran, Korea, Japan, Poland and the former Yugoslavia. Various issues related to immigrant settlement were raised in the interviews, including housing, employment, family and community life and children's schooling. Here we focus on

data related to reskilling and gaining access to employment although, as we discuss, these activities cannot readily be separated out from domestic and community life. Indeed, as we will argue, a range of activities are involved in the development of multiple capitals implicated in the enactment of the 'human capital' of neo-liberal theory.

While our analysis is based on the whole sample, we focus on two households, one in each neighbourhood. Both households consisted of a husband, wife and children. Not all families in our study lived as nuclear households; some were single-parent or extended family households. But these two households are typical of families in the sample coming to Canada with children – or hoping to have children – with the intention of making Canada their home. The Marcos family,[3] who had emigrated from the Philippines, had two preschool-age children and were living in rented accommodation in East Vancouver at the beginning of the study period. The Khalili family from Iran, who had two teenage children, were living in the Tri-Cities area, also in a rented apartment. These two households allow us to explore how gender is implicated in the activation of multiple capitals. The presence of children in the household also allows us to explore the deployment of emotional capital within household settlement strategies – given that emotional capital has been particularly associated with women's emotional resources in the domestic sphere and the raising of children (Reay 2004). From different source countries, with the men of the household both having similar professional qualifications and arriving in the year of the first interview, the two households also provided us with the opportunity to observe similarities and variations in strategies that could give us insight into the complexity of capital transformation processes. The interview team interviewed both adults in the Marcos household, Margerete and Jose, and in the Khalili family, Mania, her husband, Majid, and their teenage daughter and son. All had strong English-speaking skills. Jose Marcos was a professional engineer, while Margarete had experience as a senior clerical worker in the Philippines though did not have a post-secondary education. Majid was also a professional engineer, his degree completed in the US and his previous employment included work experience in Europe and Iran. Mania had been a high school English teacher in Iran, and had a university degree. Over the period of the study, their children attended a local high school with a strong academic reputation.

6.5 Family households, strategies of reskilling and the gendering of capitals

Bourdieu's theory of capitals was directed towards understanding the generation and maintenance of class distinctions primarily through processes of reproduction. Immigration of skilled workers, on the other hand,

potentially threatens the accumulation and stability of forms of capitals; in fact, immigration research in Canada suggests that downward occupational mobility is common.[4] Our research shows the declines or 'interruptions' of many forms of capital throughout the process of immigration. Arriving in Canada with a history of a particular manifestation of capitals – recognised in the points system of immigration policy – neither main applicant in our two households found the 'human capital' developed in their countries of origin transferable across national boundaries. Although the educational credentials of the main applicant of each family were necessary for entering Canada through the points system, Canadian employers appeared unwilling to acknowledge the value of their degrees or prior work experience. In both households, adult members found their capitals devalued and, additionally over time, the economic capital they brought with them depleted. Efforts to get prior qualifications and experience recognised within Canada floundered in the face of professional associations' protectionism and employer indifference. The only jobs available were in low-wage sectors. Other multiple strategies were followed, often simultaneously, to reskill. Like members of other households in this study, all adults in the two households discussed here pursued one or more educational avenues at different points in time, including: 1) courses designed to introduce immigrants to local labour expectations and employment practices, such as writing resumes and interviewing strategies; 2) English-as-a-second-language (ESL) courses for those who needed to improve English fluency; and (3) occupationally specific courses and diploma programmes that might provide specific 'Canadian credentials'.

As a response to devaluation, such reskilling was a priority for the adult members of the households, but this was not just a matter of gaining another qualification. They soon learned that employment practices in Canada require specific forms of cultural capital they did not possess. They had to develop new forms of capital recognisable in the local context in order to find work in the Vancouver area. As argued elsewhere, employers' demands for 'Canadian work experience' and 'Canadian educational credentials' are forms of cultural capital central to negotiating the labour market (Bauder 2003, 2005). Other forms of more embodied cultural capital were also important, including linguistic capital (English fluency with an 'appropriate' accent),[5] and knowledge of local employment practices (interview protocols, 'appropriate' dress, demeanour, assertiveness, etc.). In addition, social capital, in the form of social networks, was critical to locating potential jobs and other forms of support; economic capital provided the much-needed resources to enable household members to reskill and retool; and emotional capital was essential to providing emotional support as well as the personal resilience, energy and fortitude that made it possible to undertake the long and difficult process of reskilling. For most households, then, the early years of settlement were devoted to

devising strategies to develop these multiple forms of capital that could be transformed into locally valued forms of 'human capital' recognised by Canadian employers.

Reskilling strategies were also dependent on the development and deployment of economic capital in relation to the job situation of other family members, collective financial security, child-care needs and career goals. In households with less economic capital than others, family members had to alternate reskilling opportunities to ensure adequate income to support the household. The continued financial viability of the household was always a prerequisite for any individual member to pursue further education. Pursuing reskilling strategies was made complicated by the often precarious nature and low wages of the employment available to immigrants, making it more difficult to develop the economic capital necessary for reskilling. Individual strategies of reskilling were always intertwined with broader household goals. Furthermore, the generation and deployment of various forms of capital was gendered in specific ways.

We turn now to the Marcos and the Khalili households to explore in more detail this gender dimension of the interweaving of capitals. We pay particular attention to emotional capital to evaluate its usefulness in broadening understanding of women's contribution to immigrant settlement processes. In addition, we suggest, the dichotomy between private and public spheres, long critiqued by feminist scholars (Barrett 1980; Pupo & Duffy 2007), is further challenged through exploring the workings of emotional capital in relation to the labour market. Emotional capital provided supportive underpinnings in the quest to achieve economic capital, as well as access to social capital that might lead to job opportunities. A longitudinal perspective allows us to examine the process of capital generation and transformation, including the interruptions and depletions as well as attempts to rebuild different forms of capital. Our focus is on the two women of the households, Margarete Marcos and Mania Khalili as they engage particularly with the 'invisible' activities of capital generation.

6.6 The Marcos and the Khalili households: Capital accumulations and transformations

A promise of a better future

Like other families with children, both the Marcos and the Khalili families expressed their decision to emigrate in terms of creating a better life for their children (this primary aim, amongst a complex of factors affecting the decision to migrate, is also noted by Banfi and Boccagni in this volume). They saw Canada as a country where children were likely to have a 'good life', one that included a high standard of education, employment oppor-

tunities and a secure political environment. Political and economic insecurities in the Philippines and Iran, respectively, had motivated the decision to leave their home countries, while the points system held forth a promise that the two men would be welcome workers in a land of opportunity. In their home countries, Jose and Majid had symbolic capital, manifested in the prestige of professional qualifications, good jobs and with English language skills that signalled their potential ability to cross international borders. This capital was tightly interwoven with their cultural and economic capital, both being further enhanced by their wives' abilities and employment. Margarete Marcos was in senior clerical work, although without a post-secondary education, and Mania Khalili held a university degree and was employed as an English language teacher.

Both households would have been in good positions to transmit cultural capital to their children – critical to their success as adults – had the economic and political climate of their countries been more favourable. Finding they were unable to transform their cultural capital into economic capital upon arriving in Canada, and without established social networks to help gain access to either of these, the households also lost the symbolic capital they had previously enjoyed in the public sphere of paid employment and community standing. Unable to invest in housing, both families lived in rented accommodation – the Marcos family in a neighbourhood well used to the arrival of non-white immigrants, and the Khalili family in a modest apartment block in an outer, primarily white, family-oriented suburban area. Neither household complained of racism, though neither were they mixing with the white 'host' population when first interviewed. Margarete and Jose had sought out other immigrants from the Philippines, particularly through a church. Meanwhile, Mania, like other women in the study who were living in the Tri-Cities, found making friends in the community difficult. With only a rudimentary knowledge of Canada, gained in the process of applying to immigrate and from images of North American life portrayed on television, both women could not readily transmit to their children cultural capital applicable to Canadian cultural, social and educational institutions.

On the other hand, the emotional labour of care, concern, attention, love, affection and expenditure of time was something Margarete and Mania did bestow in their localised daily practices. As noted, such emotional labour tends to be highly gendered, and primarily the province of women, particularly in societies with strong public and private divisions (Corman & Luxton 2005; Kershaw 2005). Although emotional labour is most often noted in the relationship between mothers and their children, the jointly devised reskilling and employment strategies between husbands and wives suggest the women had a considerable 'burden' of emotional labour in supporting both children and husbands. This was particularly so in Mania's case where teenaged children were settling into

an unfamiliar school system and Majid had little success in matching his skills to his employment and few avenues to reskill. In the next section we elaborate on this interweaving of emotional capital with other capitals, as the families re-oriented their approaches to generating economic capital.

6.6.1 Employment strategies, children's futures and women's deployment and generation of capitals

In the absence of established social networks, both households set about forging social relationships soon after arrival. These initial networks (a form of social capital) were critical to the first jobs that Jose and Majid found. They also depended on the social geography of the city. Jose and Margarete in East Vancouver actively sought new contacts and friendships in an area where there was some institutional depth of the Filipino community, in the form of a Filipino church, as well as local services and shops run by other immigrants from the Philippines. Jose found his early jobs, unrelated to engineering, through notices in shops and via a friend. In the case of Majid and Mania, they were settling in a neighbourhood without a concentration of Iranians, but, from the beginning, were still linked in with other immigrants from Iran. A relative of Majid's found them rented accommodation in an apartment block where there lived other Iranian professionals, who in a common pattern for recent immigrants, had also not found work in their fields. Through this network and in response to being unable to find engineering work, Majid took a cashier job at a local gas station, working with other Iranians who had been engineers in Iran. In both Jose's and Majid's cases, this locally based social capital, in the form of new, co-ethnic networks, gained them access only to low-skill, low-wage sector work. Neither did these jobs give them the experience that local employers wanted for engineering work, failing to transform their Filipino and Iranian cultural capital into the Canadian labour market. Without reskilling, precarious, low-wage labour was hard to escape. So long as most links in their networks were in a similar situation – underemployed foreign-trained professionals – the social capital of these networks could not be transformed into more desired forms of economic capital. Even after gaining experience in the gas station over time, Majid was unsuccessful in his bid to become a manager; the reason cited was that he had not been in Canada long enough.

Both men sought to reskill by taking an Autocad course, a software program with some parallel features to engineering. Jose went further in taking a British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) diploma programme to become a civil engineer technologist. In these ways, both Jose and Majid generated new forms of cultural capital, attaining locally recognised educational credentials and knowledge of labour market

practices. However, neither reskilled to their previous level of professional training. How this newly acquired cultural capital was transformed into economic capital is discussed in a later section; here we look at how reskilling was enabled and Margerete's and Mania's participation in this process of cultural capital generation.

Like their husbands, Margerete and Mania experienced downward occupational mobility. Margerete worked in a series of temporary data entry jobs below her clerical training while Jose reskilled. Mania had wanted to reskill herself, but was denied the opportunity of retraining as a teacher since she did not have a complete set of education certificates going back to high school and was unable to retrieve them from Iran. This also proved to be a barrier to her second choice of pursuing social work training. In both households, the husbands' reskilling and search for career opportunities was put first. While such a choice involves a number of factors likely to vary within families, in the practice of such choices we see women's generation and deployment of cultural, social and emotional capital as important dimensions of support in their husbands' search for jobs commensurate to their training. While the men had lost their symbolic capital in the public sphere, we could see the family household strategies, perhaps, as preserving something of a husband's symbolic capital (authority, prestige) in the domestic sphere.

In the Marcos family, soon after their arrival, Jose's low wages precipitated Margarete's finding a job. The intertwining of jobs, to secure sufficient income (economic capital) for Jose's reskilling and to provide for the family, required flexible care arrangements. The family obtained subsidised child-care, which made it possible for both parents to work – although in low-wage sectors of employment. This subsidy was withdrawn, however, as their income increased. Furthermore, their insecure jobs led to periods of unemployment. In one period of unemployment, when she was able to benefit from employment insurance payments, Margarete stayed at home for a year with their children and Jose attended further education full time. Here we have an instance of the indirect transformation of one spouse's emotional capital into the other spouse's cultural capital, with the potential of this cultural capital being transformed into economic capital. When both were employed again, they used a babysitter until grandparents visited for a year and took over the emotional and practical labour of child-care, thus allowing Jose and Margarete to build their economic capital.

The Khalili's strategy was different, though contained similar elements of capital generation and transformation. Majid maintained his employment at the gas station and Mania took primary responsibility of the care and concern for the children, particularly in the case of the daughter whom she would accompany to the library after regular school hours, promoting her daughter's education and local cultural capital. In the absence of an

extended family network, Mania bore the brunt of providing emotional and social support for her husband and children. Her children, in the final interview, acknowledged their mother as the primary support for the family in the first years of settlement. She helped them adjust to school and provided emotional support to her husband throughout the disappointments he had encountered. They had talked of returning to Iran, but for the sake of their children's futures and in the context of Iran's political climate, had decided to stay for at least the forseeable future. Mania was also developing social and cultural capital through work in the community by taking her capacity of 'care and concern' for others into community work. Emotional capital, closely tied to social capital (Nowotny 1981) and generally associated with family and friendships, we suggest, may also be deployed in the 'public' sphere in the domain of volunteer work. This example indicates a transformation of emotional capital into cultural capital. Mania's emotional labour of 'mothering', together with her developing cultural capital about how 'to go on' in Canada, was directly used in working with more recent Iranian women immigrants in a community programme. Here Mania was able to use her Iranian place-based cultural capital in her work with the women, work that also constituted the valuable local cultural capital of 'Canadian experience'. She used her English skills in translation work for the women, and her teaching experience to give them English lessons. Through these sets of work skills, including labour that involved care and concern for others, we see Mania interweaving and generating cultural, social and emotional capital and, in doing this, transforming them into economic capital to help provide for the family household. Interestingly, Mania's growing social and cultural capital was deployed in helping new Iranian immigrants to the Tri-Cities; the Khalili household was now one with cultural capital to bestow – providing information on resources, schools and other avenues that might be helpful in the first years of settlement.

In the next section, we see how these emerging capitals were consolidated, together with their variable utility across gender and generation.

6.6.2 Consolidations, changing course and gender

By the fifth year of the study, both the Marcos and the Khalili families had generated social, cultural and economic capital. Emotional capital was implicated in how these capitals interwove and could be transformed. However, it is crucial to note that in the processes of capital transformations, wider economic, political and social relations were also at play and set a context of constraint or enablement. None of the adults had been able to transfer their pre-immigration skill levels to the Canadian labour market, nor was their symbolic capital in the public sphere restored in the context of wider Canadian society. The reskilling strategies enacted by

household members were shaped by a precarious and deeply polarised labour market as well as the gendered nature of emotional capital in reskilling processes. The limitations of local social networks in providing convertible social capital was, in some instances, ameliorated by a wider international social network set within international migration processes in a global context. In the cases of both the Marcos and the Khalili families, familial and professional networks in the United States had become part of the process of attempts to acquire the economic capital that would enable the two families to make a new home that was also socially viable from their perspectives. In the potential strategy of crossing another international border, social capital took on heightened value.

In the final interview of the study, we heard that both the Marcos and the Khalili families were contemplating moves to the US after continued lack of success in finding employment in Greater Vancouver that was commensurate to their training and skills. Relatives in California had been urging Jose to come for some time, and two years after the last interview the family moved there. Their newly acquired Canadian citizenship gave them access to a work visa in the US, and Jose found employment in his field of civil engineering. Margerete had been less keen to move, as she had developed considerable social and cultural capital in the local context and a sense of belonging through friendship networks.

Majid and Mania had also considered a move to California, again spurred on by relatives and friends. Three years after arriving in Canada, Majid actively pursued a job there, but difficulties in getting a visa in a timely manner and health problems of the anticipated employer led to the loss of this opportunity. Majid continued having difficulty getting a good job in Vancouver, although by the end of the study he had found an engineering-related job through his Autocad training. This, however, was still at a much lower level than his former job in Iran. Like Margerete, Mania had been reluctant to move to the US. Although Mania was bored after having enjoyed her successful career in Iran, she had built up local friendships, mainly with other immigrants, and co-ethnic friendships in other neighbourhoods, and felt reasonably content with their neighbourhood and children's schools. She was contributing to the community, as well as providing emotional support for her family. She was the key source of emotional and social capital, as well as a contributor of economic capital for the household, and it was the development of these interrelated multiple capitals that provided the basis for the children to do well. Yet, from the perspective of 'human capital' theory, Mania's contributions are considered marginal at best and her husband's contributions in the labour market take precedence.

As with other family households in the study, children's futures were an important component of family strategies. Much of the emotional capital that women develop and deploy is connected to helping other

family members, particularly children, develop their own cultural capital that can then be transformed into economic capital in the labour market. The Marcos children were still pre-school age or just starting school by the end of the study, but the good education and employment opportunities were about to come to fruition for the Khalili children. Certainly, the household's economic goals were intertwined with their children's achievements in Canada. The son, coming to Canada at a young age, was enjoying school and had made many friends. The daughter, more home-oriented, was achieving well at school and had various opportunities she could pursue. Children raised and educated in Canada would never face the barriers their parents did, with employment being linked to demands for a Canadian education and Canadian experience. The children had acquired cultural capital with local value and recognition. Majid was struck by the contrast between his children's opportunities in Canada and his own, lamenting the difficulty he was still experiencing in securing a job that would bring him social standing. Like most families in the study, Majid and Mania were resigned to the fact that the better life they sought in emigrating to Canada, if attainable, would rest with their children.

Both Margarete and Mania had worked hard to develop social capital that would be useful not only to themselves, but for other members of their families. Like many other women in the study, each had made friends and found work through settlement service NGOs, community centres and their local schools. In building and maintaining community relationships (social capital), either in the local geographical community or broader ethnic-based community, the women also could find important 'inside' information (or cultural capital) and job leads for their spouses. Further, the type of employment some women engaged in, such as with non-profit organisations serving other immigrants, in itself is associated with attributes of 'care and concern'. Such work experience provided the women with the 'Canadian experience' valued by employers, and was hence a direct transformation of emotional capital into economic capital. The women's accounts of their family and work experiences since being in Canada showed that gender was a significant dimension of emotional capital intimately tied to a family's struggle for economic and social 'success' in Canada. Women's 'emotionally laden' skills and assets were the basis of freeing other members of the family unit to develop their social and cultural capital (especially in the case of the children) as well as economic capital (for example, taking less desirable employment to enable a spouse's reskilling and job search). It was difficult for parents, for instance, to retrain or upgrade their credentials when they needed income for housing, living costs, tuition fees and child-care costs. These were choices households made about whose cultural capital they could afford to invest in at a given time. Due to uphill battles in finding secure employment, parents tended to forgo opportunities in Canada for themselves in

order to provide for their children. The mothers, in particular, bore the brunt of diminished opportunities, both in the household and outside it. They were generally more responsible for raising the children, with all the emotional supports and development of social capital that entailed, and accommodated their husbands' employment strategies while placing their own reskilling on hold. In sum, strategies of settlement and reskilling were enacted in gendered ways that made women central actors in these processes and yet made them largely invisible in 'human capital' narratives and the public policies they engender.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter problematises human capital discourses that underlie Canadian immigration policies and privilege 'skilled' independent immigrants while casting other family members as a burden. Firmly rooted in a neo-liberal paradigm of autonomous self-sufficient actors, human capital discourse ignores how immigrants are embedded in family households that provide the supports for individuals to negotiate a precarious labour market and forge new spaces of belonging. Human capital theory is place-, race- and gender-blind: adherents assume that educational credentials, skills and work experience transfer across national boundaries in a predictable fashion unmarked by larger power relations within the labour market and broader society. As our research illustrates, however, immigrants to Canada routinely find the skills, educational credentials and work experience developed in their countries of origin – the 'human capital' on which their immigration applications were accepted – has little or no value in the Canadian labour market.

This chapter argues that feminist revisions of Bourdieu's theory of interrelated multiple capitals provide a more promising theoretical point of departure to explain the gap between immigrants' 'human capital' on paper and in the local Vancouver context. It also sheds light on the complex, multifaceted and gendered processes of reskilling and mutual support that family households engage in. The family households in our study worked hard to develop new cultural capital – doing volunteer work or co-op placements to gain 'Canadian experience' and following a variety of courses and programmes to become oriented with local employment practices and attain Canadian educational credentials – critical to gaining a foothold in the Vancouver labour market. Family households forged new social networks in the local context, depending on specific neighbourhoods, developing new forms of social capital critical to job-seeking and processes of belonging in Vancouver, while drawing on pre-existing networks at the same time. In all family households in our study, and exemplified in the two families highlighted in this chapter, mutual caring,

support and solidarity – or the development and deployment of emotional capital – was central to settlement and to job-seeking, specifically. Household members developed long-term family strategies for reskilling that took into account the overall financial needs of the household, employment options of various individual members and child-care needs, and made choices about whose cultural capital could be invested in at specific points in time. Hence, a broad range of cultural, social and emotional capitals were developed and enacted by family households that were transformed over time into varying levels of economic capital, economic capital that, in turn, underpinned options for further reskilling.

The gendered nature of these processes constitutes a key finding of our study. The unfolding of gendered household strategies and the component transformations of capital reveals how the domestic sphere is closely interwoven with labour market activities. Far from viewing family members attached to independent immigrants as economically 'unproductive' and 'problematic', we need to acknowledge that migration is an interdependent family strategy in which household members develop family-based practices and goals (see also Gonzalez-Ferrer this volume). The reshaping of the meaning of the family and constituent roles and responsibilities are similarly noted in Bonizzoni and Varrel (this volume). As we have illustrated, gender dynamics within households and overall economic resources shape decisions about who will seek educational opportunities and of what kind. Except where family economic capital was more plentiful, wives routinely placed their reskilling aspirations as secondary to their husbands'. In struggling against labour market obstacles, the women typically did not follow their own career opportunities. Rather, the women took part-time or volunteer work to provide the flexible labour that supported the social and economic goals of the family unit. Moreover, the development of social and emotional capital within family households was clearly gendered, with women forging broader community-based social networks, often linked to their children's schooling and other community activities, both paid and volunteer, that aided themselves and other family members in job searches and developing a sense of belonging. Women's emotional capital was perhaps even more central to sustaining family households through the long and difficult processes of reskilling, always with an eye to situating their children's and husbands' future prospects more than their own. As wives and mothers, they were the most active in providing the emotional investment that held their households together and developed solidarity as a unit. In our study, the emotional work of women in relation to making 'home' for the family unit in this way can be seen as integral to the building and transformation of other forms of capitals – cultural, economic and social. Women as flexible labour in the household, combining work in the home and in building new friendships and neighbourhood relationships in the local community with

paid and volunteer employment, were accumulating social and cultural capital that had the potential to be transformed into economic capital. Women are therefore central to the economic and social integration of other family members (including husbands who are typically earmarked as the independent immigrant) in ways that often simultaneously reinforced their own position of marginalisation.

As a theory of multiple interrelated capitals that collectively transform and/or reproduce relations of privilege and social inequality, we suggest that extending Bourdieu's approach to the context of immigration in Canada is particularly useful. Although he did not address issues of immigration or racialisation, per se, our study shows that using Bourdieu to problematise human capital discourse highlights how place-based notions of 'human capital' are central to reproducing social inequality in Canada. Systemic preferences for 'made in Canada' cultural capital is an effective way of reproducing economic privilege for the Canadian-born in a period of high levels of immigration and rapid changes in ethnic and racialised diversity in urban centres; in 2006, for example, the population of Greater Vancouver was 40 per cent immigrant and nearly 42 per cent of residents identified as people of colour (Statistics Canada 2007, 2008). The differential recognition of educational credentials, skills and experience as legitimate 'human capital' in this context should be understood as part of a process of 'othering' new immigrants; it puts newcomers 'in their place' at the bottom of the labour market where they must begin the process of developing their cultural, social and economic capital all over again in an effort to find better jobs more commensurate with their prior training. By contrast, to examine Canadian immigration through the lens of 'human capital' is to make these processes of racialisation, gendering and power invisible. Moreover, it mistakenly asserts that the problems related to poor economic integration of immigrants are related to inadequacies of the immigrants themselves and to the 'unproductive' family members they bring with them.

Notes

1 For example, children must meet several conditions, including being 'under age 22 and unmarried or not in a common-law relationship' (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2007: 50). Parents of the migrating family and other family members are unable to accompany the applicant and can only be sponsored later under onerous and cumbersome conditions to join the family (McLaren & Black 2005).

2 Much of this research has been conducted by researchers at Statistics Canada (e.g. Aydemir & Skuterud 2004; Frenette & Morisette 2005; Ostrovsky 2008; Picot & Hou 2003; Picot & Sweetman 2005). The underemployment of skilled immigrants has become so widely reported that it recently became a federal election issue that

led to national commitment to establish a 'foreign-credentialing office' (see Creese & Wiebe 2009).

3 All names are pseudonyms.

4 For examples of such research, see references given in note 2.

5 Bourdieu (1977) defines 'linguistic capital' as an embodied form of cultural capital that rests less on traditional notions of fluency and grammar than on power – i.e. the 'right' to speak and be heard. Accents, in particular, are an 'index of authority' that shapes the ability to be heard. Elsewhere, we have discussed how 'local accents' remain a form of cultural capital enabled in the labour market that most immigrants find difficult, if not impossible, to acquire. Indeed, in some contexts – for example, among black immigrants from Commonwealth Africa – embodied accents are a proxy for race and discrimination against 'African English accents' can be a form of systemic racism (Creese 2007; Creese & Wiebe 2009).

References

Abu-Laban, Y. (1998), 'Welcome/STAY OUT: The contradictions of Canadian integration and immigration policies at the millennium', *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 30 (3): 190-211.

Allatt, P. (1993), 'Becoming privileged: The role of family processes', in I. Bates & G. Riseborough (eds.), Youth and inequality, 139-159. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Arat-Koc, S. (1999), 'Neo-liberalism, state restructuring and immigration: changes in Canadian policies in the 1990s', *Journal of Canadian Studies* 34 (2): 31-56.

Aydemir, A. & M. Skuterud (2004), 'Explaining the deteriorating entry earnings of Canada's immigrant cohorts: 1966-2000', Statistics Canada Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series, catalogue no. 11F0019MIE, no. 225, May.

Barrett, M. (1980), *Women's oppression today: Problems in Marxist feminist analysis*. London: Verso.

Bauder, H. (2005), 'Habitus, rules of the labour market and employment strategies of immigrants in Vancouver, Canada', *Social and Cultural Geography* 6 (1): 81-97.

Bauder, H. (2003), '"Brain abuse" or the devaluation of immigrant labour in Canada', *Antipode* 35 (4): 699-717.

Bourdieu, P. (1986), 'The forms of capital', in J.G. Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, 241-258 . New York: Greenwood Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1977), 'The economics of linguistic exchanges', *Social Science Information* 16 (6): 645-668.

Buzar, S., P.E. Ogden & R. Hall (2005), 'Households matter: The quiet demography of urban transformation', *Progress in Human Geography* 29 (4): 413-436.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2007), 'Annual report to parliament on immigration'. Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada. Cat. no. Ci1-2007.

Corman, J. & M. Luxton (2007),'Social reproduction and the changing dynamics of unpaid household and caregiving work', in V. Shalla & W. Clement (eds.), *Work and labour in tumultuous times: Critical perspectives*, 262-288. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Creese, G. (2007), 'Racialising work/reproducing white privilege', in V. Shalla & W. Clement (eds.), *Work and labour in tumultuous times: Critical perspectives*, 190-224.

Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
Creese, G., I. Dyck & A.T. McLaren (2008), 'The 'flexible' immigrant? Human capital discourse, the family household and labour market strategies', *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 9 (2): 269-288.
Creese, G. & B. Wiebe (2009), '"Survival employment": Gender and deskilling among African immigrants in Canada', *International Migration* DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-2435.2009.00531.x.
Depatie-Pelletier, E. (2008), 'Under legal practices similar to slavery according to the UN convention: Canada's "non white" "temporary" foreign workers in "low-skilled" occupations.' Tenth National Metropolis Conference, Halifax, 5 April 2008.
Frenette, M. & R. Morissette (2005), 'Will they ever converge? Earnings of immigrant and Canadian-born workers over the last two decades', *International Migration Review* 39 (1): 228-258.
Galabuzi, G.E. (2006), *Canada's economic apartheid: The social exclusion of racialised groups in the new century*. Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press.
Gillies, V. (2006), 'Working-class mothers and school life: Exploring the role of emotional capita', *Gender and Education* 18 (3): 281-293.
Kelly, P. & T. Lusis (2006) 'Migration and the transnational habitus: Evidence from Canada and the Philippines', *Environment and Planning* 38: 831-847.
Kershaw, P. (2005), *Carefair: Rethinking the rights and responsibilities of citizenship*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.
Li, P. (2004), 'The place of immigrants: Politics of difference in territorial and social space', *Canadian Diversity* 3 (2): 23-28.
Li, P. (2003), *Destination Canada: Immigration debates and issues*. Don Mills: Oxford University Press.
McBride, S. (2000), 'Policy from what? Neoliberal and human-capital theoretical foundations of recent Canadian labour-market policy', in M. Burke, C. Mowers & J. Shields (eds.), *Restructuring and resistance: Canadian public policy in an age of global capitalism*, 159-177. Halifax: Fernwood.
McLaren, A.T. & T.L. Black (2005), 'Family class and immigration in Canada: implications for the study of sponsored elderly women', Vancouver Centre of Excellence: Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis (RIIM) Working Paper Series no. 05-26.
McLaren, A.T. & I. Dyck (2004), 'Mothering, human capital, and the "ideal immigrant"', *Women's Studies International Forum* 27 (1): 41-53.
McLaren, A.T. & I. Dyck (2002), '"I don't feel quite competent here": Immigrant mothers' involvement with schooling', Vancouver Centre of Excellence, Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis (RIIM) Working Paper Series no. 02-12.
Ng, R. (1992), 'Managing female immigration: A case of institutional sexism and racism', *Canadian Woman Studies* 12 (3): 20-23.
Nowotny, H. (1981), 'Women in public life in Austria', in C. Fuchs Epstein & R. Laub Coser (eds.), *Access to power: cross-national studies of women and elites*, 178-192. London: George Allen & Unwin.
Ostrovsky, Y. (2008), 'Earnings inequality and earnings instability of immigrants in Canada', Statistics Canada Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series, catalogue no. 11F0019MIE, no. 309, April.
Picot, G. & F. Hou (2003), 'The rise on low income rates among immigrants in Canada', Statistics Canada Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series, catalogue no. 11F0019MIE, no. 198, June.

Picot, G. & A. Sweetman (2005), 'The deteriorating economic welfare of immigrants and possible causes: Update 2005', Statistics Canada Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series, catalogue no. 11F0019MIE, no. 262, June.

Pupo, N. & A. Duffy (2007), 'Blurring the distinction between public and private spheres: The commodification of household work – gender, class, community and global dimensions', in V. Shalla & W. Clement (eds.), *Work and labour in tumultuous times: Critical perspectives*, 289-325. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Rankin, K.N. (2003), 'Anthropologies and geographies of globalization', *Progress in Human Geography* 27 (6): 708-734.

Reay, D. (2004), 'Gendering Bourdieu's concept of capitals? Emotional capital, women and social class', in L. Adkins & B. Skeggs (eds.), *Feminism after Bourdieu*, 57-74. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Reay, D. (1998), 'Engendering social reproduction: Mothers in the educational marketplace', *British Journal of Education* 19 (2): 195-209.

Statistics Canada (2008), 'Canadian's ethnocultural mosaic, 2006 Census', catalogue no. 97-562-X.

Statistics Canada (2007), 'Immigration in Canada: A portrait of the foreign-born population, 2006 Census', catalogue no. 97-557-XIE.