NETWORKING CARE – IMMIGRANT WOMEN'S ACCESS TO CHILDCARE

by

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Master of Arts
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This MRP highlights some of the challenges experienced by a small non-probability sample of newcomer women with children when trying to access childcare. It begins with an overview of feminist theory in relation to social reproduction, as well as social capital theory. It outlines the current situation of childcare in Canada, including an emphasis on the gaps in service. I highlight research that has been conducted on various forms of informal childcare networks that immigrant women form. My own research focuses on the social networks immigrant women forge and to what extent forms of child minding have helped newcomer women participate in Canadian society. This project includes accounts of five mothers (status and non-status) as they struggle to find adequate, affordable childcare. In-depth qualitative interviews are used to examine the challenges, ingenuity and resourcefulness of immigrant women when it comes to accessing childcare in a new setting. My research found that although referred to as "weak-ties", non-kin are an important source of information and childcare support for newcomer women.

Key Words: Immigrant, women, childcare, weak ties, fictive-kin, reciprocity

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I. Introduction

Quality, affordable childcare is an important factor in ensuring women's participation in society, be it through entering the workforce, attending school, upgrading language skills. It is also an extremely important factor for immigrant women during the process of migration and settlement in a new country (Schnur, 1995; Dominguez and Watkins, 2003; Hagan, 1998). Without proper childcare arrangements immigrant women may feel compelled to stay home and out of the public arena. As a result of economic hardship and poverty among new immigrants, many are forced into low wage, precarious and often temporary employment (Gabriel, 2006; Kofman, 2004). Given that poverty is high among new immigrants and that there has also been a feminization of precarious labour, what may also occur is a role reversal, whereby newcomer women enter low-wage employment and men will stay home with the children (Ali and Kilbride, 2004).

Over the past decade or so, a growing number of women have been entering the paid labour force. In 1995, for example, more than half of all women with children under the age of six worked outside the home (Schnur, 1995, p.2); and from 1975 to 1993, the labour force participation of women rose by 71 percent (Grandea, 1996). For women with children under the age of 16, the participation rate increased from 54.5 to 69.6 percent (Grandea, 1996). This trend continues today, particularly among women with children under six, as can be seen in a recent Statistics Canada study: in 1999, their participation rate was 67.6 percent, it increased to 71.8 percent by 2005 (Roy, 2006, p.21).

During the same period, Canada has experienced a growth in the number of immigrants to Canada. In the past few years there has been a significant change in the immigrant source countries. The ten most common source countries were China, India,

Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Iran, the Russian Federation, South Korea and Jamaica (CIC, 2005, p.7).

There has also been a concentration of immigrants landing in urban areas, the highest concentration in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal. For the purpose of this MRP, I will focus specifically on Toronto. The 2001 Census found that there were 2,033,000 immigrants living in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CIC, 2005). Toronto's immigrant population has been steadily increasing over the past 15 years, and has grown faster than the Canadian-born population; immigrants account for two-thirds of Toronto's total population growth between 1986 and 2001 (CIC, 2005).

The increase in immigration has been in line with the global increase of the feminization of migration, whereby women are over-represented in subordinate, less valued, low paying jobs, primarily in the care industry (Gabriel, 2006; Kofman, 2004). Many of the above mentioned newcomers are women. For example, in 2005, 42,300 more women than men arrived among the 1,078,500 recent immigrants in Toronto (CIC, 2005, p.13). Of the recent female newcomers, many are of childbearing years. In 2001, nearly half of recent immigrants living in Toronto were between the ages of 25 to 33; with over 420,000 more women in this age group than men (CIC, 2005).

It is also important to note the racialization of these migration patterns. The number of "women is particularly high among recent immigrants from the Philippines (13,000 more women than men out of 73,900 recent immigrants) and Jamaica (6,700 more women than men out of 39,500 recent immigrants)" (CIC, 2005, p.13), as many of these women enter on temporary visas, often through the live-in caregiver program (CIC, 2005; Kofman, 2004). The feminization of migration and the increase in precarious,

temporary, part-time labour is often filled by racialized, immigrant women (Gabriel, 2006; Kofman, 2004). Others remain unemployed because of challenges they experience when juggling school, and/or paid work and family responsibilities, especially child care.

Newcomer women who cannot find paid work because of challenges with finding childcare can feel especially isolated and segregated from mainstream society (Hagan, 1998; Schnur,1995; Dominguez and Watkins, 2003; Briggs, 2002), and limiting gender roles may become entrenched in their daily lives (Salaff and Greve, 2004; Luxton, 2006). Childcare is a necessity for immigrant women prior to and during migration, as well as during the settlement stage. In order to settle and participate in the Canadian labour market, immigrant women with children must be able to access child care and feel comfortable with their arrangements. I am interested in looking at immigrant women's strong and weak social capital networks, specifically at family and friends, and how they assist newcomer mothers with childcare, as well as to evaluate how these networks are used to help immigrant women participate in a new society.

Childcare arrangements have not gone unnoticed by academics and have been theorized by both feminist scholars (Luxton, 2006; Braedley, 2006; Dobrowolsky and Jenson, 2004; Goldstein and Ross, 1989; Friendly, 2006a; Friendly, 2006b; Jenson, 2000; Prentice, 1999 and 2001), as well as Social Capital theorists (Bourdieu, 1986; Briggs, 2002; Boyd, 1989; Burrawoy, 1991; Hagan, 1998; Putnam, 1993 and 2000). Both feminist and social capital schools of thought provide a theoretical framework through which to analyse immigrant women's access to child care, as well as different forms of networks that emerge in order to compensate for inaccessible, publicly funded childcare.

It is also important to evaluate the limited and constrained choices that parents have when it comes to childcare options in Toronto. The lack of government support for childcare, the high costs, long waiting lists for spaces and subsidies, low quality care, as well as overworked and underpaid staff are just some of the factors that make licensed childcare in Toronto inaccessible. I will contextualize the current childcare situation in Ontario by elaborating on the gaps in services, on past and present government cutbacks, as well as on the supports needed to have quality, affordable, accessible childcare system, that is accessible particularly to newcomer women.

This MRP begins with a literature review that provides an overview of feminist theory in relation to social reproduction, as well as social capital theory. This literature review is essential in presenting the theoretical concepts that frame immigrant women's access to childcare, as well as the possible reasons for this. I then outline the current situation of childcare in Canada, including an emphasis on the gaps in service and where Canada is ranked internationally on its commitment to early childhood education. Furthermore, I will highlight the research that has been conducted thus far on the various forms of informal childcare networks that immigrant women form, including help from kin and non-kin. In each of the aforementioned categories, I will highlight the advantages, as well as challenges, that can arise from each of these networks and demonstrate their importance to the successful settlement of newcomer women to Canada.

This MRP highlights some of the challenges experienced by a small non-probability sample of newcomer women with children. First, I explore what social networks immigrant women forge. This is followed by an examination of the extent that

these forms of childcare have helped newcomer women participate in Canadian society. This project includes accounts of five newcomer mothers (status and non-status) as they struggle to find adequate, affordable childcare. In-depth qualitative interviews are used to examine the challenges, ingenuity and resourcefulness of immigrant women when it comes to accessing childcare in a new setting, and theoretical analysis will help explore and explain the role of both strong and weak ties of social capital networks. I conclude with suggestions on how to improve the situation for newcomer women with children.

II. Theoretical Framework & Literature Review

i. Social Reproduction and Caregiving

Social reproduction refers to "the processes involved in maintaining and reproducing people, specifically the labouring population, and their labour power on a daily and generational basis" (Bezanson and Luxton, 2006, p.3). Social reproduction can operate at two levels, the first is in a larger, more abstract notion that focuses on the reproduction of systems and structures through the reproduction and maintenance of a labouring class. The second is on a micro level that affects daily lives and tasks, including gender roles, caring and childcare, as well as assumptions of mothering. The two levels are intertwined, I will focus on the micro level which can include biological reproduction (having children), but also day to day tasks such as cooking dinner, mending clothing, and general household duties. These activities, be they waged or unwaged, are preformed largely by women and are done in addition to their paid employment outside of the home; they are also not limited to, but include caring for children (Braedley, 2006; Jenson, 2001).

Within social reproduction there is a need to examine the blurring of women's roles in the public and private realms as a primary cause of gender inequality in society. This gendered inequality stems from the essentialized notion that women are natural caregivers, and that caring is something that is engrained in a woman from birth. "The fact that real, but unpaid, labour is hidden under the emotive rhetoric of "caring" is part of the designation of women as natural caregivers" (Ungerson, 1998, pg.3). This results in childcare being equated with women's work, which is undervalued and unacknowledged, and may be often, poorly paid or unpaid.

Feminist Political Economy evaluates social reproduction from the family-market-state nexus (Benzanson and Luxton, 2006; Arat-Koc, 2006; Braedly, 2006). It stresses the interrelatedness of these factors, and focuses on how the actions of the market and the state directly impact families and individuals. This can be seen through the on-going tension between women's economic independence, their traditional roles as unpaid caregivers and the social policies that influence both (Ungerson, 1998). This tension is illustrated by the constant blurring of the public and the private sphere. The continuous cutbacks to the welfare state have significant impacts on the public responsibility for childcare. Caring has been moved out of the public realm and relegated into the private sphere, where women are expected to shoulder the burden of caring on their own, as well as to balance caring (private sphere) with paid employment (public sphere)[1]. This shift has been blurred by the emotive discourse of childcare, where "childcare" and "caring" are treated as synonymous, when in fact they are distinct. As such, social reproduction raises questions and debates about the role of women's domestic and economic labour within a capitalist society (Bezanson and Luxton, 2006, p. 3).

The interconnectedness of the family-market-state nexus can be seen in the current context of caring and the lack of publicly funded childcare. It is directly linked to the ongoing changes and cutbacks being made to the welfare state. At the "ideological level, the state promotes, through a range of policies, an ideal of family life, in which women care and nurture others" (Ungerson, 1998, p.3). These ideologies are based on the aforementioned assumption that women are natural caregivers and that caring is a

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[1] There has also been a recent increase in transnational mothering, where women and children are separated and living in different countries, if not continents – a discussion of which is beyond the scope of this research – for more details see Arat-Koc (2006), Bernhard et al. (2005), Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997), Parrenas (2005).

naturally engrained tendency in women. The following section will highlight the problems with the childcare system at the federal, provincial and municipal level and demonstrate how the state's actions and ideologies directly impact women's lives.

ii. Childcare and the Cost of Caring

> *"Children's early care and education [is] a shared responsibility between the family and the state, and not just for the family alone to bear" (OECD 2001, p. 40; Jenson and Mahon, 2002, p.4).*

Childcare is important in ensuring that women are able to participate in the labour market or to attend schooling. The lack of an affordable, accessible, publicly run childcare program either keeps women within the domestic realm or leaves them in search of childcare arrangements within the informal sector or their social networks (Dominguez, 2003, p.114). Canada is often perceived to be a strong, stable welfare state, however when it comes to childcare this is not the case. Social reproduction and "care," specifically childcare, are perceived to be private issues and the responsibility of the family (Friendly, 2006a). This divide between public and private roles and responsibilities has been further compounded by on-going cutbacks to the welfare state, which has also been felt by recent immigrants (Richmond and Shields, 2004; Lim et al., 2005).

In 2004, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) released a report where it was noted that Canadian childcare policies are not well developed and appear to be in the initial stages development (2004; Friendly 2006b). On an international scale, Canada does not "measure up" to other developed countries and has a long list of problems and gaps in services that must be improved in order for the childcare system to move forward (Friendly, 2006b). Among some of the problems

observed by the OECD were that there has been no expansion of the system in the past ten years and less than 20 percent of children from birth to 6 years find a place in a regulated childcare centre (Friendly 2006b). Other problems listed included: extremely long waiting lists; a lack of quality care; low per child public expenditure; market set costs; an inefficient subsidy system that is not being accessed by parents; as well as a generally under-funded sector (Friendly, 2006b).

Despite the acknowledgement of these problems and an awareness of the importance of early childhood education, there has been little action taken on the part of governments to improve the current situation. To date, there has yet to be a government that has developed and implemented a national childcare plan. The 1990s were especially difficult for social programs which were subject to severe neo-liberal cutbacks. It appears that childcare is always "one of the earliest casualties of a rapidly restructuring Canadian welfare state" (Prentice, 1999, p.137).

Women and childcare arrangements in Ontario have also been subjected to neo-liberal cutbacks, especially following the election of the Mike Harris Conservative government in 1995. Of all the provincial governments in Canada, the Ontario Conservative government made the most severe cuts to the welfare state (White, 1997, p.7). By withdrawing its level of public support, the state placed an increased burden on private households and families, which are expected to fill the void in services created by cutbacks (Prentice, 1999). Given that women tend to be primary caregivers, and that women are generally responsible for everyday household operations, this increased burden will and has been more than likely be shouldered by women.

The provincial cutbacks were also felt in municipalities, where off-loading and cuts to transfer payments had heavy impacts at the local level. One of the first changes implemented by the provincial Conservatives was a 47 percent cut in municipal transfer payments from 1995 to 1997 (Tyyska, 2001). For the first time in history, cities were legally obligated to provide childcare in their regions and to cost-share the entire childcare budget and not just the subsidies (Tyyska, 2001; Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, 2001). The lack of provincial support and funding made municipalities search for ways to cut childcare costs by funding home care and closing municipal centres. "The erosion of this funding base doesn't bode well for regulated affordable, accessible high quality childcare or for the staff who provide it" (OCBBCC, 2001, Para. 7). It also negatively impacts low income, vulnerable families the most, which in turn "generally jeopardize[s] the well-being of women with children" (Tyyska, 2001, p.14; White 1997; Clark, 2002).

Following a period of cuts in spending, things appeared to be improving when the federal government and the provinces committed to and signed many new agreements relating to the improvement of the childcare system. These agreements outlined the government's commitment to early learning which was based on inclusion, affordability, accessibility, quality and parental choice (Albanese, 2007). They also signaled an acceptance of the fact that both "high quality early learning and childcare is the foundation for lifelong learning" (Friendly, 2006a, p.6-7)[2].

However these advances and agreements were short-lived, when in 2006, the federal Conservatives came to power. Under Stephen Harper, the newly elected minority

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[2] For more information on childcare accords and agreements, refer to Albanese (2007) and Friendly (2006a).

government replaced funding commitments to the provinces with their "Universal Childcare Benefit" (Albanese, 2007; Battle et al., 2006). The on-going lack of a concrete childcare plan is continuing today with the UCCB, which gives every family $100 a month ($1200/year) for each child under six years of age, and is taxable in the hands of the lower income parent or single parent (Government of Canada, 2007; CRRU, 2006; Battle, 2006). Given that the federal Canada Child Tax Benefit, the GST and provincial tax credits fall as income rises, the UCCB will result in a $390 annual reduction in existing benefits (Battle et al., 2006b).

The UCCB is supposed to give parents "choice in childcare" but this so-called "choice" and "support" in childcare remains unclear, as the average cost of daycare is about $50 a day, which the $100 a month does not come close to covering. Apart from the lack of affordability, there is also a shortage of daycare spaces for children; it is not unheard of for mothers to place their children on waiting list while, or even before they are pregnant. As a result of the extremely long waiting lists and the lack of daycare spaces, many parents are forced to enroll their children into substandard facilities, or into informal, unlicensed forms of care.

The aforementioned cutbacks and lack of state action have continued to shift the already limited public responsibility for childcare into the private sphere. Currently households and individuals are expected to bear the burden of social reproduction and caring for children, with no support, or at best limited support, from the state (Braedley, 2006; Friendly, 2006a; Jenson, 2000; White, 1997; Prentice, 1999 and 2001; Tyyska, 2001). When childcare is treated as solely a private family responsibility, women's equality and access to the labour force becomes compromised (Prentice, 1999; Tyyska,

2001). The lack of public daycare facilities, and the increasing reliance on informal networks of care, shifts the focus away from the state and into the private realm of the household, where caregiving is unregulated and often unpaid, unnoticed and devalued[3].

Given that social reproduction and caregiving is predominantly the responsibility of women, finding suitable forms of child-care becomes an additional hurdle that immigrant women face during the settlement process and even more difficult for non-status women. Prior to women being able to enter the labour market or attend school, care must be arranged for their children. If newcomer women are not aware of the complicated process needed to enrol children into daycare, how does this impact their ability to seek employment? Do traditional gender roles become reversed in the newcomer household? How does a woman's immigration status affect her ability to register her children in daycare, or her ability to take advantage of the limited benefits for mothers and children? Do newcomer women turn to kinship networks to help with childcare? What if they have no kin in Canada, do they turn to friends and neighbours? If so, how do these relationships form, what are the advantages, and what are the challenges? How does a reliance on informal, unlicensed childcare, relate to the government's commitment to quality care and early childhood education?

iii. Social Capital

Social capital is a highly explored area (Putnam 1993 & 2000; Bourdieu 1986; Briggs 2002; Burrawoy 1991), and can be evaluated at an individual level that focuses on relationships and social networks, as well as an aggregate level that deals with analyzing

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[3] For additional challenges with childcare, including the dominance of the English language in childcare centres, refer to Pacini-Ketchabaw and Almeida (2006).

neighbourhoods and organizations (Dominguez, p.112; Briggs 2002). As defined by Bourdieu, "social capital refers to positions and relationships in groupings and social networks, including memberships, network ties, and social relations that can serve to enhance an individual's access to opportunities, information, material resources, and social status" (Bourdieu 1986, p.242).

For the purpose of this project I will focus specifically on social capital at the individual level, which refers to the connections and supports systems among people and the reciprocity that can arise from them (Smith 2001). I will also focus on social networks which comprise a part social capital. Such networks provide an opportunity for people to act together more effectively and to pursue a common goal or a shared objective. It is generally accepted that during the process of migration and settlement, social networks are an invaluable resource to immigrants (Rose et al., 1998; Simich et al., 2004).

In migration literature, social networks refer primarily to family members, friends, neighbours and co-workers. They play an important role during all stages of the migration process and can reduce cost and stress that accompany immigration (Hagan 1998; Schnur, 1995; Dominguez and Watkins, 2003).

Social capital is made up of both strong ties and weak ties. Strong ties tend to be made up of kin, life long neighbours and intimate friends. Weak ties typically refer to relationships and connections outside of one's immediate family and circle of friends. Although they are called weak ties, Briggs (1998) points out that these ties are not necessarily weak and can benefit immigrants in many ways. It is also important to note

the fluidity of social networks and how they change over time. This will be discussed in further detail in a later section on fictive kin.

Strong social ties provide people with emotional support as well as with forms of instrumental help such as rides, small loans and a place to stay in an emergency or during the transitional period of migration (Briggs 1998; Dominguez and Watkins, 2003). Such strong ties can further ease the settlement process by helping immigrant families with childcare, housing referrals and by providing employment leads. These forms of relationships can build trust and group solidarity; however they can also have a negative impact on the settlement process, as well as lead to increased tensions within a family (Dominguez and Watkins, 2003). One of the questions that arises from this, which requires empirical verification, and which will be the focus of this research, is what role these ties play in the lives of immigrant women particularly as they seek affordable child care.

How are all of the multifaceted forms of social capital and social networks formulated? How do these networks help immigrant women settle and survive in their new locations? Do these relationships ultimately help newcomer women overcome challenges related to finding childcare in Toronto?

iv. Varying Social Networks – Kinship and Fictive Kin
a. Kinship

Social capital is used for the provision of scarce resources through membership in various networks. While more funding was being infused into early childhood education and care until 2006, the amounts were inadequate; spaces remain limited, waiting lists are

long and costs are high. Many newcomer women may need to turn to their social networks to accommodate their needs. These networks can be accommodating; however they require a high degree of trust, and only a few members of a social network can offer the specific type of support that caring for children entails (Salaff and Greve, 2004). As a result of the intricacy involved in arranging care for children, such as trust, compensation, hours worked, immigrant women may make use of more than one type of social network; including but not limited to kinship, fictive kin and institutional networks.

Child care networks can often be located within families and kinship relationships. A vast literature on immigrant kinship networks exists (Menjivar 1997; Dominguez and Watkins, 2003; Treas and Mazumdar, 2004; Schnur, 1995; Hagan 1998; Uttal, 1999). Kinship networks are defined as the social relationships within families that help newcomers with material and emotional support, as well as important settlement information upon arrival (Menjivar, 1997). Some scholars have argued that strong kinship ties are established and engrained at birth, and as such imply a set of expectations and obligations that are not easily broken (Salaff and Greve, 2004). Others contest such essentialized notions and believe that class and other socio-economic factors need to be considered. The latter point will be explored in greater detail in the following section.

Salaff and Greve's (2004) description of strong family bonds demonstrates a commitment by some newcomers to maintain their kinship networks. In their study they found that kin-related social networks "may be portable across the seas," despite long distances between them (p.151). Treas and Mazumdar (2004) demonstrate the significance of elderly family members in the role of kin-keeping and caregiving (Treas and Mazumdar, 2004 p.105). Be it through family sponsorship or seasonal migration

between residences, the commitment to kinship can be seen through such relationships, where elderly family members help their children settle into their new communities (Treas and Mazumdar, 2004). Making use of kinship networks for childcare also provides an opportunity to maintain cultural practices and values, including food and linguistic skills that are practiced within a certain family or ethnic group[4] (Uttal, 1999; Salaff and Greve, 2004).

Apart from the help of elderly kin and non-kin networks for childcare, many parents worked around each other's schedules in order manage caring for their children and their careers at the same time (Salaff and Greve, 2004; Ali and Kilbride, 2004). There is often a form of compromise that takes place between working parents that may include changing their career aspirations and goals or working towards them at a slower pace (Salaff and Greve, 2004). Even with the help from broad kinship networks, it was found that women's careers were commonly put on hold and more negatively affected than their husband's careers (Salaff and Greve, 2004). This may be a direct result of social reproduction and the fact that women are primarily responsible for the care of children and as such are also responsible for arranging childcare provisions.

Despite the multiple benefits of relying on kinship ties to help with settlement and childcare, there are also drawbacks. Dominguez and Watkins (2003) point out that although trust and support are important factors that help to ease a newcomer's settlement into a new location, they can "sometimes undermine social and economic mobility by...placing restrictions on individual freedom" (Dominguez and Watkins, p.113). They can also limit the type of interactions newcomers have with the outside community.

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[4] The importance of networks and support can also be illustrated by the Chinese community in Canada. In China, childcare is provided by a vast network of family, friends and institutional arrangements, with the family playing an important role (Salaff and Greve, 2004).

Communities with mature and established networks can assist with emotional and cultural support and provide vital information regarding housing and job opportunities (Menjivar 1997; Hagan 1998; Schnur, 1995; Dominguez and Watkins, 2003). Some research has shown that networks may perpetuate exclusion of immigrants from the dominant society by preventing members from establishing ties outside of their own ethnic group (Menjivar, 1997; Schnur,1995; Hagan, 1998). There are also instances where the expected outcomes of social networks have failed new immigrants (Menjivar, 1997; Dominguez and Watkins, 2003).

The kinship networks of immigrant groups vary from group to group, and are shaped by broader socio-economic contexts (Menjivar, 1997). It is often assumed that kinship networks form automatically, especially amongst newcomers; however some studies have demonstrated the contrary; they have shown that tensions can arise as a result of economic constraints, difficulties and varying class inequities/structures (Menjivar, 1997; Dominguez and Watkins, 2003).

Menjivar (1997) writes that "the physical and material conditions in the receiving context foster or hinder immigrant networks" (pg.2). This complements Bourdieu, who believes that social capital is a direct result of oppressive and hegemonic historical impacts on each individual community (Bourdieu, 1986; Arneil, 2006). In Menjivar's (1997) longitudinal study it was found that kinship networks among Salvadoreans did not always conform to what was traditionally accepted as a natural formation of kinship ties. In fact, during the process of resettlement, kinship networks among Salvadoreans often became weak and broke down (1997). For Salvadoreans this was the result of factors in

the receiving country, including poverty and marginalization; as well as trauma from 12 years of civil war which often resulted in family breakdowns (Menjivar, 1997, p.4).

Many migrants chose to move to a country such as Canada or the United States where they have many pre-established familial contacts. There is an expectation that they will either receive some form of assistance, or that the migrant cohort before them has been successfully incorporated into the new society, however this is not always the case (Menjivar, 1997).

When evaluating social capital networks is to ask how the many interwoven factors, such as gender and race relations, historical reception and treatment of immigrants, the economy, the characteristics of the receiving community can affect the strength of these relationships? Regardless of the problems that may arise, kinship may still be able to offer minor, yet vital support. Such supports include referrals to caregivers in the neighbourhood, and the provision of care for children in cases of emergencies, despite tensions that may be taking place between family members (Menjivar, 1997).

To avoid familial tensions and not to be an increased burden on family members, newcomers may turn to fictive kin (non-kin) networks for help. Other immigrants may be estranged from their kin and as such may turn to other networks to take advantage of what kinship ties may not be able to supply. Another reason for turning away from kinfolk networks is that they may impede or slow down the speed of the settlement and the integration process because they can prevent members from establishing ties outside of their immediate group (Menjivar, 1997).

b. Fictive Kin/Non-Kin

There are instances where immigrants enter a country with no previously established kinship networks and must form new social connections. Groups of women have described moving to a new country and leaving extended family networks behind (Dominguez and Watkins, 2003, p.120). Subsequently, they have formed friendship-based networks that have become a form of "fictive kin, which are close relationship ties that replicate many of the rights and obligations usually associated with family ties" (Dominguez and Watkins, 2003, p.120). These networks are generated on trust and solidarity, where members of the group will pool their resources to benefit those in the network.

Fictive kin networks can also serve as a point of extra-familial contact for newcomers and can help ease culture shock, isolation and communication difficulties. Many social networks, particularly when faced with economic constraints, are focused on maintaining a balanced level of reciprocity (Nelson, 2000; Stack, 1974; Albanese, 2007). Margaret Nelson's work (2000) is based on single mothers forming ties to assist one another with childcare, which is similar to Carol Stack's work (1974) that focused on low income, Black families in the United States and the use of informal networks to overcome the obstacles the faced as a result of poverty. Albanese's (2007) work on informal child care networks in Quebec also demonstrates the ways that mothers are able to organize the complex juggling of people and schedules in order to make their childcare arrangements possible. It is through such informal networks that people are able to overcome daily challenges and uncertainties through support that moves beyond reciprocity (Wellman and Wortley, 1990).

Newcomers to Canada who arrived without a pre-established community and were often separated from their families, have to rely on forming social networks to help in the settlement process (McGowen, 1999). Given this situation, immigrants are more likely to form reciprocal relationships for child care. Such networks can provide a satisfying form of child minding, as there is no cost involved, linguistic skills can be retained, and there is a mutual understanding of each other's situations.

Such childcare provisions are important for newcomers, as they lead to networking which can provide valuable information. They are also significant as they enable parents to be able to seek employment or schooling, to gain independence and participate in their new societies. By having access to culturally sensitive forms of child care, parents may be able to reduce some of their anxiety and stress, as well as have a caregiver that can act as a bridge between the newcomer family and the Canadian culture.

Reciprocal childcare exchanges often go beyond simply caring for children and fosters friendships between the care providers and the children's parents. The relationship can move outside of the realm of employment and on to a more personal level, where newcomers become acquainted with the neighbours who are outside of their ethnic community. Informal care providers may act as role models and as sources of information for newcomers. Providers who are established in a community and demonstrate that they are able to manage in both cultures, and can act as role models and mentors to immigrants parents, helping them to navigate and cope (Schnur, 1995). They can provide emotional support but also help connect new families to community service agencies, to family programs and activities, as well as can introduce them to other

neighbours and friends who can help them along the way (Schnur, 1995; Dominguez and Watkins, 2003).

Within these reciprocal ties there is also an ethno-cultural dimension. Siemiatycki et al. (2003), briefly demonstrate reciprocity across cultures in Toronto in the first half of the twentieth century between Italian and Jewish immigrants (Siemiatycki et al., 387). Jewish families would leave their children with their Italian neighbours in order to attend Saturday synagogue services, and would reciprocate by minding Italian children during Sunday morning mass (Siemiatycki et al., 387). These relationships contributed to cooperating immigrant communities (p.388).

In this case, there were advantages that arose from the varying ethno-cultural backgrounds of the caregivers. The immigrant children's interaction with others can aid in the acquisition of the English language, which will help with the transition into school and can also support the parents' efforts to learn English (Schnur, 1995).

There are also benefits if a family chooses to select a provider of the same ethno-cultural and linguistic background. These fictive kin relationships can also help maintain language and cultural traditions. It may also reduce stress and strangeness for both the parents and the children and may foster a child's sense of security and self-concept (Schnur, 1995).

Although informal networks of care and the practice of reciprocity have many benefits, there is always a risk that tensions and the dissolution of relationships may arise; especially if expectations are unmet or one party benefits more from the relationship than another (Dominguez and Watkins, 2003). If an exchange of one's time is to take the place of monetary exchanges, then these relationships must be equally reciprocal or

conflicts can arise. There is also the risk that the care provided is unlicensed and unregulated, which may result in other types of problems, such as too many children for one caregiver or children left unstimulated and unchallenged.

Another possible downfall of informal reciprocal networks is that women may not be able to rely on these networks on a long-term basis (Salaff and Greve, 2004). Although child care exchanges may take place between neighbours with children of the same age, and neighbours can also provide emergency care, it may be more difficult to rely on such networks for longer term support such as returning to school to requalify for a profession, or to return to full time employment (Salaff and Greve, 2004).

In sum, social capital as linked to reciprocity is not a new concept, and has been utilized by women for decades; however the literature on reciprocity is limited, particularly focusing on reciprocity and non-monetary exchange for childcare. There currently exists a small body of literature on the importance of childcare to immigrant women, as well as on social capital and kin networks. The research on social capital highlights the advantages and disadvantages of social networks, focusing on a few groups of women. The majority of these studies focus on Black and Latina women in the United States, some of whom are second generation immigrants (Dominguez and Watkins, 2003; Small, 2006; Benin and Keith, 1995; Hagan, 1998), as well as Chinese women in Canada (Salaff and Greve, 2004; Jimenez, 2007), and Latin American women in Montreal (Rose, et al., 1998). What about other immigrant groups' experiences? How have they differed? How are they similar? What more can we learn from them? Although research concerning women of different ethnic origins has been done, such a body of literature from a Canadian perspective, and particularly with regard to their social

networks is insufficient. There is also a body of literature concerning informal childcare networks that move beyond kinship networks (Purkayastha and Subramaniam, 2004; Albanese, 2007; Stack, 1974; Wellman and Wortley, 1990; Rose et al., 1998), however there is a need to further explore the formation and use of informal social capital networks, as well as a need to analyze their drawbacks and advantages, especially for newcomer women.

There is a need to further the research and literature on non-kinship networks in relation to childcare with a focus on immigrant women's experiences in Toronto/Canada. The decision on what form of childcare is selected, why, and how it works is directly influenced by many intersecting factors where gender, race, class, and propinquity work together to provide certain outcomes. My project seeks to address some of this.

III. Methodology

The goal of my research is to gain an understanding of immigrant mothers' experiences with childcare in Canada. This includes the formal and informal networks of care that develop among immigrant women, as well as how these networks have helped women overcome challenges that they face. Given that childcare in Canada is a fragmented patchwork of under-funded and underdeveloped systems, I am interested in hearing about the barriers and strategies that immigrant mothers develop when trying to settle into a new country and access childcare in Toronto.

Originally, I had hoped to interview women who were taking part in a cooperative form of childcare, whereby women would exchange caregiving while also working for pay or attending school. However, as I began recruiting women, I found that each woman's situation was unique and that although their childcare needs and experiences varied, they all illustrated the need for childcare arrangements while settling in a new society.

Data Collection

This project is exploratory and follows a qualitative approach which includes a literature review, a brief demographic survey, as well as unstructured interviews with open and closed-ended probing questions. A qualitative approach complements the exploratory nature of the MRP, by allowing the participants to speak about their lived experiences. The literature review highlights relevant theories and concepts that will frame the current research on childcare and social networks of care.

A non-probability, snowball sample was used to recruit participants. I asked newcomer mothers to participate in the study and asked if they knew of any other women that I could approach and ask to be interviewed. I also contacted various settlement agencies, as well as various parenting drop-in programs in the downtown area. I contacted a total of three settlement agencies and seven parenting centres, including the *Ontario Early Years Centres.* However one of the challenges I faced with the settlement agencies was that my project proposal had to be reviewed and approved prior to posting my recruitment posters. Given the limited time frame for the MRP, the time needed by the agencies for the approval process became a set back.

I also avoided settlement agencies that I am affiliated with through my work as a Settlement Outreach Worker. This was done in order not to give the perception that participation in the study was contingent on the services provided by the agency I work for. Only two women I interviewed were connected to an agency or centre. The rest came from some of my personal contacts and snowball sampling.

Part of the data collected for the study was gathered through a brief demographic survey. The information gathered is presented in aggregate form and summarizes the information for all participants in the study. Information gathered includes their age, marital status, familial situation, custodial arrangements, country of origin, ethnicity, employment status, number of children, number of children in care, hours a week their child(ren) is enrolled in daycare, monthly cost of daycare, source of income, living arrangements, level of education and average household income.

The remainder of the data for this study was collected through face-to-face, in-depth interviews with five newcomer women. Each interview lasted between 60 to 80

minutes; this time frame included the revision and signing of the consent form, as well as the demographic survey and interview component. Given that two of the five participants did not speak English but were fluent in Polish, I translated the consent forms, demographic surveys and interview guides into Polish. I also conducted the two interviews in Polish, as I am a native speaker and this facilitated the gathering of information and provided a more comfortable atmosphere for the participants.

Three interviews took place at the participant's home and two at a local coffee shop, and all interviews, except for one (at the woman's request), were tape recorded. Given that the study was not funded, I was unable to compensate women for their time and was unable to provide childcare. By having interviews at the participants' homes, the women did not have to arrange for childcare and in two occasions, we were able to schedule around the children's naptime. Some of the participants had other care arrangements, and/or felt more comfortable to meet outside of their homes. Each interviewee was ensured confidentiality, and was asked to choose or was assigned a pseudonym so that they would not be personally identified.

During the interviews I did not ask for women's immigration status, however in two interviews the participants' discussions surrounded their precarious immigration status, and how that impacted their families, as well as their ability to access childcare.

Although I had created an interview guide with questions, I quickly came to the realization that there was a more organic way to conduct the interviews. At the outset, the interviews were semi-structured, however the interviews began to change and be unstructured to being more as a conversation, where I asked the women to tell me their stories of what it was like trying to find childcare in Toronto. I believe that this format

provided the participants with a space to voice their lived experiences, as they saw it and not how I perceived the search for childcare to be. It also felt more natural and less like a formal interview. The storytelling was also very powerful and effective as it presented a wealth of information and helped me to re-evaluate and expand the questions I was asking. Given that the interview was informal and structured as a conversation, it also gave me the opportunity to probe and ask questions, in order to get the participants to elaborate more on certain pieces of information. Due to language barriers for some and the sensitivity of their immigration status or family situation for others, I felt that unstructured qualitative interviewing, with probing questions was the best research approach. Qualitative interviews have also been used by numerous other researchers in the area (Ali, 2005; Albanese, 2007; Bernhard et al., 2005; Dominguez and Watkins, 2003; Menjivar, 1997; Nelson, 2000; Pacini-Ketchabaw and Almeida, 2006; Parrenas, 2005; Salaff and Greve, 2004), as an effective and important tool allowing respondents to reflect upon their experiences and speak (in their own words) to issues they deem important.

I began by asking women for an overview of their experiences in searching for childcare. I also asked whether they had family and friends (of the same and/or different ethnic origin) in the Toronto and whether they were instrumental in helping with childcare or helping to find childcare. Other questions included the affordability, reliability and flexibility of the care arrangements. I concluded the interview by asking women to describe what their ideal form of childcare would look like.

Reflexivity

Reinharz (1992) points out that the "involvement of the researcher's personal experience and the research project takes the form starting from one's own standpoint" (p.259). As a researcher, I feel that it is necessary to evaluate my perspective and to reflect on my social position, as it has an impact on the information gathered, as well as my analysis of it.

My interest in this topic arose from my own experiences in trying to find childcare for my daughter. The challenges in accessing daycare were immense and I quickly learned first hand what some of the problems were with childcare in Canada. I became curious about the experiences of newcomer women when searching for childcare and wondered how they began their childcare search, if they had family to rely on and what happened when there were no family members, no close friends and an inaccessible childcare system in place? Who did they turn to and what were some of their coping strategies?

Upon further evaluation, I also came to realize that when my family arrived in Canada (over 20 years ago), my parents were in need of childcare to be able to attend school and work. They relied on fictive kin and established a support network, where caregiving was exchanged.

While recruiting women for the study, I felt as if a mutual trust between myself and the participants developed on the basis of motherhood, and at times on the basis of a common language. This was an important factor in recruitment and in building rapport at the outset of the interview.

However, although there was an initial connection formed on the common ground of motherhood, it would be incorrect to essentialize my experiences with those of other mothers, especially without further analysis. It is necessary to reflect on my "location of self…within power hierarchies and within a constellation of gender, race, class and citizenship" (Hertz, 1997, p.viii).

As a white, university educated, Polish-Canadian woman, I have had many opportunities that the women in my study have not had. My privileged social position, including my race, my class and my citizenship, as well the fact that I was raised in Canada, am fluent in English, have family and friends in the Greater Toronto Area, and have knowledge of Canadian childcare system, provided me with different needs and a different perspective. It would be unfair to assume that my experiences in accessing childcare and my childcare needs are the same as the mothers that I interviewed.

With this being said, my search for childcare brought to my attention the challenges that many mothers, especially newcomer women face when trying to access childcare in Toronto. By documenting immigrant women's access to childcare, I hope that this study will contribute to the literature on women's agency in finding childcare in Toronto. I also want to bring to policy makers' attention the need for a more suitable, adequate, quality form of care that will give immigrant mothers more choice and will make the settlement process easier, regardless of their immigration status.

IV. Demographic Overview

I interviewed five women and collected demographic information from each participant to gain an understanding of who the women were as a group and how this information may influence their ability to access childcare.

Overall, I found that the number of children that the participants had varied from one to four. One woman had 4 children, one had 3 children, one had two children and the remaining two women had one child each. Their children's ages ranged from two to 14 years. Three of the five participants were married, two of five were separated and in the process of divorcing.

The annual income of all of the participants was below $45,000 annually. One participant's annual household income ranged between $35,000 and $44,999; two participants earned between $25,000 and $34,999 annually and the final two earned under $25,000 a year. Their primary sources of income varied. One woman is receiving *Ontario Works*; one woman is fully supported by her spouse's income and three of the five women are working and supported by their own income. One of the working mother's income is also complimented by her spouses income.

None of the five women have received formal education or training in Canada. In their countries of origin, one had two Masters Degrees and a Bachelor of Education; three had completed some university and college courses; and one had completed high school.

One participant owned a home, while four of the five women were renting apartments. Of these four women, two had experienced domestic violence and were living in shelters. These two women were in the process of transitioning from the shelter to subsidized units through the *Toronto Community Housing Corporation* (TCHC).

Three of the five women have no immediate family (kin) in Toronto or Canada. Two of the five women have family in Canada which includes an uncle, an aunt and cousins. Two other women had family which included in-laws; one participant used to live with her mother-in-law and another woman's former husband's family lives in Toronto. One woman had no immediate family or no in-laws in Canada.

Four of the five women had childcare arrangements at some point since arriving in Canada. One of the women was a full-time stay at home mother because she had no alternative arrangements of care for her children. The cost of childcare varied for each of the women. Two of the five participants were receiving a full subsidy from the City of Toronto and the cost of childcare was completely subsidized. One woman had paid $800-$900 a month for childcare, while another woman paid approximately $150 to $200 a week. There were also periods of time where two of the women engaged in a form of reciprocal childcare where no money was exchanged.

Other relevant demographic information to be considered is that three of the five women were fluent in English, while two had elementary knowledge of English for basic communication. Three women are considered to be "racialized" or "minority" women and the remaining two are white. Two of the five women have less than full immigration status. In a later section I will discuss the implications of these factors, especially the issues of gender, race, class and precarious immigration status and how they impact and influence newcomer women's access to childcare in Toronto.

V. Personal Narratives

Safiyah

Safiyah arrived in Canada from Pakistan in 2003, with her three children, aged 10, 6 and 5. Upon her arrival she was reunited with her husband, after a prolonged separation of five years. Two years ago she gave birth to a fourth child.

Apart from her husband and her children, she has no family in Canada. She has also not developed any close relationships since her arrival. Safiyah is the primary caregiver of her four children and is with them day and night, while her husband, previously a Doctor, works anywhere from two to six jobs at a time, one of which includes driving a taxi.

In Pakistan, Safiyah was a math teacher with a Bachelor of Education and also has a Masters degree in Mathematics, Statistics and Economics, as well as a Masters degree in English. In Canada, she was told she would have to have her credentials re-recognized prior to working in her field.

I am optimistic to do something for myself and my kids; to better our lives...I don't want to stay at home and waste my knowledge and talent. I am a social person, I have skills, says Safiyah.

Childcare care is a necessity for Safiyah, so that she is able to attend school and begin to re-establish her career in Canada.

Kasia

Kasia arrived in Canada from Poland in 2003, with her husband and child. Since her arrival, she gave birth to another son. Her husband is on a temporary contract/work permit, Kasia and her eldest son are without status and her youngest son was born in Canada and this therefore a citizen.

Upon arrival, Kasia and her family stayed with her aunt until they were able to find a place to live. Kasia works with a group of non-status Polish women as a housekeeper.

She has faced many barriers when trying to access childcare as a result of her immigration status. Accessing a licensed daycare centre makes her uneasy, she has heard the waiting lists are extremely long, that it is very expensive and she is unable to access a childcare subsidy because of her immigration status.

Despite these challenges, she was able to find childcare for her two sons through personal contacts and social networking. Childcare was vital for Kasia to be able to enter the labour force and to feel as if she was doing something for herself, as well as for her family.

At this time, I also really wanted to do something for myself, something with my life. I had two children, I said I have been home with them for over two years, I won't sit at home any more, for two years I stayed home and I said no, no more, says Kasia.

Magdalena

Magdalena arrived in Canada from Poland in 2003, with her husband and their two and a half year old son. Her family entered Canada on a Visitor Visa and began to settle in Toronto, in hopes of eventually regularizing their immigration status.

Upon arrival they lived with Magdalena's uncle and his family in a basement apartment. Her husband was able to find employment in construction and she began to work as a housekeeper.

Magdalena quickly learned what challenges she would face in Canada, as a result of her precarious immigration status. At her first job, Magdalena worked for a week and was not paid. When she tried to enroll her son in daycare, she was unsatisfied and uncomfortable with the unlicensed, informal home daycare. When she registered her son in a daycare centre, she was required to pay the full fees ($900 per month), plus additional insurance for her non-status son. When Magdalena's son was old enough to attend grade one, three schools in her area refused to accept him because of his "illegal" immigration status.

This past September (2006), Magdalena's family became disillusioned with their opportunities as non-status immigrants living in Toronto, and her husband and son returned to Poland. Magdalena will also return at the end of this year.

What choice do I have? What will happen in 4 years if we are forced to leave Canada and return to Poland? At that time my son will not be able to communicate properly in Polish and will be behind...Ideally, I would like to stay here. To get our immigration papers in order, I have a good job, a house, a life here. If my son could go to school we would have never made the decision to leave, says Magdalena.

Childcare was an important factor in ensuring her family's survival in Toronto. However, the first two home daycare facilities that Magdalena's son attended were unlicensed. In the first facility, the children were left unsupervised and alone, and in the other her son was not being challenged enough and was falling behind developmentally. Magdalena was satisfied with the licensed daycare centre her son attended, but ultimately her immigration status outweighed her son's opportunities and her family's options to remain in Canada.

Jamila

Jamila arrived in Canada from Lebanon in 1995, with her husband. Since her arrival she has had three children who are now 11, 9 and 2 years old.

Although Jamila has been in Canada for over 10 years, she is recently on her own with her three children. Having experienced years of abuse and isolation by her husband, seven months ago she made the decision to leave. She lived with her children in a shelter for 5 months, was placed on the priority list for subsidized housing and has recently moved into an apartment. Other than her former in-laws, Jamila has no family in Canada.

She was able to get childcare through the shelter, however now that she has moved she must find new arrangement for her children. Presently, Jamila is spending hours a day commuting and $20 a day on gas to drive her children to daycare so that she can study and volunteer.

I'm tired, it's very far for me to bring my kids to different daycares and come to where I'm studying. It's very far for me to go home, but what can I do? says Jamila.

Having childcare in place for her three children will enable Jamila to re-establish herself, to attend computer classes, and to complete her General Education Developmental (GED) testing so that she can begin to work in her chosen profession.

Joy

Joy arrived in Canada from the Philippines, with her husband in 2002. Three years ago (2004) her daughter was born. Upon arrival, she and her husband temporarily stayed with her Aunt and cousins who live outside of Toronto.

Following the birth of her daughter, Joy's mother-in-law came to stay her family. The arrival of her mother-in-law began to complicate her marital relationship and Joy felt that her position as a mother was undermined. There were also increased tensions with her husband on how to raise their daughter. Over a year ago, Joy's partner began to physically and verbally abuse her, and six months ago Joy made the decision to take her daughter and end her marriage.

Currently Joy is living in a shelter with her three year old daughter and is on the priority list for subsidized housing. Childcare is a necessity for Joy so that she can begin to rebuild a life for herself and her daughter.

You know, in the Philippines we don't have daycare; it's always extended family that helps. Here it is different.

Through a drop-in program that Joy attended with her daughter she learned of a part-time job opportunity at a daycare. The manager of the centre helped her apply for a subsidy and found a spot for her daughter at the same centre that Joy would be working. In the next year Joy wants to enroll in an Early Childhood Education Program that she can attend in the evenings.

VI. Findings

The five women who participated in this study were all in need of childcare; however all had unique circumstances that influenced their access to childcare. The main themes that surfaced throughout the interviews were challenges presented by economic and immigration class, and challenges that arose from a lack of kinship networks in Canada, or lack of support from kin, when they did exist. Despite these challenges, each woman's individual agency led her to develop various strategies for childcare. Through social networking, building relationships and systems of support through fictive kin, as well as making use of various social services, the women in the study were able to find some form of childcare that in turn enabled them to enter to labour force, to attend school and to be able to run errands and attend appointments without their children.

i.   Challenges and Strategies in Accessing Care – Economic and Immigration Class

One of the main challenges in accessing childcare is class, both economic class and immigration class. Economic class directly impacts the ability to access, purchase and make use of services that charge a fee. Immigration class also limits the ability to access services, as certain programs and services, particularly ones funded by the government are limited to people with "legal" immigration status.

Of the five women I interviewed, one participant's annual household income ranged between $35,000 and $44,999; two participants earned between $25,000 and $34,999 and the final two earned under $25,000 annually. When a family is living below the poverty line, from pay-cheque to pay-cheque, it is difficult to conceive how they can afford licensed childcare which averages around 50 dollars a day.

All of the participants expressed concerns over the high costs of licensed childcare. To offset the cost some women were able to receive a childcare subsidy from their municipalities, while others discussed that subsidies were just another service that they were unable to access.

Two of the five women in the study, Joy and Jamila, are permanent residents and have been able to access licensed childcare. Both women were living in a shelter and with the help of shelter staff, were able to receive a childcare subsidy, which covers the full cost of childcare because of their low income. In these cases, it was both their "legal" immigration status and the shelter staff that assisted them in accessing not only childcare, but also fully subsidized childcare. However, not all of the women in the study were in the same situation, with the same type of access.

Magdalena's and Kasia's children are not in a licensed daycare and neither is receiving a childcare subsidy. When I asked if Kasia had tried to apply for a subsidy, she replied, "*No, I never tried to apply because of our status, we have an unregulated status. We want to arrange for our papers but, umm, but they always ask about our status. Everywhere we go; even in the school they asked for our status.*" Magdalena had a similar response when asked if she applied for a subsidy. "*I didn't try to apply for a subsidy because I couldn't. I don't have status so I didn't try to do anything.*" Both women have low incomes and would benefit from financial assistance however they are not eligible given their immigration status. Thus, their economic and immigration class worked to limit their access to licensed childcare. As a result, they turned to their informal social networks and to the grey economy.

Kasia and Magdalena were put in a position where they had to pay the full cost of licensed childcare or search for a less costly option and take advantage of unlicensed care

for their children. Unlicensed childcare is something that many women have utilized for the care of their children. It can provide temporary relief from care giving, an ability to run errands and attend appointments, and can also be a form of full-time care for children so that parents can work for pay or attend school.

Kasia overcame the challenges that arose from her economic and immigration class by using unlicensed childcare. This arrangement was more affordable as she was able to negotiate fees for service that fit her budget. Kasia also spoke highly of the flexibility that her caregiver provided. *"She came to pick up our kids in the morning when we were getting ready for work and when we came back she drove them home. It was a great arrangement, financially and time wise, it was perfect,"* she described. She paid her caregiver $150 a week to care for her two sons for eight to nine hours a day, which averaged to be just over three dollars an hour. Because the caregiver came to her home, they were able to develop a friendship which has continued despite the fact that she is no longer caring for Kasia's children.

An additional challenge for women with a precarious immigration status is not simply an issue of accessing childcare, but also accessing the school system when their children are older. A disheartening theme that surfaced during Magdalena's interview was her son's inability to receive an education in Canada. Despite promises and commitments that school is a right for all children regardless of their immigration status, the school system became a detrimental barrier for Magdalena and her family. Magdalena tried to enroll her son in many schools; however her family's precarious status prevented him from attending primary school.

> *They wouldn't accept my son, they told me to bring papers from immigration or proof that I had started some process and only then would they accept him. So that's when we made the decision that my husband would return to Poland with*

our son because he has to go to school. I tried but wherever I went, wherever I
tried they all said I don't have a chance to get status so what can I do?

. Magdalena's son returned to Poland with her husband so that he could attend school and

Magdalena remained in Canada to work and send remittances to her family. While she

wants to stay in Canada, she will also return to Poland once she has saved enough money.

Economic and immigration class severely limits a person's ability to access

licensed childcare, as well as a variety of other benefits and services. The women in the

study with full immigration status were able to apply for a childcare subsidy; however the

women with less-than-full status were unable to receive a subsidy, and also faced barriers

when trying to access education for their children.

ii. Challenges in Accessing Care – No Kinship Networks in Canada

When compared with the Canadian born population (nine percent), a high

proportion of recent newcomers (16 percent) are living with extended family (CIC,

2005). However despite these numbers, it cannot be assumed that family can

automatically be relied on for childcare. It is also important to consider the immigrants

who arrive in Canada and have no extended family and no kinship networks - who do

they turn to for childcare?

Two women in the study, Safiyah and Jamila, do not have any family (other than

their husbands) in Canada. Safiyah and her three children arrived to reunite with her

husband, in hopes of building a more prosperous life for their family. Safiyah's family

was not prepared for the many hardships they would face in Canada. She described that

her family experienced a great deal of stress and strain as a result of their limited finances

and having no familial support.

My husband, a doctor, worked morning and night. He had three to six jobs so we can live...you know the stress is hard for me and my husband. At one time we quarreled all the time, I cried day and night. It's hard financially, emotionally...my family in Pakistan always asks why we don't come home, we have family there, less problems."

Safiyah, a foreign trained professional, learned that in order to work as a teacher she would have to return to school to get her credentials recognized in Canada. Safiyah is currently a full-time, stay-at-home-mom because she has no other childcare arrangements. She tried to register her children in a licensed childcare but has been unable to find care for all four of her children at the same location. Her husband works extremely long hours and she has no other family that she can rely on. She has also been unable to make friends because she devotes all of her time to her four children. *"It's very hard, the whole day and night I care for my children, how can I go for lessons or work or to meet new people?"* asked Safiyah.

Jamila's situation can be contrasted with Safiyah's in that her husband's entire extended family is in Canada. However, Jamila does not consider her in-laws as family. When she left her husband because of on-going abuse, she cut off all ties with them. When she first separated from her husband she tried to keep in touch with her brother-in-law but has also severed those ties after she realized he was constantly trying to manipulate her. Jamila describes what it is like not having anyone to count on:

My husband he never pick- up the kids from daycare. But in case of emergency the children's uncle has picked them up. His brother pick [my daughter] up one time but when he drops her he's try to let me do shared custody...because he told me if you do full custody and if you need money or something like this, we doesn't give you anything. I told him, already you don't pay for me anything, I six months in the shelter and nobody helped me with anything. Right now how I trust him with anything?

For Safiyah and Jamila, the unavailability of kinship networks made arranging childcare more challenging. In Safiyah's case, her lack of kinship ties made childcare for her four children impossible.

iii. Challenge in Accessing Care: Unavailable and Unsupportive Kinship Networks

Through the interview process the women discussed situations where their family became an additional burden, as opposed to a helpful support source. Three of the five women I interviewed had some family in the Toronto area. Magdalena, Kasia and Joy arrived in Canada and immediately moved in with family members. Magdalena, Kasia and Joy spoke of their experiences living with their family, as well as the extent to which their family helped them during their settlement process to find housing, employment and childcare. Kasia described her relationship with her family in Canada:

> *We have family here, my aunt and my cousin, but all the information, work, other possibilities in Canada I always find out on my own, or from friends and acquaintances, family has not helped us at all. It seemed like they didn't want to share any information with us, I don't know why...It's like this: sometimes family helps and other times they just make it harder for you...My family didn't help with childcare...I found care for my children on my own. Family, to put it simply, just complicated my life even further...it's unfortunate but it's true.*

Magdalena experienced a similar situation with her family. *When I was looking for work, they gave me a Polish newspaper and said here you go*, said Magdalena. Her uncle was able to provide a possible childcare lead, by informing Magdalena that he saw a woman taking children to the bus stop every morning and that she may provide childcare in her home. This was the first caregiver that Magdalena hired to care for her son; however he was only there for two days as Magdalena discovered that he was being left unsupervised and uncared for.

When Joy and her husband arrived in Toronto, they also lived with her family members. The family, Joy's aunt and cousins, did not help with childcare as Joy's daughter was not born yet, however "my *cousins helped me find a job. My 1ˢᵗ job is in Starbucks cleaning tables, part-time*" said Joy.

A few years ago, Joy sponsored her mother-in-law, who has been living with her family since her arrival. When her mother-in-law arrived Joy was on maternity leave and her daughter was just a few months old. Although the presence of her mother-in-law enabled Joy to take advantage of temporary care to be able to run an errand or to attend an appointment, it proved to be a negative arrangement. Having her mother-in-law live with her, led to increased the tensions in Joy's home. "*I feel like was she trying to be the mommy, to take over my role. You know, I waited 42 years to be a mom, I don't need her to take over...sometimes I feel like they were all against me,*" described Joy.

iv. Strategy in Accessing Care: Fictive-Kin as a Support System for Care/Social Capital Networks

When family is not readily available, it often becomes necessary to turn to other sources for support. All of the women in the study, whether they had family in Canada or not, had at some point during their settlement process turned to their social networks to assist them in finding childcare. Turning to fictive kin for childcare was used as a coping mechanism for not having kin present in Canada or the result of a family relationship breakdown. The social networks ranged from close friends to a stranger at a store, and also include employers, neighbours and organizations. These so-called "weak ties" proved to be very strong and reliable networks that enabled these newcomer women to attend appointments, run errands, enter the labour force and attend school.

Two of the women in the study, Kasia and Magdalena are friends and work together. At one point they took turns caring for each other's children - based solely on reciprocity. Their situation is interesting in that they did not know each other prior to coming to Canada; both have a precarious immigration status and have family in the Greater Toronto Area. In order to enter the labour force, both women were in need of care arrangements for their children. Given that they were unable to count on their family members, they began to search within their communities for childcare. Kasia stated that *"The most important and helpful people have been friends and contacts I've made through word of mouth, or by answering ads that women posted in the stores. This is more effective than family."*

Kasia and Magdalena described how they searched in Polish language newspapers and replied to caregiver posters in local Polish delis. It was by chance that Kasia and Magdalena first met in a Polish store and began discussing their need for childcare. When Magdalena found a job, Kasia took care of her son for the first week. The following week Kasia went to work and Magdalena watched her son. Their childcare arrangement was based solely on reciprocity and no money was exchanged.

Their social networking helped with childcare and also became useful for employment leads. Magdalena was able to speak with her employer and arranged a job for Kasia. At this point they both enrolled their sons in a Polish home daycare, which they also found through word of mouth. In separate interviews, Magdalena and Kasia described how helpful and supportive their boss was. Kasia stated:

> *My boss helped us a lot; she let us have flexible schedules so that it would suit us, our children and our care arrangements. She also has two children and a babysitter. There were also days where our babysitter would go to her home, or her babysitter came to our home to watch our kids, there was never a problem. She has really helped us a lot.*

Magdalena also spoke highly of the relationship she developed with her employer and the tremendous amount of support she has received. Magdalena's boss assisted her with housing, as she is currently renting a basement apartment from her. Her employer also offered to act as a sponsor so that Magdalena and her family could remain in Canada and regularize their immigration status. Magdalena described that:

> *Sometimes my boss helps me with childcare, if I didn't have a caregiver for my son, or I had to work later, she would take care of him or would pick him up from the daycare or from the babysitter. A few times when he was sick and she would take him to the doctor for me.*

Not only were Magdalena and Kasia able to count on one another, they were also surprised by the generosity and good will of their employer. Their employer filled the void that both Magdalena and Kasia's families did not fill; she helped them with housing, childcare and offered emotional support and friendship.

Safiyah does not have family in Canada and has been unable to make friends or acquaintances because of the time needed to take care of her four children. Despite these challenges Safiyah has found a degree of support in community organizations and has built a relationship with her neighbour. For example, during our interview, Safiyah's children played in the backyard while their neighbour supervised them. If Safiyah needs to run to the grocery store she takes her youngest child, and her neighbour, if available, will watch the other children for short periods of time. The neighbour also watched the children when Safiyah first went to a settlement agency to find out about re-assessing her credentials and attending job search workshops. However, despite this support source, her neighbour is only available temporarily. Given that the majority of the workshops were more than a few hours, Safiyah could not attend. She remains limited in her options outside of the home because of the lack of childcare for her children.

v. Strategy in Accessing Care: City of Toronto Shelters

Another strategy to fill the void of kinship networks was to make use of various social services, specifically the shelter system in Toronto. Jamila and Joy arrived in Canada with their spouses and had children following their arrival. Both women experienced domestic violence and at one point made the decision to take their children and leave the abusive relationships. *"You know, I just didn't want my daughter to see the violence"* said Joy. Jamila also wanted to take her three children away from the problematic relationship because *"it just wasn't good for my kids."*

For Jamila not having family in Toronto, and for Joy, not having a close relationship with her aunt and cousin, left both women with no place to turn for housing, and no support system to help them with childcare. Also being newcomers, they were not aware of the existence of shelters; both women mentioned that in their home countries they had not heard of such a service.

Through social contacts and networks with friends and community organizations, Jamila and Joy learned about the shelter system in Toronto. Immediately following their arrival to the shelter, both Joy and Jamila received support from the shelter staff. *"The workers in the shelter really encourage the mommies to have their own time,"* says Joy. The shelter Jamila stayed in had a daycare in it, which was very helpful for her and the other women with children. Having her three children in the same daycare centre enabled her to begin searching for work, volunteer positions and skills training courses in order to be able to work as a hair stylist and fashion advisor. It also resolved commuting challenges and the coordination of the drop-off and pick-up of her children.

The shelter Joy and her daughter live in does not have a daycare within it, however the shelter staff where helpful in arranging childcare for the women. They worked individually with each woman to help her find childcare in the area and to apply for a daycare subsidy. In addition, when meetings, workshops and counseling sessions occurred, the shelter provided short-term childcare so women with children could attend.

Prior to living in the shelter, Joy did not consider the need for childcare. She said that *"the problem of the childcare came when I went to the shelter and I started thinking of going back to work."* Her aunt and cousins are unable to help her with childcare as they lived at the opposite end of the city. Although Joy received a great deal of support from the shelter staff, she also found assistance from her employer. Joy was fortunate that she found employment within a licensed daycare centre and that the manager immediately offered her daughter a daycare spot. This enabled Joy to find a loop-hole and by-pass the long waiting list for a childcare spot. She also learned of the childcare subsidy from the daycare's manager. She said that the manager *"told me to go get a subsidy so that I could go back to work."* Despite Joy's ability to access licensed childcare, she continues to worry about childcare outside of her working hours. She is concerned about what will happen if she decides to enroll in an Early Childhood Education Program at a university. She added that *"When I go back to school I hope that we can work a schedule of visits. I will tell the lawyer that these days I have to go to school and she has to be with the papa,"* but this is yet to be confirmed.

Both Joy and Jamila did not receive help from family but relied on their weak-ties social capital to help them during the settlement process. These relationships were vital in helping them leave their abusive husbands and in arranging childcare. The childcare

arrangements provided an opportunity for Joy and Jamila to begin rebuilding their lives - to begin working, volunteering and attending classes. Without their childcare arrangements both women would not be in the positions they are in today. Weak ties (fictive-kin) networks helped the five women in the study overcome challenges that they encountered with childcare and helped them settle into their new environment.

In the following section I will discuss how gender roles and social reproduction affected the woman in the study, as well as how they are able to balance public and private tasks and responsibilities. I will also discuss this in relation to childcare policies, as well as elaborate on the limitations of unlicensed and licensed care in Toronto. This will be followed by a discussion of cultural social capital and immigrant needs, and will conclude with an evaluation of kinship and non-kinship ties and the development of these networks.

VII. Discussion

    i.   **Gender Roles and Family Dynamics**

Upon analysis of the findings, it is clear that a strong gender dynamic exists within each of the participant's households. All of the five women in the study are either married or recently separated from their husbands. Apart from extended kinship networks, the closest family that the participants had were their husbands. However, in all five households, it was clear that the women were primarily responsible for their children and their homes. Unlike their husbands, they had to balance their desires to work outside of the home with their domestic responsibilities. This reinforces Bezanson and Luxton's (2006) work on social reproduction and gender dynamics. They write that women are predominately responsible for "maintaining and reproducing people" (Bezanson and Luxton, 2006, p.3). In order for women to participate in the labour market, they must strike a balance between the private and public sphere. However in order for this to be possible, they must first make childcare arrangements. This situation is further complicated for immigrant women, who may not have the support of kin and may not have established non-kinship networks to assist them with childcare. Like Salaff and Greve (2004) I found that women's careers tended to be more negatively affected than men's. For example, regardless of the woman's desire to work for pay or attend school, she always shouldered the additional burden of having to find childcare that was suitable, adequate and affordable.

Throughout the interviews the five participants discussed how childcare and arranging childcare was their responsibility. None of the women interviewed were able to search for employment or continue their education, without first arranging care for their children.

Kasia's husband is employed as a contract construction worker and works long hours; at times he is gone for days and weeks at a time. When Kasia wanted to return to the labour force, she had to make childcare arrangements for both her sons. Magdalena is in a similar situation, as her husband also works in the construction industry and is gone long hours. She said that when he was able to, he would help her by picking-up or dropping-off their son at daycare, however it was Magdalena who had to make these arrangements in the first place.

Joy and Jamila did not have to worry about childcare until they left their husbands and wanted to enter the labour market. Enrolling their children in daycare was their responsibility, as were the drop-off and pick up arrangements. For Joy the coordination was not too difficult as her daughters daycare is the same daycare in which she works. For Jamila, having her three children in different daycares led to many difficulties, especially in picking up her children on time. She could not count on her husband to pick up the children, as he did not believe the children should be in daycare in the first place and refused to be involved in that aspect of their lives.

The challenge of having to strike a balance between the private and the public sphere is further complicated by expectations of gender roles and responsibilities. Jamila was able to enroll her three children in a licensed childcare centre; however is constantly criticized by her former husband that she is not a good mother. Her husband has never picked up the children from daycare and refuses to help because he believes it is her role as a mother to care for the children. Jamila says, *"He blame me because I not share with them my life...and I take the time from my kids and I put them like in prison in daycare.*

That's what my husband thinks. And blame me all the time...that I not good mother, I don't take care of my kids."

Accessing childcare can be extremely difficult for newcomer women and may at times be impossible. Without a form of childcare, women may be forced to stay at home and unable to enter paid employment. As Salaff and Greve (2004), as well as Luxton (2006) described, without childcare limiting gender roles become entrenched in women's daily lives. This was also true of the women in the study. For example, Safiyah, who has not been able to find suitable, affordable childcare for her four children, has remained at home and cannot return to school or work. She is unable to receive help for childcare from her husband because he works long hours to support their family and is rarely home.

These findings are in-line with the literature that states that immigrant women who are unable to find childcare may begin to feel isolated and segregated from the mainstream society (Hagan, 1998; Schnur, 1995; Dominguez and Watkins, 2003; Briggs, 2002). Not only has Safiyah been unable to enter the labour market or have her credentials recognized, she has also been unable to make friends within her community. She says that she would enjoy meeting new people and making contacts in the community but with four children she just does not have the time.

Finding and managing childcare arrangements tend to fall on the woman's shoulders. The notion that caring is natural for women crystallized social reproduction as a "woman's issue" (Bezanson and Luxton, 2006; Braedley, 2006; Jenson, 2001; Ungerson, 1998). If a mother chooses to leave the domestic realm, she must find someone to replace her role as the caregiver. This burden is further complicated for newcomer women, who may not know how to navigate Toronto's childcare system. The

long waiting lists, high costs and limited childcare subsidies make it difficult for immigrant women to access licensed childcare. Access is made even more difficult when coupled with financial constraints and a precarious immigration status.

ii.   **Childcare Policy – Challenges and Areas of Development**

The City of Toronto boasts that childcare is "available in over 800 licensed childcare centres and through 22 licensed private home child care agencies working with over 2,000 approved home care providers" (Toronto, 2007). Accessing licensed childcare has many benefits. Children are stimulated, have a daily routine and the teachers have Early Childhood Education Degrees or Diplomas. One of the participants, Joy, is satisfied with her daughter's daycare. She described how much her daughter has learned, how much her daughter likes the teachers and that her daughter is now fluent in three languages at the age of three. Given that the centre is licensed, she was also able to receive a daycare subsidy which covers the entire cost of her daughters care.

However despite the statistics provided by the City, there still remains a lack of funding, resulting in long waiting lists, high costs and questionable care (Friendly, 2006a). These are just some of the problems that exist with the childcare system in Toronto. These problems can also act as barriers for immigrant parents who are trying to access licensed care for their children. Safiyah's children are not enrolled in licensed childcare and she has never applied for subsidized care. When I asked her why, she replied, *"you know, everywhere I go there is no space available for my four children, or it is very expensive, or there are age limits, there are so many barriers."*

These challenges are partly due to what Ungerson (1998) describes as the on-going tension between a woman's economic independence, her role within the household and the increasingly restricting social policies that aim to keep her there. Restrictive polices also trickled down to the municipal level, where off-loading and cuts to transfer payments and social services had a disproportionately negative impact on women, who now have to fill the void in services (Tyyska, 2001; Prentice, 1999). This impact is further felt by immigrant women, who rely on social services to help with their settlement and who do not have family or friends in Toronto.

Immigrant women have a difficult time in finding adequate, affordable childcare in the city. Navigating the licensed childcare system in Toronto can be difficult and at times surprising. For example, knowing to place children on a waiting list months, if not years in advance, and having an understanding of how to apply for a subsidy can be confusing for Canadians, let alone for newcomers. These problems are exacerbated by a lack of funding, long waiting lists, high costs and questionable care (Friendly, 2006).

The complexities of accessing licensed care in Toronto are further complicated for immigrant women who have less-than-full immigration status (Friendly, 2006b). Access to childcare and childcare subsidies may be dependant on immigration status. For example, subsidies are only available to permanent residents and citizens. In the study, Magdalena was the most satisfied with her sons licensed daycare. She said it was obvious that her son was happy, was being stimulated and his level of English was dramatically increasing. However, as a result of Magdalena's precarious immigration status she faced more challenges in accessing this childcare than most parents. Prior to her son being accepted to the daycare, she was required to pay the first and last months'

fees, and was also required to purchase additional private, personal insurance for her son. Magdalena works as a housekeeper, and is paid just above minimum wage. A childcare subsidy was not an option for her family because of their immigration status. Magdalena felt that in order for her son to receive quality care and to develop on par with children his age, she would have to register him in the childcare centre, regardless of the cost.

Immigrant women with "proper" immigration status (Permanent Residence, Canadian Citizenship), may be eligible for a childcare subsidy to offset the high costs of daycare. However, once enrolled in a licensed centre, parents are faced with a whole new set of problems. This can be illustrated by Jamila's experiences with childcare. All three of Jamila's children are in daycare, however because of a shortage of childcare spaces at each centre, as well as a limited number of spaces set aside for subsidized care, her two sons are at a daycare in West Toronto and her daughter is at a daycare in Scarborough. Jamila is volunteering at an immigrant serving agency, and is also taking computer classes. She describes her daily stress of trying to balance her desire to work, with the challenges of picking up her children from two separate childcare centres. The daycare charges a dollar a minute for every minute that she is late. In addition, if she is late more than three times, her children will be deregistered from the centre. The hours of operation and strict regulations are very stressful for Jamila, especially if she gets caught in rush hour traffic. If the daycare was open later or had more flexible hours, it would accommodate not only Jamila's situation but also the situations of many other parents.

Jamila has also raised concerns over the quality of care her children are receiving in the licensed centre. One day the children were playing outside and her son injured his finger. He tried to tell the teacher that he was hurt but she told him that she is too busy to

deal with him at the moment. By the time Jamila realized her son had injured his finger, his whole hand was swollen. The doctor informed her that he fractured his finger and he is now waiting to meet with a specialist. Jamila spoke with the daycare manager and learned that no accident report was filed. She became angered and concerned but was told by the manager *"you know sometimes because we have a lot of kids and staff is working no one will file a report."* Despite the promises by the City of Toronto that its childcare centres "allow parents to work or study knowing that their child is well cared for and safe" (Toronto, 2007, para.2), it appears that the regulations are not always followed.

Like Dominguez and Watkins (2003), I found that when finding quality, licensed childcare is difficult and access is restricted, many newcomer women will turn to their informal networks for care. One of the women stated *"necessity is the mother of invention."* With no childcare options available, the women in the study would utilize their individual agency and establish other supports for childcare. Like Stack (1974) I found that some women may turn to unlicensed childcares, family (kin), while others will relay on non-kinship networks to provide informal childcare support.

Many unlicensed forms of childcare centres exist, which can vary in quality of care and service. Some of the advantages this form of childcare are that it is affordable, the hours of operations are more flexible and accommodating and it is possible to find a caregiver who speaks a common language. The downfall of unlicensed childcare is that it is unregulated and there is no guarantee of quality and suitability (Friendly, 2006a). There is also no guarantee that the caregiver is qualified or what activities the children will be engaging in.

Magdalena's experience perfectly highlights the dangers of unlicensed childcare. When she first came to Canada, she was able to immediately find a job as a housekeeper. At that time she lived with her uncle who advised her that there was a woman on the street who would take a few children to the bus stop every morning. Magdalena met with the woman and she agreed to care for her son. Her second day on the job, Magdalena brought her son to the daycare and went to work. She said that she had a feeling that something was wrong and she immediately returned to the daycare. Magdalena described that she returned to the daycare and knocked on the door but no one answered. After a few minutes she opened the door and found that all of the children were left alone and unsupervised. *"I went to the kitchen and my son was alone, strapped into the high chair. I don't know where the woman was but I took my child, dropped money on the counter, we left and never went back there again."*

When registered forms of childcare are inaccessible and unlicensed care is not an option, the immigrant women in the study turned to their families and friends for guidance and assistance in locating childcare.

iii. Kinship Networks and Fictive-Kin

(a). Kinship

A recent study by CIC shows that recent immigrants are more likely to live with their extended family (CIC, 2005); approximately 15 percent of those who immigrated from 1996 to 2001 have such living arrangements (CIC, 2005). Although it is often assumed that family members are able and willing to help with childcare, this is not always the case.

Salaff and Greve (2004) wrote that kinship networks are invaluable to immigrant families, and "may be portable across the seas." This argument was supported by Menjivar (1997) who wrote that kinship ties provide not only material and emotional support but also vital information during settlement. Although some of the women in the study had family in Canada and were able to temporarily live with them, they did not find their kin to be invaluable.

This MRP research troubles the division in the literature between strong and weak ties and demonstrates that there are many grey areas within the two categories. Contrary to Salaff and Greve (2004) and Menjivar (1997), the participants in my study described that their families were not very helpful and at times complicated their settlement and adjustment. Kasia said that she had the impression that her family was holding back information and did not want to share their knowledge with her. Joy's mother-in-law increased tensions in her household by instigating many arguments between Joy and her husband and by being critical of Joy's parenting.

However, as Menjivar (1997) describes, despite the tension between family members, the women in the study were still able to count on their kinship networks for the provision of temporary and emergency of childcare. This also holds true for some of the women in the study. In Joy's case, she did not get along with her mother-in-law but she was able to rely on her in situations where she had to attend an appointment or run an errand. Although these provisions were temporary, and could not be relied upon for the long term, they were useful none-the-less. The literature on social networks would point to the women's families, including the estranged husband and the mother-in-law as

strong ties when in actuality they proved to be weak, and much weaker than the so-called "weak" ties.

(b). Kinship and Class Disparities

Dominguez and Watkins (2003) demonstrated that kinship networks can break down as a result of economic constraints and varying class inequities. In the case of Kasia and Magdalena their families' Canadian citizenship status was a constant reminder of the lack of their own status. There were also obvious class differences between the newcomers and their Canadian relatives. This can be seen through the economic disparities in their living arrangement, where the newcomers often live in a room or in the basement of their family members' homes. The non-status women in the study arrived in Canada with hopes of being able to regularize their status, however as time progressed they realized that this would not be as simple as they had hoped. With less-than-full immigration status and a lack of childcare support from their families, they were constantly reminded of what they could not attain. These class disparities increased tensions between family members, which decreased the likelihood of asking for and receiving support, especially when it came to childcare. Magdalena described that when she first came to Canada and lived with her family, she felt as if she had no one to count on for childcare, *"I always helped myself, not family, not the Polish community."*

iv. Non-Kin Networks for Childcare – Reciprocal and Ethnic Relationships

(a). Reciprocity and Fictive Kin

When family was unavailable or unwilling to help, the women in the study

searched for other avenues of care for their children. They most often found this support

through their weak ties social capital, also known as fictive-kin (Dominguez and

Watkins, 2003; Menjivar, 1997; Rose et al., 1998; Wellman and Wortley, 1990; Simich et

al., 2004). These relationships developed into support networks that aided in the

provision of childcare and proved to be stronger and more useful than kinship networks.

The literature on the strength and benefits of non-kinship networks as described

by Albanese (2007); Wellman and Wortley (1990); Stack (1979) and Nelson (2000), can

also be applied to immigrant women and their need for childcare arrangements. When

individuals find themselves in similar circumstances, Dominguez and Watkins (2003)

found that many "women hold to relatively strict norms of return" (Dominguez and

Watkins, p.113). Many new immigrants are in need of childcare, and face similar

economic and personal hardships. These similar situations give way to an empathetic

understanding of each other's needs and constraints, which in turn gives rise to reciprocal

relationships and exchanges, and continually strengthens the "weak" ties.

Like Dominguez and Watkins (2003), I also found that reciprocity in childcare

developed amongst newcomers. Magdalena's and Kasia's experiences illustrate this

concept. As a result of their precarious financial and immigration status, they have an

empathetic understanding of each others situations. They took turns watching each

others children so that each could actively search for work without the stress of having to

find a care provider on short notice. Such reciprocal relationships with fictive-kin

became even more invaluable in situations where kinship networks were unavailable, as was also the case with Magdalena and Kasia.

However despite the many benefits, Salaff and Greve (2004) state that a limitation of reciprocal networks is that they may not be a long term solution. This was true in Safiyah's case, as she cannot rely on her neighbour for long-term, consistent care. As such she has been unable to return to school or attend all-day job preparation workshops. This was also true for Magdalena and Kasia. Although they were able to partake in a reciprocal care exchange, this arrangement was only a temporary solution until they both found employment.

There is also a risk that tensions within the relationships may arise; especially if expectations are unmet or one party benefits more from the relationship than another (Dominguez and Watkins, 2003). However, although this situation is conceivable, this was not the case with any of the participants in the study.

(b). Fictive Kin and Ethnicity

Fictive-kin relationships were also impacted by ethnicity and ethnic relations. Like Schnur (1995), I found that some of the participants preferred care providers of the same ethno-cultural background. This was used as a coping mechanism to reduce stress of the "unknown", especially when dealing with the initial shock of being in a new country, without the extended support networks previously available. Having a caregiver of the same ethnic background is also a way to maintain language, culture and various customs and traditions (Schnur, 1995).

Joy was able to connect to women of the same ethnic origin through her participation at an *Ontario Early Years Centre*. Joy said that many of the nannies who frequented the centre were Filipina and a common language and culture was a good conversation starter. Through these networks, she was able to leave her daughter with one of the women and quickly run a few errands. She also liked that the caregiver was able to speak to her daughter in Tagalog to help maintain her native language.

Kasia and Magdalena tried to broaden their social networks through the Polish community, the Polish church and through Polish delis and stores. All of their friends are Polish, part of which stems from their limited knowledge of the English language. They also developed a close relationship with their employer, who was able to assist them both with childcare and was very accommodating and understanding of their needs as newcomer mothers. While their boss is Lithuanian, her husband is Polish, so she was able to communicate in Polish. At one point, both Magdalena and Kasia had their children enrolled in a Polish home daycare. The women described that by having their children immersed in the Polish language they were confident that they would be fully bilingual as they grew older. They knew that their children would acquire English outside of the home, from school, other children, and television, and wanted to ensure that Polish would be taught whenever possible.

Although Safiyah stays at home with her children and does not have a permanent caregiver, she is able to receive some help from her neighbour, who is also a Pakistani woman. It made her feel more comfortable that her neighbour speaks the same language and is aware of their culture and traditions. Safiyah mentioned that one of her concerns

with enrolling her children in a licensed childcare centre is that their cultural and religious needs would not be met, including concerns over the food not being Halal.

Despite the advantages of having a caregiver of the same ethno-cultural origin, there are also certain drawbacks that can arise. Schnur (1995) discusses that having a care provider of a different ethno-cultural background can also help newcomers in their adjustment and can help improve the whole family's English skills (Schnur, 1995). I also found this to be true, however to a lesser extent. Two of the participants, Joy and Magdalena, discussed their satisfaction with their children's language development through interaction with other children.

VIII. Conclusion

Accessible, affordable childcare is a necessary component of immigrant women's successful settlement process. In order for newcomer women to be able to leave the domestic realm and actively search for work (paid or voluntary) or school, they must first arrange a reliable form of care for their children. Although it is commonly assumed that immigrant women can rely on their families and kinship ties for childcare, this is not always the case. The situation may be that newcomers do not have family in Toronto or that the family they do have is unavailable or unwilling to help. In such cases, I found that there is a heavy reliance on non-kin, "weak" ties for information and help with childcare. Contrary to research which is very culturally specific, including Salaff and Greve (2004) who focus on the Chinese community; Menjivar (1997) who focuses on Salvadorean, Vietnamese and Mexican newcomers in the United States; Rose et al. (1998) who focus on Central American women in Montreal, my research demonstrates the importance and strength of "weak" ties and fictive-kin, regardless of ethnic and cultural origin. The women in my study turned to, or developed their "weak" social networks (friends, members of their ethnic communities, neighbours, employers, shelter staff), as a key source for information and childcare support. While these social networks are often referred to as "weak" in the literature, they proved to be quite "strong" and central for these immigrant women's settlement process, and particularly for help in finding childcare. Another significant component of the MRP, is the demonstration of the fluidity of "strong" and "weak" ties. These relationships are not fixed and invariable, but rather they are dynamic.

This Major Research Project gained an understanding of five newcomer women's experiences in navigating the childcare system in Toronto. I wanted to give the women an opportunity to voice their concerns and challenges they encountered. Also I wanted to demonstrate that in light of all of the hurdles and limitations that immigrant women face (for instance, an undeveloped childcare system, potentially poor quality of informal care, long wait lists, high costs, immigration status and no kinship networks), they are very resourceful and creative in finding childcare solutions.

As one of the participants stated, *"Necessity is the mother of invention."* When the women in the study were unable to access licensed, registered childcare, they found other ways to meet their needs. Through social networks and fictive kin relationships, the five women in the study were able to find care for their children so that they could work (Magdalena, Joy, Kasia) and attend school (Jamila), or at the very least, so that they could leave home once in a while without their children (Safiyah). Various strategies were used for childcare, including reciprocal childcare exchanges; seeking help from City of Toronto shelter staff; meeting and chatting with strangers in local ethnic grocery stores and attending *Ontario Early Years Centers*; as well as receiving help from neighbours and employers. These strategies are not unusual; however they further illustrate the avenues that many newcomer women may turn to for help with childcare in light of an inadequate, inaccessible childcare plan.

There were also some limitations to this study that should be elaborated on in future research. Given the short time frame, I was only able to recruit and interview five women. Although this is a reasonable (non-probability) sample size for a qualitative study, it is difficult to make generalizations from such a limited number of interviews. I

provided a class and gender analysis, however future research should attempt an in-depth race analysis in order to gain an understanding of racialized women's experiences. Such an analysis will also be useful for future policy changes and implications.

Future research should take place on a larger scale project that can allow for more time to research and recruit participants. It would be interesting to look at women from various ethnic groups to gain an understanding of not just their weak ties and social networks used for childcare but also to evaluate to what extent what Bourdieu (1986) and Arniel (2006) describe as the socio, political and economic factors may influence the participants in the sending and the receiving countries.

Despite the limitations of this study, I was able to highlight the importance of childcare, especially for immigrant women. My key finding is that the so-called "weak ties" are in fact very strong and important to immigrant women's settlement in Canada, especially in light of a faulty childcare system. I also found that despite numerous challenges that women faced, they were very resilient and creative finding care for their children. I interviewed five women and although I cannot generalize from such a limited number of interviews, I think this study gave some interesting insight into these women's lives. It also demonstrates that despite each woman's varied circumstances, whether they had relatives to assist them and/or whether they had full immigration status, when they wanted to look for paid work outside of the home, they had to arrange for childcare and this was not an easy task.

The MRP also brought to light the gaps in services and the need to develop a solid national childcare plan. Inaccessible childcare clearly prevented women from fully participating in Canadian society and at the very least was a major obstacle to greater

participation and settlement. The "burden" of care was disproportionately on their shoulders compared to their current or estranged husband's. With the increasing amount of immigrants arriving in Toronto, the ability for immigrant women to have an opportunity to leave the domestic realm is vital. The women in the study are very resourceful, however finding a suitable, trustworthy form of childcare should not be such a difficult and challenging endeavour. The Federal Government's strategy for childcare, the UCCB, of $100 a month does not address the many challenges and shortcoming within the existing childcare system and does not affect any positive changes for families, especially low-income and/or families with precarious immigration status.

When concluding interviews, I asked the women to describe what their ideal form of childcare would look like, as well as what areas are of utmost importance for them and their children. The main issues discussed by all of the women were affordability, quality of care, the hours of operations and extremely long waiting lists. As past research has demonstrated and childcare advocates have been arguing for decades, a more child-and family-friendly, culturally-sensitive, accessible, high quality childcare system is a necessity. Although all aspects of what an ideal childcare program would look like are important, policy makers need to prioritize the aforementioned needs. The focus should begin with ensuring quality care, which would make certain that all children are safe, well cared for, in a clean, safe space and are stimulated and challenged for their age group. On top of quality, policy makers must address the high costs and inaccessibility of care. Childcare in Toronto is particularly inaccessible to newcomer women as it is difficult to access and navigate through waiting lists, subsidies and high costs. In order for newcomer women with children to be able to adjust, participate and gratifyingly

contribute to Canadian society, a proper form of childcare that meets the needs of new immigrants must be developed. Without such a system, gender roles may crystallize and become entrenched, relegating immigrant women to the domestic realm. This may lead to the isolation and marginalization of a large population of women who are willing to enter the public sphere.

As was demonstrated, there is also a risk that children will be left in unsafe and unsuitable childcare with inappropriate caregivers. Although it was not discussed in the interviews, it is not inconceivable that a woman may be forced to leave her children alone and unsupervised in cases of emergencies. Regardless of what form of childcare a woman chooses, be it a formal daycare centre or an informal home setting, she should be able to know that her children are safe and well cared for. This is not an abstract, unimaginable notion. This is something that should have been put in place many years ago and that is needed in order for immigrant women to be able to successfully participate in Canadian society.

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Appendix I

Research Questions:

1) Social Reproduction: What kinds of challenges do immigrant mothers face when it comes to balancing family responsibilities (namely, childcare) and other settlement challenges (like learning English, pursuing education and/or finding and keeping paid employment).

2) Social Capital: What roles do formal and informal (weak and strong ties) networks play in accessing and using childcare? Who do newcomer mothers turn to? What are the strengths and weaknesses of these arrangements? Do women from different ethnic groups rely on different network types? Are there racial and or cultural differences in who women turn to? How successful are the arrangements?

3) What challenges and barriers do mothers encounter when it comes to childcare? Are there cross-cultural variations in the challenges faced? Racial variations? What role does immigration status (non-status) play in the types of barriers faced?

4) How do newcomer (immigrant/status and non-status) mothers overcome some of these challenges and barriers? Who/what do they turn to?

5) What needs to change to make the managing paid and unpaid work (namely, childcare) easier for newcomer mothers?

Appendix II
Demographic Survey

Please state your current age

In what year did you immigrate to Canada?

Did you immigrate with children?
What are their ages?

Please tell us your marital status.

Response

Married
Single
Common-Law
Divorced/Separated
Widowed
Other

Do you currently live with your fathers children?
Yes ___
No ___ (if no please answer the question below)

Is your child(ren's) father currently involved with them?
Yes - He is a full custodial parent
Yes - He visits regularly
He is somewhat involved
No - He is not involved with my child(ren)
Other (please specify)

What is your country of origin?

What is your ethnicity?

What is your partner's ethnicity?

Please tell us how many hours per week your child(ren) are in daycare.

40 Hours or More Per Week
30 - 39 Hours Per Week
20 - 29 Hours Per Week
10 - 19 Hours Per Week
Less Than 10 Hours Per Week
Other (please specify)

Please tell us how much you currently pay for daycare per child per month:

Less Than $200
$200 - $499
$500 - $799
$800 - $1099
$1100 - $1499
$1500 or More
Other (please specify)

What is your primary source of household income?

My own job
Spouse or Partner's Job
Social Assistance
Parent or Other Family Member
Savings
Inheritance
Other (please specify)

Please tell us your average household income for last year?

Under $25,000
$25,000 - $34,999
$35,000 - $44,999
$45,000 - $54,999
$55,000 - $64,999
$65,000 - $74,999
$75,000 - $99,999
More than $100,000

Please tell us about your living arrangement. Do you:

Rent a House
Rent an Apartment
Own a House
Own a Condominium/Apartment
Share with extended family?
Other?

Please tell us your level of education.

	From Canada	From Abroad
School: Grade K-8		
School: Some High School		
School: High School Graduate		
College: Some College		
College: College Graduate		

University: Some University
University: Undergraduate Degree
Post-Graduate Work: Some Post-Graduate Studies
Post-Graduate Work: Post-Graduate Degree
Other (please specify)

Appendix III
Interview Guides

1. How many children do you have?

2. What age is your child(ren)?

3. Are you currently working or attending school?
    Are you currently on Maternity Leave?
    Do you intend to go back to work?

4. Do you have extended family in Toronto? In Canada?
    If yes: what family members?
            How often do you see them?
            How important have they been in helping you with your settlement into the city?
    Prompt: have they helped you find housing? Employment? Child-Care?

5. Do you have friends of the same ethnic origin?
    If yes: how important have they been in helping you with your settlement into the city?
    Prompt: have they helped you find housing? Employment? Child-care?

    Do you have friends of a different Ethnic Origin/background?
    If yes: how important have they been in helping you with your settlement into the city?
    Prompt: have they helped you find housing? Employment? Child-care?

6. Have you tried to apply for a registered daycare with the City of Toronto?
    If yes: What were your experiences?
            How did you find the costs of the daycare?
            Did you apply for a subsidy?
            Where you able to find a daycare spot or was there a waitlist?

    If no: What were your reasons for not choosing childcare through the City of Toronto?

    Prompt: Have there been problems that you have run into?
    Prompt: Have there been people who have helped you get things sorted out?

7.   How important was a previously established ethnic community in the search for childcare? Did community members help you or did you use other methods, such as immigrant serving agencies?

8.   a. What forms of child-care are you currently using?

i.   Registered Daycare
ii.   Registered Home Daycare
iii.   Co-operative form of daycare? (exchange hours, no cost)
iv.   Informal daycare/caregiver (family, friends; cost or no cost)

Prompt: who takes care for your children when you are at work/school? (Family? Friends? Neighbours?)
Prompt: How long have you been using this form of child-care?
Prompt: How do you get to the caregiver (transportation)? How long does it take?
Prompt: Are there other children with your child? Is this important to you?
Prompt: Do you have to provide food for your child(ren)? Diapers? Snacks? Formula?
Prompt: How flexible is the current arrangement/situation? What happens if you are running late?
Prompt: Is this the only person you count on or do you have multiple arrangements?

b. If you do not have a childcare arrangement, what have your experience of working or attending school been like? What are some of the challenges you have encountered?

9.   How did you find this type of child-care? What have your experiences been like?

Prompt: Are your networks reliable
Prompt: Who is involved in you child-care network?
Prompt: How did you meet?
Prompt: Are you paying for child-care or keeping track of time and hours owed? Or something else?

10.   How did you decide on this form of care and why?

Prompt: Is it reliable? Do you feel comfortable leaving your child while you go to work/school?
Prompt: What are the advantages to this form of care for your children?
Prompt: What are some of the disadvantages?
Prompt: What do you do when your child is sick?

11.   Has this form of child-care given you the opportunity to work or attend school or language classes?

12.   Overall, what has it been like trying to find child-care in Toronto?

13.   Ideally what type of care arrangement would be best for you? For your child?

③
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