Do Tied Movers Get ‘Tied Down’?
The Occupational Displacement of Immigrant Women in Canada

**Rupa Banerjee**, Assistant Professor
Ted Rogers School of Business Management
Ryerson University, Toronto, Canada

**Mai Phan**, Postdoctoral Fellow
Department of Sociology
McMaster University, Hamilton, Canada
Motivation

- New immigrants in Canada face significant occupational displacement.
- Immigrant women often experience ‘double’ (or ‘triple’) negative effects associated with sex, immigrant status and race.
The Importance of the Family Unit

- Most immigrants to Canada arrive as family units.
- Family dynamics may play a significant role in post-migration labour market outcomes.
- In most traditional immigrating families, the husband is the principle applicant, while the wife is a dependent applicant.
Migration has a particularly negative effect on highly skilled women’s careers.

- Family investment hypothesis
- Gender role theory
Research Question

Does being a ‘tied mover’ affect immigrant women’s labour market adjustment and lead to low-skill employment?
Data Sources

Study uses mixed-methods using quantitative and qualitative analysis

- Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada
- 22 Semi-structured interviews with skilled recent immigrants to Canada
Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada: LSIC (waves 1-3)

- Included respondents who had worked previously in their country of origin and intended to work in Canada; must be employed in at least one wave to be included in the model.
- Between the ages 25-64 years at the first interview
- Excluded refugees and business class
- With these restrictions, N = 5,055
- Among men: 65% are skilled principle applicants
- Among women: 47% are skilled principle applicants
Outcome Variable: Relative Job Prestige

- Job prestige created by Boyd (2008) using regression models that took into account level of education and earnings for each occupational title.

- Job prestige scores range from 0-100.

- Relative job prestige is the difference between the prestige scores of the main job held at each wave (at 6 months, 2 years and 4 years post-migration) and the last job held in the home country.
Explanatory Variables

- Skilled principle/dependent applicant or family class
- Pre-migration occupation (professional/non professional)
- Region of origin
- Education (University degree)
- English/French language ability (scale 0-5)
- Marital status (married/common-law status)
- Number of children
Growth Curve Modeling

- Specialized application for longitudinal data
- Describes and predicts within and between-person differences in the time trajectory of a response variable
- Offers numerous advantages to other methods of studying change:
  - Allows the inclusion of individuals even if they are not assessed at all time points
  - Can include both time-varying and time-invariant explanatory variables
  - Can estimate both intra-individual changes and inter-individual differences in changes in the outcome variable(s)
Growth curve model

Level 1 model:

\[ Y_{ti} = \pi_{0i} + \pi_{1i}(wave_{ti}) + \pi_{2i}X_{ati} + \varepsilon_{ti} \]

Level 2 model:

\[ \pi_{0i} = \beta_{00} + \beta_{01}IMMCL_{i} + \beta_{02}X_{bi} + \upsilon_{0i} \]

\[ \pi_{1i} = \beta_{10} + \beta_{11}IMMCL_{i} + \beta_{12}X_{bi} + \upsilon_{1i} \]

\[ \pi_{2i} = \beta_{20i} \]
Findings: Gender and occupational displacement among professionals

Figure 1: Job Prestige Scores of Immigrants by Gender and Pre-Migration Occupation

- Professional/Managerial Men
- Professional/Managerial Women
- Non-professional Men
- Non-professional Women

Pre-migration and time in Canada

Job prestige score

Pre-migration and time in Canada
Figure 2A: Occupational Mobility of Professional Immigrant Men
Figure 2B: Occupational Mobility of Professional Immigrant Women

- Skilled Principle Applicant
- Skilled Dependent
- Family Class
Interviews

- 22 skilled immigrants (8 couples) who had worked in professional or management occupations before arriving to Canada
- Recruited by advertising through several large immigrant-serving non-profit organizations in the GTA and in Ottawa
- Telephone interviews, 1-2 hours
- 64% of men are principal applicants
- 36% of women are principal applicants
“...I applied as an economic immigrant and so ...you get a score or a mark by the degree or by the occupation. So the score I have is higher than my wife’s.”

“No conflicts between me and my wife about who would be the principal applicant...We knew at that time that it would make no difference for us as long as we were immigrating to Canada as a joint family, me my wife and daughter...Except the master’s degree, that gave me 35 additional points to make the 80 plus mark. That is how it was decided.”
Results: Gendered division of labour

“I guess culturally, women have been taught to ... well in my culture we are supposed to take care of the family regardless of the importance of your profession or your work... Once you are back home you are still the mother and wife.”

“We tried to balance our lives but actually my husband was the main income earner so I was mainly taking care of the home and kids.”
Lack of domestic support:

“In India we never had to do this type of work like cleaning... Here each and every thing we have to do on our own... We were not that kind of rich to have all of these things available. But still we could afford over there because labour is cheap there.”

“The extended family – my mother-in-law and father-in-law, they helped me take care of the kids.”

“...back home we lived together with my parents. We had a large apartment and lived together and they were helping us look after our kids.”
Summary

Migrating as a ‘tied-mover’ associated with significant occupational displacement:

- However, this appears to apply only to immigrants who worked in professional-managerial occupations prior migration.

- Spousal/dependent applicants experience great occupational displacement, net of human capital differences.
Professional principle applicants devote more of their time to re-establishing their careers;

Dependent applicants tend to take on a supportive and care-giving role within the family.

Since dependent applicants are disproportionately women, this leads to a gender-based occupational inequity among immigrants.
Implications

- Not only do immigrant women face barriers related to credential and experience recognition, must also deal with the conflict between labour market adjustment and their roles within their family units.

- Recent changes to the Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSWP) focuses on the human capital of spousal applicants
Thank you!