CRUSHED HOPES:

Underemployment and deskilling among skilled migrant women

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FOREWORD

The situation of women in international migration flows has gained significant attention in migration studies and public debate over the past few years. In particular, the fact that women increasingly choose migration as a strategy, both independently and as part of a family, is evidence of their improved level of autonomy worldwide.

Nevertheless, although they are more present than ever among people on the move, enjoying greater access to higher education and often being very skilled, women are still underrepresented within the most sought-after professions such as business management, engineering and information technologies. In turn, women dominate in professions linked to social reproduction such as health, education and culture. The skills attached to such social reproduction professions are unfortunately less valued on the labour market; thus, these skills tend also to be less transferable from one country to another, with the result that qualified women are often unable to apply their skills and find appropriate employment after they relocate.

This phenomenon of highly qualified migrants being pushed into underemployment or lower-skilled occupations, with the risk of losing their skills, is a reality with strong negative economic and social implications for migrants themselves and also for host and home countries. This deskilling is also a manifestation of the stiff barriers that remain to the mobility of people and talents.

Through a broad review of literature on the gender dimension of deskilling and case studies from Quebec, Geneva and the United Kingdom, this publication intends to illustrate the professional setbacks that can derive from migration for qualified women and the far-reaching impact such losses may have on their well-being, sense of identity and family relationships.

I am confident that the analysis of the economic and social implications presented in this report will contribute to advance the international debate on skilled migration. I also hope that the interesting findings of this work will be used by various actors, including migrants' associations, to advocate for improved integration systems likely to better tap into the skills and experience of migrant women.

However, this study must be seen as the starting point of a more comprehensive effort to comprehend the long-term consequences of migration on women's empowerment and personal development in countries of destination. With a stronger understanding of the social dynamics involved in migration, the international community can then rightly address the needs of women migrants and enhance their contribution to their host and home communities.

William Lacy Swing
IOM Director General

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A broad review of the literature

Blandine Mollard is a Project Officer in the Gender Coordination Unit of IOM. She has a background in international law and international relations. Her work at IOM consists of providing expertise on the inclusion of gender concerns in migration management, and she has particular expertise in issues surrounding the topic of gender and labour migration.

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GENDER, MIGRATION AND DESKILLING

A broad review of the literature

Blandine Mollard
Sanober Umar

Introduction

The global economy is increasingly characterized by two important phenomena. The first is the ever-growing importance of knowledge-based activities such as services, including finance and trade, communication, education, information technology (IT) and insurance (OECD, 1996), with estimations highlighting that half of the gross domestic product (GDP) of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries is derived from human capital. The second phenomenon is the unprecedented mobility of people within and across borders, with migration flows which tend to be increasingly feminized.

These two parallel and mutually influencing trends explain how highly skilled workers often become one of the most precious production factors and, as such, worthy of being deployed from all over the world. As a consequence, several industrialized countries have established immigration systems likely to attract and select migrants best able to integrate into and contribute to the host country economy. Within this equation, the situation of women is complex.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has recognized the deeply gendered nature of migration and its varying impacts on women, particularly given the fact that public and private demarcations in the economy lead many migrant women to work in the informal and unregulated sectors of the economy.

To give visibility to the under-researched topic of deskilling of migrant women, IOM has undertaken this research project with the objective of taking stock of the existing literature on the topic, carrying out some primary research on the various facets of deskilling among migrant women and drawing policy conclusions and making recommendations to mitigate the impact of deskilling on women and optimize the benefits of migration for qualified migrant women.

This introductory chapter describes how the literature on migration points towards its gendered nature and its specific impact on women, who can be further marginalized within a global economy that often fails to take into account their skills. It seeks to account for the way in which the gendered dimension of the

phenomenon of highly skilled migrants being unable to transfer their skills when relocating to a new country, or deskilling, has been treated in recent migration literature. It is of particular importance to grasp the way in which migration research has conceptualized and outlined the issue, as this has important implications for the types of policy options derived from such research.

This chapter is followed by three chapters, each relating to cases studies on the psychosocial aspects of underemployment and deskilling among qualified migrant women. Focusing on three contexts as geographically, politically and socially different as Quebec, the United Kingdom and Geneva, the case studies highlight how migration may affect women's ability to use their human capital.

In the second chapter, the author describes the situation of health professionals in the United Kingdom who work as care workers. It describes how the unmet demand for unskilled care services for individuals and in nursing homes results in stiff barriers for skilled migrant women to move from care work to professional certification. It gives voice to the difficulties and frustration experienced by those women as their migration experience falls short of their expectations.

In the third chapter, the research in Geneva examines the effect deskilling and underemployment may have on the lives of qualified migrant women employed in occupations below their levels of education and professional experience. By looking into issues such as well-being, anxiety and resilience, the study sheds light on the emotional and psychological costs of this loss of professional status.

The fourth chapter focuses on the strategies used by migrant women from various cultural backgrounds in dealing with the loss of professional status as a result of migration to Quebec. These strategies are analysed in the context of their family and marital relationships.

Lastly, the conclusions summarize the recommendations made by the different authors and call for policy options likely to prevent and mitigate the difficulties related to deskilling.

Gender and deskilling in migration studies

Conceptualizing skills

Any discussion on the phenomenon of deskilling requires an understanding of the meaning of "skills". However, this term remains rather ambiguous, particularly in relation to migrants, thus highlighting the complexity of the issue from the outset.

Most scholars describe migrant workers with tertiary education as being skilled; however, even this category contains a hierarchy of skilled and highly skilled workers (Iredale, 2005). Highly skilled workers are distinguished from low-skilled or simply skilled workers on the basis of skills acquired either in their education or occupational area of specialization. The notion of "skills" is often referred to as the learning outcome acquired in either the formal or informal environment (Sabadie et al., 2010). However, several countries adopt a more narrow understanding of the concept, such as that contained in the Australian Standard Classification of Occupations, which defines skill levels as "a function of the range and complexity of the set of tasks involved. The greater the range and complexity of the set of tasks, the higher the skill level of the occupation. The criteria to measure skill level are the formal education and/or training (i.e. primary, secondary or tertiary education) and previous experience usually required for entry to the occupation." (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1997). Variables such as formal education and previous experience are defined as per institutional structures of the host country requirements. Other analysts of the concept, such as Freeman, have expressed certain uneasiness from a policy perspective. He points out the dilemma that policymakers face in terms of whether skills should be assessed on the basis of occupational shortages in a particular field or on the basis of whatever field the candidate excels in (Freeman, 1999). After all, the definition of a skilled migrant is also influenced by occupations in demand, such as the information technology sector (United Nations, 1995). Batalova and Lowell (2005) point out that the "recognition of qualifications of skilled workers varies across countries, which makes comparative research using international migration statistics difficult." The lack of a consistent definition or methodological conception has caused several problems.

In particular, these definitions matter in the context of job requirements as most countries, including the United States, offer work permits to "highly skilled migrants" who have both occupational experience and high educational degrees that are recognized. McGuinness (2006) points out that, on the one hand, there has been an incredible rise in the number of students pursuing arts and humanities degrees (particularly in the United Kingdom); on the other hand, there has been an increase in demand for vocational skills. He concludes that it is not the size of the market, but the level of competition, that effects people to accept jobs that are not commensurate with their qualifications.

In this literature review, the problem of conceptualization is particularly highlighted by the fact that a number of scholars writing on skilled migration move on to discuss the complexities of the phenomenon without defining their key terms, used rather normatively in their narrative analysis. This leaves little scope for an absolute measurement or criterion of skills. However, some feminist scholars have tried to nail down the problem of rigid definitions. In this regard, Zulauf (2001)

discusses the fact that "skills" are ideologically constructed, with some competencies being defined as skills and others being excluded from the definition, mostly on the basis of gender stereotypes. Other scholars such as Kofman (2000, 2007) further argue that the notion of "skilled work" tends to only encompass production sectors that directly contribute to the economy and therefore tends to exclude professions linked to social reproduction. Consequently, competencies linked to occupations related to welfare and social reproduction sectors (education, culture, social work, nursing, etc.) are likely to be considered as inherently feminine qualities rather than skills.

This vision of skilled occupations influenced by gender stereotypes results in most migrant admission systems giving priority to professions and occupations in which men dominate, such as upper-level business management, information technology, engineering and finance, over occupations of welfare and social reproduction in which women tend to be over-represented, such as education, social work and nursing. Equally, authors have argued that such admission systems tend to favour highly transposable skills (Mattoo et al., 2008) and expertise that is not context- or culture-bound (Kofman, 2007), most commonly found in unregulated occupations in which skills and credentials are easily transferred over nationally defined and codified professions.

This particularly affects women because they largely work in professions that are linked with social reproduction and seen as an extension of women's traditional roles (Zulauf, 2001). Therefore, defining skills without a gendered lens prevents us from understanding a broader perspective of issues connected thereto, such as the lack of recognition of skills or "deskilling".

Conceptualizing deskilling

Deskilling is yet another complex phenomenon, derived from our understanding of skills. In the literature that was used for this exercise, it was often referred to as underemployment (Jong and Madamba, 2001), downward occupational mobility (Bauer and Zimmermann, 1999), degrading of skills (Grandea, 2008), over-qualification (Chen et al., 2010), over-education (Chiswick and Miller, 2009), job mismatch (Pecoraro, 2011) and skill erosion (Galgóczi et al., 2009). Deskilling can broadly be defined as a situation in which migrant workers occupy jobs not commensurate with their qualifications and experience. Nonnenmacher (2007) explains that this usually occurs (although it is not the only factor) due to the non-recognition of professional qualifications of migrant workers, such as their diplomas, which "determines whether the knowledge and professional skills of the applicant are appropriate to undertake a particular profession in the receiving country." Here she draws a distinction between regulated (e.g. nurses) and unregulated professions

(e.g. nannies), pointing out that the former is more prone to be subjected to the institutional practices of the host country. Scholars such as Balakrishnan (1997) define this process of skill erosion as a phenomenon that occurs when a migrant does not make use of skills over time. Another interesting term that tries to conceptualize this situation is "mismatched underemployment". Flatau et al. (1995) define this within the larger context of "invisible underemployment", which refers to employment inadequacy. "Mismatched underemployment" occurs when a worker's skills, knowledge and capacities could be better utilized in an occupation other than that in which they are employed and hence comes within the framework of "invisible underemployment".

The related notions of "brain waste" and "brain drain" are also often used to describe the situation of skilled migrant workers, as well as the negative effects of deskilling. "Brain drain" is used to describe the migration of skilled workers from the perspective of the sending country, since these workers, by leaving their country of origin, are no longer contributing directly to their home country's economy, infrastructure, provision of public services and overall development. "Brain waste", for its part, seeks to describe the multifaceted dimension of the loss incurred when migrants' skills, qualifications and job experience acquired in the country of origin are not recognized abroad or not tapped effectively, thus affecting not only the sending country but also the host country (Moreno-Fontes Chammartin, 2008). Therefore, the sending country, the receiving country and the migrant (including their families and communities) all suffer in different and often overlapping ways from brain drain and brain waste.

These numerous definitions and ideas demonstrate that the concept of skills and deskilling is discussed from various perspectives. It is particularly important to investigate these trends from a gender perspective, given that there is a shortage of literature on the gendered aspect of migration – most reviews deal with the causes of migration rather than those migrating and the context in which they do so.

Evolution of gendered perspectives in migration studies

Before the 1970s, migration analysis was largely dominated by neoclassical views which did not take into account factors such as ethnicity, class, race and gender. However, in the 1970s these views were largely dismissed and a more complex approach was adopted to look into a wider spectrum that reflected the multiple ways in which migration operated and affected the experiences of these workers. There was increasing recognition that women were as likely as men to migrate to the United States and other Western countries from their respective developing nations. However, as pointed out by Curran and Saguy (2001), "This phase of scholarship added important new evidence, but, in many cases, women migrants

were presented as a special case." The focus was mostly on production relations, ignoring the patriarchal structuring of such relations as it emphasized migration only in economic and political terms.

The feminist movement of the 1980s had an impact on the understanding of migratory patterns from a gender viewpoint. By the 1990s researchers tried to break the public/private dichotomies to address the concerns of migrant women and their experiences in an increasingly globalized labour market, where many women worked in the informal domestic sector, or in what some scholars have termed the "care economy" (Sassen, 2000). Many scholars have taken into account how the household economy becomes a critical site for gender and migration and how there is a need for researchers to not only view its positive and negative impacts on women, but also the context within which migration takes place to reinforce gender asymmetries or, alternatively, provide a space for reworking the status of women (Piper and Roces, 2003).

Scholars such as Sassen have pointed out that the disparity in wealth between the global North and South due to neo-liberalism has led women from the global South to reinforce traditional roles of women as caregivers (along the praxis of class and ethnicity) when they migrate to the North, given the lack of other options available to them in a highly gender-segregated labour market. According to her, there has been a shortage of labour supply in care chains among women from the global North who have been acquiring more "professional/vocational/highly skilled" degrees. Consequently, in the context of ever-reduced family-friendly public policies, this has opened avenues for women from the global South to look after the children and the increasingly ageing population of the North (Sassen, 2000). This system was further perpetrated by not recognizing the qualifications of these migrant women (through various factors, institutional and otherwise), thereby leading to their deskilling. However, the limitation of this kind of analysis is that there has been a tendency to feminize migration to only the reproductive sphere rather than focus on deskilling in the mobilization of migrant workers. Although female migrant workers tend to dominate the sex and domestic industries, the contribution and difficulties faced by female migrants who manage to enter other skilled sectors of the economy and still face deskilling of another kind – such as the inability to move up the professional hierarchical ladder – should not be overlooked.

Migrant women in skilled migration flows

One of the biggest problems in analysing the flow of skilled women migrants is their virtual "invisibility" in data collection. Kofman blames redundant research methodologies which have primarily focused their empiricism either along the lines of the global cities paradigm or on individuals. She points out that the global cities

paradigm is influenced by a world systems analysis that ignores social dimensions and their connection with economics (Kofman, 2000).

In such a scenario, either migrant women are seen only as casual labourers in the informal sector (as discussed above), or cities are viewed as sites of financial concentration. These centres of financial concentration, however, usually tend to be dominated by the male elite in senior managerial positions despite the entry of women, including migrant women, in these professions. On the other hand, little attention has been paid to highly skilled feminized sectors of the economy such as health care. The lack of gendered data, as mentioned earlier, further obliterates the presence of highly skilled women migrants, which Kofman sees as a result of the neo-liberal agenda adopted by many governments since the 1980s. These elements reduce the role of migrants to only "wealth generators" for the host economy especially. She considers that such a limited economic approach does not take into account how employers can exploit skilled migrants in the workplace under the pretext of "training", while simultaneously utilizing their skills and not giving them jobs and salaries commensurate with their qualifications.

Other approaches, such as focusing on individual male or female migrants, fail to take into account the changing social structures in the societies of emigration and what impact they may have on highly educated migrant women who have entered a number of professions. In addition, Kofman (2000) also asserts that we need to challenge popular notions that all migrant women are unskilled and, even within the skilled categorization, to understand that different groups of women have to confront and negotiate a diversity of factors while dealing with immigration policies.

Although in recent years efforts have been made by different sets of scholars to quantify the flow of skilled migrant women, their conclusions have not been consistent. The literature on the flow of highly skilled migrants is heavily dependent on reports provided by OECD countries due to poor monitoring of migration flows in general by most developing countries in the global South. Therefore, even in terms of data analysis, there is a lack of literature. In addition, although statistics in *The World's Women 2010* acknowledge difficulties in gauging the number of migrant women in the world, the authors believe that, with the rise in education and mobility of women worldwide, the migrant rate has been balanced by sex (United Nations, 2010). Abella (2003) further points out that within this increasing flow of migrants, most OECD countries adopt liberal policies for entry status of highly skilled labourers. Interestingly – and more importantly for this literature review – statistics provided by Allan and Larsen have also shown that emigration rates to OECD countries of highly skilled women often exceed those of their male counterparts (Allan and Larsen, 2003). Along the same lines, Dumont et al. (2007)

have shown in their analysis that women from developing countries with tertiary education have a higher propensity to migrate than men with the same level of qualifications. However, Docquier et al. (2009) concluded through their empirical and analytical methodology that there is no proof to suggest that skilled women have a higher tendency than skilled men to migrate. It is nevertheless pertinent to note here that they acknowledge that this conclusion excludes the presence of a "genetic or social female-biased gender gap in brain drain." Nonetheless, from a brain drain perspective, both sets of scholars unanimously agree that, given the fact that most developing countries invest less in girls' and women's education, the flow of highly skilled women is a cause of concern for labour productivity in the origin country's economy. For the present literature review, this concern can also be applied to brain waste specifically, that is, when skilled migrant women's potential is not recognized and tapped in the host country. This represents a loss not just for the migrants and the host economy, but also in terms of the amount of remittances sent to the home country.

Analysing deskilling from a gender perspective

In recent research, there has been a rise in literature about the "professionalization" of the labour market and how this affects the deskilling of migrant women. Ribeiro (2008) remarks: "[Their] migratory experiences tend to be perceived in the context of female vulnerabilities, such as physical, sexual and verbal abuse. With some exceptions, areas such as access to employment, the integration in the workplace and career progression mostly remain unexplored." Curran and Saguy (2001) make a similar point about the gender blindness of most research on the concept of brain drain, pointing out that little is known about the experiences of social mobility and higher level of ambitions of migrant women.

Therefore, the main concerns of these studies were "gender-related problems", such as sexual harassment, changes in sexual conduct, family planning, single-parent families or health problems. As a result, the role of women as post-migratory participants in the productive sphere was overlooked and they were instead depicted as passive victims of the migration process.

Hence, there is a need to move beyond essentialist representations of women as a homogenous group, as many feminist critiques have pointed out. Ribeiro (2008) suggests taking into account the institutional factors at play which affect migratory patterns and examining them from a gender perspective. This would also mean taking into account the reasons for migration and occupational experience in the countries of origin – and the "formal" and "informal" credential recognition and internal labour market segmentation in the country of destination. Therefore, the

understanding of deskilling among migrant women cannot be complete without taking into account market mechanisms of professionalism, which is to say, the constitution of an identified professional group. As pointed out by Saks and Kuhlmann (2006), selective inclusion and exclusion mechanisms launched under the professional recognition process are based on formal citizenship status and place of accreditation, which produce a complexly stratified system of rights. Therefore, the intersecting gender order in this system requires further analysis.

In addition, according to some scholars, such as Witz (1992), the restrictive access to certain markets, such as the medical sector in Europe, shows how the regulatory power of professionalism and the embedded tensions between exclusionary tactics and social inclusion continue to matter, but in a globalized version that amalgamates classic exclusionary tactics of the professions with citizenship status. Such strategies that result in the deskilling of highly skilled migrant women need to be further explored.

It is also crucial to mention here that much of the migration literature focuses on knowledge-based industries such as the IT sector, where men usually dominate (Raghuram, 2008). Although there are still knowledge gaps in this field from a gendered perspective, an increasing number of studies have shown that most female migrants do in fact have tertiary education, but the lack of gendered data obscures this and consequently the effects of migration on women, including deskilling, are overlooked (Kofman and Raghuram, 2009).

Are women disproportionately affected by deskilling?

Likelihood of deskilling for men and women

The summary findings of a report prepared for the European Commission in 2008 exposed some stark realities concerning migrant women in Europe (Rubin et al., 2008). First, it revealed that migrant women from third countries were at greater risk of unemployment than third-country migrant men, EU migrants and native-born women.

Clearly, dimensions other than migrant status have to be taken into account given this scenario. Nonetheless, this conclusion implicitly goes on to show how the chances of migrant women taking up jobs not commensurate with their qualifications are significantly higher than native-born women and migrant men. Indeed, this crucial aspect of deskilling is further brought to the fore by statistics in the report which reveal that not only was underemployment higher among migrant

women than than among native-born women; it was also higher among migrant women than among migrant men. Here, the gender dimension of migration accentuates their situation further.

The report also draws attention to the fact that migrant men are more likely to suffer in the job market than native-born women. However, the worst off were migrant women, lagging behind migrant men in terms of job opportunities that meet their skills. Hence, migrant women have a "double disadvantage" because of their status as both migrants and women.

Here too, both native-born and migrant women face obstacles of a gender-segregated market as they are both concentrated in service sector occupations, albeit at differing rates. Migrant men, on the other hand, have a wider choice and market for various occupational sectors. Contrary to this, migrant women tend to be more heavily deployed in low-skilled service sector jobs such as domestic work, cleaning and child care, thereby diminishing their chances of upward mobility in the labour market. This consequently increases their rate of deskilling compared with migrant men and native women, even though several studies have shown that the number of migrant women with tertiary education is on a par with migrant men in many regions.

Taking into account the increasing demands of the skilled labour force due to globalization and higher competition, the report showed that highly skilled migrants had better chances of integrating into the labour market if judged through indices such as labour participation, unemployment rates and employment rates. Yet third-country migrant women were systematically disadvantaged compared with their counterparts who had an equivalent education. The researchers point out that: "High-education migrant women are more 'at risk' than native-born women of equivalent education of being 'under-employed', that is in employment that requires a lower level of education than they hold. Third-country migrant women of high education levels are more likely than either native-born or EU-born migrant women to be employed in low-skilled sectors of employment. High-education migrant women born outside the EU are twice as likely to be employed in low-skill jobs as EU-born and native-born women with the same level of education." (Rubin et al., 2008).

Jolly and Reeves observe that, in countries undergoing economic transition such as Eastern Europe and the Russian Federation, there is a growing trend of women being unemployed and deskilled. Russian women, for instance, with secondary and tertiary education levels are migrating in great numbers to Thailand to become sex workers (Jolly and Reeves, 2005). This deskilling phenomenon is also affecting women originating from other regions such as Africa, Asia and Latin America. For

example, women from the Philippines holding university degrees are increasingly travelling to the Arab Gulf region to work as housemaids (Kofman and Raghuram, 2009). These authors also point out that women from OECD minority groups adopt a similar migration strategy. They indicate that, in some countries – particularly in Southern Europe – this was due to shortages in less skilled sectors (especially domestic labour), highly protected skilled sectors and non-recognition of non-EU qualifications. Within Europe, women migrants from the Eastern European accession countries were also affected by deskilling – the bulk of migrants since 2004 have filled low-skilled jobs in old EU countries. Although now covered by EU regulations, it is not yet clear to what extent they wil be able to move into more qualified employment reflecting their educational level (Kofman and Raghuram, 2009).

Occurrence of deskilling linked to women's entry status

The entry status of migrant women is of importance when pinpointing the occurrence of deskilling. Bolzman, in his work on the transferability of migrants' qualifications, notes that the risk of deskilling for migrants seems higher for those who have not been admitted as workers but who entered Switzerland through other schemes such as marriage migration, family reunification or asylum streams. He explains this phenomenon by pointing out the general preconception by employers and institutions that such migrants' qualifications do not necessarily meet the demands of the local job market (Bolzman, 2007). Other authors draw attention to the fact that a migrant's status on arrival has implications for the variety of jobs available in the market, the ways of finding employment and the recognition of foreign degrees in the country to which they have migrated (Iredale, 2005). In particular, the fact that women who migrate tend to be assigned the status of being dependent on male members of the family leads to a devaluation of their qualifications as an independent person (Zaman, 2008). Therefore, despite the human capital they might bring with them and their willingness to enter the labour force, the migration of women as "trailing spouses" tends not to be considered as economic in nature and their contribution to society is assumed to be limited to the social sphere (Kofman, 2000). As a result, the skills of women migrating under schemes not related to employment, namely refugee, family and student migration, tend to be overlooked (Kofman, 2007; Kofman and Raghuram, 2006).

Similarly, highlighting the relation between entry status and deskilling of migrant women, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia has pointed out that, besides exploitation at the workplace, female migrant workers may face severe consequences and discrimination depending on their entry status in the labour-receiving State. Women in particular tend to have fewer entitlements due to their different entry status – if women are viewed as "dependants" their

rights may be legally based on the migration and residency of their husbands, keeping some women in possible abusive relationships (UNESCWA, 2007).

This brings to mind regions in the Middle East where the entry status of migrant women is seen as "dependent" on the "independent" migrant status of men. Therefore, admission policies not only tend to reinforce patriarchal notions of familial power equations between men and women, but also make it difficult for women to secure permission for entering paid work if they are initially classified as "dependants." Consequently, women may face a lack of job opportunities and be compelled to take up jobs that might be below their level of qualifications due to a limited market.

In addition, women migrants may also be prohibited from working in the host State as their migrant work status is contractual, dependent solely on the terms and condition laid down by the employer. For instance, in Gulf countries such as Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, the entry status of migrant domestic workers is dependent on a concept called *kafala* (sponsorship), by which a migrant woman's entry status is tied to her employer who serves as her "sponsor". This practice leaves workers who flee abusive situations exposed to being arrested or deported for being out of status in the country (Migrant Rights, 2010).

However, it should be pointed out that domestic work is often the first work opportunity for many migrant women. Some manage to change sectors later – some do not – but it is often a starting point even for skilled women with entry permits. A large number of highly skilled workers from developing countries accept low-skilled jobs in Western countries with hopes of subsequent upward mobility (ICMPD, 2005).

Yet it should not be presumed that countries open to highly skilled migrants integrate these women into their markets. Riaño and Baghdadi have shown that, despite Switzerland's recently adopted migration policies that give preference to skilled migrants, women with high human capital from various regions, such as Latin America, the Middle East and South-Eastern Europe, are not integrated into the market (Riaño and Baghdadi, 2005). As Boyd aptly states in the context of entry status: "In destination countries, state immigration policies, migrant policies and gender policies determine the rights and entitlements of migrant women and men; contained within these policies are capacities to facilitate gender equality or perpetuate gender inequalities" (Boyd, 2006). From a more holistic perspective, it could be claimed that the position of women in both sending and receiving societies determines the economic and social opportunities available to them to allow their skills to be effectively tapped in the market.

What is keeping skilled migrant women away from qualified jobs?

Family constraints and change of roles linked to migration

Deskilling is a phenomenon that affects both men and women, albeit differently and with more severe consequences for women given the prevailing tendency in neo-liberal economies to overlook their "private" constraints. Across several research studies carried out in Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom, the act of migrating itself is associated with a reduced labour market participation for migrant women (Ho and Alcorso, 2004; Man, 2004; Ho, 2006; Liversage, 2009; Meares, 2010) for various reasons linked to work permits, lack of recognition of degrees obtained abroad, low value given to professional experience acquired before migration or lack of demand for their specific skills, or discrimination based on gender and ethnicity.

In particular, it has been observed that this reduced occupational activity and the loss of traditional support structures (such as family, friends and domestic help) in the new context combine to induce an increase in their household and childcare responsibilities, which can include the tasks of facilitating the settling in of husbands (Yeoh and Willis, 2005), managing the integration of children and establishing new social networks, thereby leading to a phenomenon of "escalation in women's roles as wives and mothers and a concurrent reduction in their role as income earners" (Meares, 2010). Certain authors have qualified this phenomenon of unwanted return to a traditional homemaking role as the "domestication" or "feminization" of skilled migrant women (Liversage, 2009). As a result of these increased family responsibilities, authors have commented on childcare being an important factor likely to affect the capacity of skilled women who migrate with young children to pursue their career and take on high-level jobs in the host country (Bolzman, 2007; Cooke, 2007; Riaño and Baghdadi, 2007; Pecoraro, 2011).

Unmet demand for low-skilled labour in the care sector

One of the factors aggravating the risk of migrant women facing deskilling is the existence of an unmet demand for low-skilled care services in the host country. As observed by Piller in the Australian context: "The human capital assumptions underlying skilled migration are flawed if job openings are mostly in unskilled areas and skilled migrants need to be deskilled in order to participate in the labour market" (Piller, 2010).

The report prepared for the European Commission mentioned earlier in this review also very significantly notes that, although several measures have been adopted by the EU to integrate native-born women into the market according to their skills and qualifications, "public infrastructure and services for domestic and care responsibilities are *not* provided directly but *indirectly* in the form of migrant women who allow native-born women to better reconcile work and family life." (Rubin et al., 2008). That is, while rates of deskilling have fallen among native women, it is often at the cost of deskilling migrant women and caused by the lack of effective policies to combat deskilling holistically. This point echoes the work of Sassen who, as mentioned earlier, argues that the increasingly globalized and knowledge-based economies are supported and made possible by some of the low-valued and marginalized services often provided by migrant women, such as domestic and care work, industrial cleaning and catering (Sassen, 2000). This notion of migrant women filling the need for inexpensive, docile and flexible labour in the social reproduction sectors is supported by research on the gender segregation of labour market economies and by recent work on gender and ethnic labour niches, highlighting that migrant women's work opportunities are often limited to both female- and immigrant-dominated sectors (Schrover, et al., 2007).

Beyond credential recognition: When gender, migrant status and ethnicity intersect

A report by Creese and Wiebe (2009) reveals that: "A key reason for downward mobility is the failure of Canadian employers and professional associations to recognize educational credentials and work experience attained in Africa; but our research also suggests there is much more to deskilling than the issue of credential recognition. In fact, we need to see credential recognition as part of a gendered process of deskilling that actively constructs Black/African immigrants as unskilled labour." Clearly the accreditation of qualifications is not the only issue at play and the elements surrounding the recognition of migrant women's qualifications are vast.

According to Mojab (1999): "As a 'social relation', however, capital is constrained in its operation by many forces such as organized labour, gender, race, nationality, politics, and culture. The skilled immigrant women examined in this study [i.e. female migrants in Canada] were undergoing a process of deskilling not only due to the requirements of the market but also because of their gender, national origin, and systemic racism. Since the majority of women were recent migrants, the market did not value their skills as equal to or fitting what is known as 'Canadian experience'. This obstacle of access to the job market has been extensively studied." According to *International Migration Outlook 2010*, the fact that global research showed that a longer period of stay in the host country did not significantly alter the opportunities

for migrants to capitalize on their qualifications is indicative of the need to look into other variables, including employers' lack of information about the quality of skills acquired in other countries (OECD, 2010). Some of the highly skilled women were professionals (lawyers, teachers) who could not readily continue their profession even when they had adequate knowledge of the local language.

This supports the points made by authors such as Cardu, who also discussed some of the reasons behind the widespread phenomenon of deskilling among female migrants in particular. Some of the reasons mentioned by Cardu include the lack of networks to help female migrants to familiarize themselves with the work culture (how to behave during a job interview) and lack of knowledge of the labour market (where to go, how to make one's availability and skills known, how to access internships that could allow employers to recognize experience acquired outside the country), besides accreditation of their qualifications and their limited time due to family responsibilities (Cardu, 2007).

Equally, Riaño and Baghdadi analyse how the interplay of class, gender and ethnicity shapes the labour market participation of migrant women in Switzerland, showing how those markers can support or undermine the conversion of their social and cultural capital into assets in the labour market. In particular, they highlighted the way in which class and gender characteristics can constrain highly skilled foreign women to accept part-time, low-skilled jobs in the hope to both help meet household expenses and accommodate childcare needs. Their study reflected that: "Most of the women cannot use their social and cultural capital to establish themselves in the upper segments of the labour market. A third is not integrated in the labour market and a quarter occupies positions below their skill level. A further third work at their skill level but only irregularly." This is not simply due to labour market mechanisms or entry status requirements, but a complex "interplay of class, ethnicity and gender" resulting in their deskilling (Riaño and Baghdadi, 2005).

This point is further supported by an analysis of some of the discriminatory practices observed in main countries of destination not only in terms of access to the labour market for skilled migrants, but also within the workplace. Such discrimination can be explicit or implicit, that is, concealed in seemingly objective professional requirements. In particular, Piller argues the case of discrimination faced by highly skilled migrants in Australia, many of whom remain unemployed for long durations on the pretext of lack of "local experience". This situation is exacerbated if the migrant is a woman and from another ethnic background (even within the feminized sector of the labour market such as service and retail) as they face hindrances on the grounds that they do not "look and sound" right for customer service (Piller, 2010). Mojab (1999) also insists that, while the lack of Canadian experience is a technical problem, it has, at the same time, "racial, ethnic, and

class dimensions." This is also applicable to European markets. GEMMA, a project carried out by five European organizations with the support and collaboration of the European Commission to improve coordination between researchers, policymakers and civil society organizations in the field of gender and migration, conducted a project entitled LIMITS (Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities in European Cities: Life-courses and Quality of Life in a World of Limitations), which concluded that migrants and ethnic minorities in various European metropolitan cities such as Amsterdam, Bielefeld, Lisbon, Rotterdam, Stockholm and Vienna face difficulties in market integration more than women migrants from other European countries.[1]

Certain authors have shown how some institutional discriminatory practices can emerge in some sectors resorting to migration to meet labour shortages. For example, as mentioned earlier in the previous section on the growing trend in the discourse of "professionalism", Witz (1992) has shown how, under that guise, institutions particularly in the medical sector use both implicit and explicit devices for the exclusion of workers depending on a number of factors. More importantly, these factors give priority to the citizens of the host country over migrants to avoid competition, irrespective of the latter's skills. Such strategies are common in the European medical sector. Ribeiro has shown in her studies of Filipino nurses in Portugal how these "demarcation strategies" are designed particularly through nation-specific structures of health professions (Ribeiro, 2008). The repercussions of institutional enactments of strategic exclusion of migrants are vast and play an influential role in further deskilling migrant women. In a very interesting paper on the psychological effects of marginalization and everyday racism faced by Ghanaian nurses in the United Kingdom, Henry draws attention to how such discriminatory practices in the medical sectors lead to further alienation and consequently discourage these women from moving up the professional ladder and from using their skills and education to their full potential (Henry, 2008). Oikelome makes a similar observation in his paper (2007). Thus, there is a direct correlation between deskilling and the psychological effects of institutionalized exclusionary practices, which leads to skills not being fully tapped.

Cuban, at a workshop and in the accompanying documentary on addressing the problems of deskilling of professional health-care workers in the United Kingdom, has shown how Filipino women face discrimination in various ways. Many of these women face racial discrimination, problems in gaining residency, inability to rise in the professional hierarchy due to lack of recognition of their qualifications and high bars set for non-EU migrants by the government to gauge their fluency in English.[2] Often these women are the sole breadwinners in their families and face not only

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1   More information on the GEMMA project and its LIMITS project is available from www.gemmaproject.eu/limits.aspx.
2   The documentary and more information on the Workshop on Deskilling of Health Care Professionals, held in 2009, is available from www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/homework/praxis_video/praxis_video.htm.

professional challenges, but also social responsibilities with few avenues available to them to raise their concerns as migrants. It could easily be deduced that the intersection between gender, formal citizenship status and place of accreditation both generates and perpetuates inequalities. This aspect is further explored in Chapter 2 of this publication.

Obstacles to reskilling

Authors, in addition to analysing factors hampering the access of qualified migrant women to skilled occupations, have looked at how some of those factors enter into play when migrant women try to regain their credentials or gain new skills by enrolling in tertiary education in the host country.

While the necessary training is sometimes available, women are disadvantaged in terms of being able to invest in such lengthy and costly reskilling (Mojab, 1999). In particular, several authors have shown how family responsibilities can hinder opportunities to reskill according to the demands of the host country. Several factors account for this, including inadequate childcare services and the lack of childcare subsidies, coupled with the women's diminished earning power, which makes it difficult for them to pay for daycare services for their children. Consequently, even their ability to reskill to overcome deskilling is strictly limited. In this regard, Kofman and Raghuram aptly observe the obstacles facing migrant women in their efforts to adapt to the requirements of the local job market and regain their skills and professional positions. They remark: "The ability to attend professional language courses may be more limited for women who have childcare responsibilities. The loss of social networks, personal and professional, after women migrate can be worse for women if family responsibilities prevent them from accessing new networks. Women's need to re-skill or to get accreditation may also be given less priority by families when there is gender hierarchy within households" (Kofman and Raghuram, 2009).

In Chapter 4 of this publication, Cardu, in her analysis of immigrant women's resilience strategies against professional deskilling in Quebec, illustrates this aspect by observing how immigrant women of North African origin tend to prioritize investment of the family resources' into their partners' efforts to reskill rather than their own.

However, the situation is not much better for those who successfully reskill. Accounts by migrants describe how the focus of reskilling is to (re)train to meet labour market demands, specifically in terms of accreditation, but also to overcome other complications. Zaman highlights some of the problems faced by women in the Canadian context when reskilling, although it should be noted that such

problems are not exclusive to Canada. She points out how migrant women who enrol in courses may have to wait for prolonged periods to receive their grades, face hindrances in completing specialized projects due to a lack of supervision and have difficulties in comprehending the demands of the new educational system and its teachers (Zaman, 2008). Lastly, reskilling will not guarantee professional success or credential recognition, despite the time (often several years) and capital invested, owing to the fact that having the right qualifications does not eliminate class-based and racialized divisions in the labour market. Zaman argues that: "In the name of reskilling, a gendered division of labour emerges between men and women, and a racialized division of labour surfaces within the female labour force itself" (Zaman, 2008).

Conclusion

Further to the analysis of factors hindering the successful transfer of skilled women's human capital from one context to another, several scholars have worked on an important but often overlooked dimension of the phenomenon of deskilling, namely the psychosocial impact deskilling may have on women and their families (Asanin and Wilson, 2009; Liversage, 2009; Meares, 2010).

The case studies concerning Quebec, Switzerland and the United Kingdom featured in the present publication aim to complement existing knowledge on this particular aspect of the plight of deskilled migrant women.

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CHAPTER
2

"I DON'T WANT TO BE STUCK AS A CARER":

The effects of deskilling on the livelihoods and opportunities of migrant care workers in England

Sondra Cuban, Ph.D., is a Senior Lecturer in Educational Research at Lancaster University in the United Kingdom. Her research focuses on immigrant women, education, learning and labour issues. Her forthcoming book, Deskilling Migrant Women in the Global Care Industry (Palgrave Macmillan), explores the gendered geographies of skilled migration, specifically the practices, dispositions, relationships and resources of professional women who participate in the global care industry. Her newest research focuses on the roles of information and communications technologies (ICTs) in the transnational networks of immigrant women and their learning.

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The effects of deskilling on the livelihoods and opportunities of migrant care workers in England

"I DON'T WANT TO BE STUCK AS A CARER":

The effects of deskilling on the livelihoods and opportunities of migrant care workers in England

Sondra Cuban

Deskilling happens through immigration, followed by ghettoization within marginal occupations and low monetary returns on educational investments. It is a story that has been remarkably resistant to change, particularly for women (Pratt, 2004: 39).

Introduction: Aims, terms, objectives and structure

At the cusp of the twenty-first century, pervasive deskilling of migrant women is taking place, not only in Canada, as Pratt (2004) has observed, but at the global level, especially in the care industry. This case study exposes a similar trend amongst migrant women in the social care sector in England. This report draws on data from a two-year study (2008–2010) that was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) in England. The study aims to examine the ways that highly skilled migrant women are drawn into the global care industry and the overall effects on their livelihoods and opportunities, and it highlights their perceptions of being deskilled as care workers. The sample discussed in this report is comprised of 54 migrant care workers (both EU nationals and non-EU residents) for the elderly in England.

The report will adapt a framework developed by Kingma (2006) to discuss the steps in women's migration into the care industry to illustrate the multiple dilemmas they face. This involves a process of making itineraries for their careers, creating routes to migrate to advance their careers and livelihoods, only to reach a dead end. The itineraries that migrant women make for their futures begin by obtaining a higher education, and then attending universities to earn a professional degree in their country of origin. Then, they make routes to migrate, most often in the form of recruitment companies, in order to locate careers, professional development and returns on their educational investments and to secure a higher standard of living in England. However, when they attempt to become professionals again, they reach a dead end when they experience institutional barriers that prevent their adaptation and the conversion of their qualifications. This state leaves them in a poorly paid occupation and unable to secure a good quality of life. In addition to the

steps that women take towards improving their lives, the findings of this report will also include their diverse motivations for migrating and their perceptions of being deskilled in this industry.

It is important to define the terms used in this report. Care workers in England are often referred to as "health-care assistants" or "carers". These carers differ from "informal carers", who provide care on a volunteer basis and without monetary compensation. The main role of a carer is to assist the elderly with their personal physical needs, including helping them to dress, feed, go to the toilet and manage other daily domestic routines such as cleaning and cooking. The work duties of carers are specified in written care plans that are stipulated by care companies. In this study, all of these companies are either care homes (residential and nursing) or private agencies that service individuals in their private homes. The privatization of care is a typical pattern across Britain today (Froggatt et al., 2009). The activities of carers are also dictated by standards created and enforced through government legislation, and by which company policies must abide.

This *support* role of care workers differs markedly from that of nurses and other health-care providers, who diagnose, assess, treat and design medical plans for clients, including directly dealing with their medical problems such as negotiating therapy and managing overall health care. The carers, many of whom were former health-care professionals (nurses, midwives, and physical and occupational therapists) in their countries of origin, testified throughout the interviews that they found their care work duty of assisting clients and the vocational types of skill sets that came with the job (complying with task-based basic activities and procedures) problematic. This was because they were not using their former professional skills or university-based expertise; hence, they felt "deskilled". The system for adapting and converting their health-care qualifications in England was convoluted in that it involved many different steps that were long and bureaucratic. It also cost money and resources.[1] Other former professionals also felt deskilled as carers due to the fact that their duties did not engage the intellectual skill sets (e.g. scientific/abstract theory, digital skills and ICT, critical thinking, reflective practice and planning, employing creative solutions to negotiate, locate and utilize resources) that they were accustomed to using in their careers and that draw on their education.

The purpose of this research is to explore the lives and opportunities of skilled workers in the care industry and in their communities. "Skilled" means that these migrants had acquired tertiary or higher education with university-based degrees

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1 The typical pathway for adaptation for non-EU nationals who were former nurses and midwives, through the Nurse Midwifery Council (NMC), involves passing a labour market language test called the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), registering with the NMC, attending an overseas nursing programme and passing it, and then applying for a licence to practice.

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(in fields such as health care, teaching, engineering, business and journalism) and most of them practiced these professions too, while others were recently graduated students. Still others could not use their qualifications (in their degree specialty) and engaged in other kinds of work in their countries of origin (e.g. an engineer who became an insurance broker). For further clarification, the term "professional" suggests a person whose occupation is founded upon specialized educational training and with standards that are often regulated through national governments and professional associations. Hence, the two objectives of this study are to: 1) understand the experiences and perceptions of the sample and their strategies for advancement, as well as their experiences of settlement in their communities; and 2) assess the skills and attitudes of migrant carers (in other parts of England) to see if the study could generalize about this population and offer a workshop to some of the participants. The rationale of the workshop will be to gauge whether an educational intervention will lead to positive changes in the career aspirations and trajectories of these carers.

Thus, the overarching research question for this study is: What are the drivers, processes and effects related to the migration of professional women for work in England's care sector? The sub-questions are: What is the educational "capital" (or intellectual resources) of these women and how does it develop over time and space, if at all? What are the effects of not using the educational capital of these women and how does this affect their livelihoods and those of their families, as well as their opportunities to advance? What is their reception and treatment in their workplaces and in their communities?

The report will first detail the context of England's care sector as a pulling force for skilled migrant women in a literature review of research. Then, the methodology used in the research will be discussed. Next, the findings will be presented in terms of themes and case studies. Lastly, recommendations will be made with regard to female professional migratory flows and its relation to the care industry, with a view to countering the effects of women's deskilling within it.

The next section will detail research that has been conducted on migrant care workers, which serves as a basis for this study.

Literature review of research on migrants in England's care sector

A small body of research on this population has demonstrated that migrants compose about a fifth (19%) of all care workers in England (Cangiano et al., 2009). Researchers such as Cangiano et al. (2009) and Yeates (2009) have predicted that, as in other European countries, the number of migrants will grow in the British care

sector in order to meet the care needs of burgeoning ageing populations and to compensate for staff shortages amid the exodus of the indigenous (British-born) care workforce. The organization of care, in general, is another explanation for why it attracts migrant *women*, in particular, including the ways the global care chain networks them into these jobs (Yeates, 2009). Yet, while the traditional care force is largely female (85%) and is being replaced by a majority of migrant women, migrant males are also entering the care workforce in greater proportion than British-born nationals (Cangiano et al., 2009). For this reason, this study has a similar gender representation in terms of proportion (mirroring the general population of females and males in the care workforce), with a majority of skilled migrant women and some skilled male carers.[2] Skilled women, in particular those with tertiary education, professional experience and qualifications, are often recruited by companies in emerging countries such as the Philippines and India. These companies portray these jobs as "stepping stones" to professional careers such as nursing or social work, and they attract women with the promise of professional development opportunities (Hussein et al., 2010; Chappell, 2010).[3] The care sector, in attempting to upgrade its image from "women's work", has raised its standards for the skill levels of carers (partly due to recent legislation such as the Care Standards Act of 2000), driving out the traditional workforce, which is less formally educated, and profiting from migrant skilled labour, especially that of former nurses who have care expertise and need little intensive training. This move has had negative effects on workers. A recent study of Zimbabwean asylum-seekers in England (2009), entitled *I Hate Being Idle: Wasted Skills and Enforced Dependence*, has shown that care work was the most common type of work that these asylum-seekers could get in England. Yet nearly 80 per cent of respondents stated that this kind of work was at a lower skill level than their jobs in Zimbabwe. While some research has data on the education and qualification levels and former professions of these migrant carers, no research, aside from this study, has focused on the subject of skills, qualifications and education amongst this population.

There is much data, however, on the ethnic composition of the migrant care population. Prevalent nationalities amongst migrant care workers in England include Zimbabwean, Filipino, Indian, Nigerian and Polish (Rawles, 2008; Hussein et al., 2010). Studies have shown that these groups are perceived by employers to deliver better care because they come from cultures with strong family-oriented values; for the same reason, these carers are also seen to treat the elderly better than the indigenous population (Datta et al., 2006, 2010; Hussein et al., 2010). Similar to England, a study in Sweden has shown that migrant women are preferred care

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2   While the study included some male carers for representation purposes, the analysis and discussion in this report, including all anecdotes, is based on women's experiences.
3   A detailed explanation of the ways that migrant women are "recruited" by these companies is described in the findings section of this report under "Routes".

workers for this reason and are targeted for this type of work (Torres, 2009). Some researchers have referred to this phenomenon as the "migrant care ethic" (Datta et al., 2010). With these positive stereotypes, care work is also becoming known as a "migrant job" in the low-level feminized service industry (along with cleaning, catering, cashiering, and clerical work – otherwise known as the "five Cs"). Yet at the same time, the education levels and professional experiences of these migrant carers are disregarded in a field that requires little formal education,[4] resulting in a significant waste of their expertise.

Feminist research has referred to the "gender contract" (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2002; Twigg, 2000) as an underlying factor for why so many migrant women are working in the global care sector. The idea of the gender contract is that women, regardless of their education levels, are supposed to be able to provide care effectively as part of their feminized roles in society. This "contract" allows countries which are reducing their welfare programmes to turn to migrant women to supply care to needy individuals like the elderly. Kofman and Raghuram (2006) discovered that the gender contract enabled highly ambitious and educated women nurses to be selected for their care expertise and cheap labour in downsized welfare regimes such as England.

Similarly, research by Kingma (2006) has demonstrated that capital-rich countries like England take advantage of capital-poor countries like the Philippines and the oversupply of female graduates for export, especially in nursing, via immigration policies that sanction their place at the bottom of the social care industry with no real prospects. These carers are often treated as "resources" in an industry with a low-educated workforce and an already ambiguous relation to the State as "employees"; they are needed but not fully acknowledged as important actors in maintaining and sustaining welfare (Twigg, 2010).

Perceptions of the language proficiencies of migrants are also an underlying variable in keeping these workers in the care industry. Research has shown that care employers say that migrant care workers suffer from "poor language abilities" (Cangiano et al., 2009; Hussein et al., 2010), that they have difficulty communicating in English with clients and need English language training. Researchers concluded, however, that these employers simply confused the foreign *accents* of care workers with their language *abilities* (Cangiano et al., 2009). Roberts (2010: 5) claims that the rationale of "language problems of migrants" is often overused as an explanation for why this group should be in low-wage industries and why they cannot professionally succeed in England's labour market, and she refers to this phenomenon as a "linguistic penalty" imposed by employers and professional

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4   Entry to the care work field does not require or stipulate a particular level of education and it traditionally has captured a largely less-educated, working-class female workforce.

bodies who operate as gatekeepers. Roberts also shows the ways that exams for the professions discriminate against migrants due to discourses used in the exam design. Likewise, Winkelmann-Gleed (2004), in a study of migrant nurses in the United Kingdom, concluded early on that the professional exam needed to enter the health professions, the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), did not reflect actual workplace communicative interactions in nursing and was not relevant. Similarly, Lowell et al. (2004) concluded that labour market tests have the effect of lowering immigration in receiving countries and creating pressured conditions in sending countries, for example, by pushing up costs for prospective recruits. These tests also can reduce wages in receiving countries for those who cannot pass the exams, as a form of punishment.

Research by Kofman and Raghuram (2006) and Kingma (2006) has demonstrated that the care industry depends on the flow of skilled female migrant labour as it expands to accommodate an increasingly privatized and tight-fisted service economy. Yet for migrant women themselves, a sense of "permanent dislocation" (Parrenas, 2001) can be experienced when they work in jobs for which they are overqualified. Care agencies that train their already skilled migrant workers can advertise themselves as offering more "professional" and low-priced services by "quasi-nurses" (Haour-Knipe and Davies, 2008).

To summarize, recruiting female migrant labour for care work has been a primary strategy of the new global care industry, as reflected in England's system. Female migrant workers are perceived by policymakers as supporting the economies of advanced countries because they provide a necessary service (care for the elderly), while also supporting the economies of developing countries through their remittances (Kofman and Raghuram, 2006). Policymakers, such as the Learning and Skills Council in England, see this group as "aspiring" rather than "skilled". One government report, for example, defines aspiring migrants as having to work in "low-skilled or unskilled roles while they improve their English or gain a relevant qualification to allow them to practice their profession" (Learning and Skills Council, 2006: 21). Yet, as this study will show, the government has not created straightforward professional pathways for these migrants to achieve their aspirations of being able to "practice their profession". Little attention is paid to the barriers blocking their advancement. This issue is critical for women, in particular for their economic *and* social integration (Kofman and Raghuram, 2006; Raghuram, 2007). While Britain has historically "poached" female nurses from developing countries, especially in the West Indies, since the 1950s, the beginning of the twenty-first century marked the country's first extensive recruitment campaign in years (McNeil-Walsh, 2004).

The next section of this report will be a presentation of the research design and the tools of the study, as well as data about the sample.

Methodology: Research design, sample, data collection and data analysis

Research design

The study was conducted in two phases so that it would have theoretical, scientific and practical-based impacts for research communities, as well as for policymakers and practitioners.

The first phase of the study matched the first objective, which was to gather exploratory data on a phenomenon that has not been well researched: skilled migrants in the care industry and the role of education and qualifications in these women's strategies for advancement and settlement in a new place. This phase would contribute knowledge to research about methodological tools, as well as new hypotheses about this population and industry. This phase will be described in detail in the data collection section.

The second phase of the study matched the second objective, which was to take the practical implications of the role of educational issues from the first phase of the study and design an assessment tool that could gauge the skills and attitudes of a new sample, in order to see whether a workshop would enable members to become more empowered. This phase will be described in the data collection section, but the focus of this report will be on the phase 2 sample rather than on the assessments themselves.

Qualitative methods were predominantly used in the study. The methodology included open and closed interviews and observations with the participants, the purpose of which was to enable researchers to gauge perceptions and behaviour in the contexts in which participants act. The methodology also involved assessments of the perceptions of a subset of participants (in phase 2 of the study) about their skills and attitudes. Analysis was largely in the form of themes and case studies, but descriptive statistics were also used for profiling the population (see the "About the sample" section of this report). Documentary analysis of care training curriculum, logs, reports and other care industry documents was also conducted to understand the types of national policies imposed on companies and workers and to gain a wider perspective on the workplace activities of carers, especially the kinds of new paperwork they were expected to complete as part of the administrative and legal aspects of their jobs. In addition, a review of the literature (including research as well as popular media articles on this population) was conducted, in conjunction with interviews with practitioners, researchers and policymakers in the fields of English as a Second Language, migration, unions and care, for the purpose of gaining a comprehensive view of the problem and for creating recommendations.

The research team was composed of female migrants, and it consisted of a principal investigator, a research associate who was once a care worker in England, a data analyst, and two informants who were actively engaged in the social care sector (one was a care worker and the other was a nurse). In addition, an advisory board composed of 16 experts in the fields of education, linguistics, gender, workplace and migration met once during the study period and communicated regularly on a discussion board for announcements, advice, gaining contacts and other help. One member, a linguistics expert, was consulted in the design of the assessment tools and the workshop curriculum for phase 2 to ensure that they were relevant and reliable.[5] The team often reflected on the findings and checked or confirmed hypotheses, and then fed this information to the advisory board and the participants in order to raise the level of validity of the findings. The informants, in particular, were key to understanding the actual situations of care workers in England's social care industry and the issues they faced as transnational women. Diaries of these women's work lives and reports about their community and family relations both locally and abroad, as well as their media analysis of migrant issues, shed light on this insider perspective and enriched the findings.

Data collection for the two phases of the study

An in-depth examination of the perceptions and lives of 22 migrant carers was conducted for the first phase of the study.[6] The participants were contacted through their employers,[7] and they could choose whether to participate in the study or not. Those who opted to participate were paid an incentive of GBP 30. The participants were observed over the course of a year at their workplaces for approximately 150 hours, which amounted to about seven visits per month. Visits were made to residential and nursing homes and the researchers accompanied the carers in their cars on their daily rotas to private homes at all times of day and night. During these observations, it was also possible to casually talk to clients and non-migrant carers about their perceptions of their workplaces and their relations with migrant carers.[8] Photographs and field notes were taken as background material on these visits. The research team also visited community sites and participated in parties and other social events so as to find out more about the participants' lives. These observations allowed the interview material to be confirmed or refuted.

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5   Dr. Kathy Pitt was the linguistics consultant for the study. She commented on documents sent to her, thereby improving them.

6   Twenty-two participants were selected to be observed and interviewed in depth for a year to accommodate the research team's resources.

7   The research team made contact with care agency employers prior to the study.

8   Casual conversations with clients and British-born care workers took place naturally in the care homes and in private homes as a way for the researcher to develop rapport with the community being observed and to gather additional background information.

The participants were interviewed at three different times over the course of the year to allow the researchers to comprehend their experiences of settling and working in England, their aspirations and strategies to advance, and their general experiences over a long time period. All of the interviews were loosely structured and each lasted about 60 minutes. The interviews were taped for the purpose of making transcripts, and they were also staggered to help the researchers develop rapport with the participants and gauge change over time. The first interview was biographical; it focused on the participants' education, demographics, family life and work histories, as well as their reasons for migrating and their initial experiences upon arrival. The second interview focused more closely on the participants' strategies for living in their communities and working in their workplaces, and their social networks and attempts to advance in their profession, including any educational or training courses they took. The third interview focused on a topic that engaged the participants and that they wanted to discuss, based on previous interviews in a narrative format. The third interview also gave them an opportunity to discuss any changes they had made in their lives, as well as their aspirations.

Additionally, six migrant care workers from the same companies but who were recent arrivals to England in 2008 (the year when the study began) were also interviewed, albeit using a different interview instrument.[9] They were interviewed within three weeks of their arrival to England and then every three months during a one-year period using the same interview instrument, for a total of four interviews each. The purpose of the interviews was to understand the initial experience of entering and adjusting to a new place of settlement, as well as to understand progress from the perspectives of the new arrivals, their experiences and aspirations related to their adjustment to their communities and workplaces, and the ways they perceived their situations to have changed (or to have not changed) over the year. The interviews were closed-structured so that the responses could be coded for change at each interval. Additional open-ended comments by the participants about their lives, opinions and ideas were also noted. They were asked directly about whether they felt deskilled and requested to give examples of these experiences in their work lives.

The second phase of the study involved two subsets of participants who were assessed on their skills and attitudes towards their self-efficacy levels on important issues (these issues were determined in the first phase of the study). The first subset participated in a workshop, whilst the second subset did not.[10] The first subset consisted of 14 migrant carers who participated in a workshop on the topic of deskilling that focused on information, guidance and referrals on issues

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9   Whilst nearly all of the 21 care workers arrived in England prior to the start of the study, the six new arrivals entered England during the period of the study, which began in January 2008.

10 The second subset of participants (12 in all) did not participate in the workshop because they were spread out throughout England.

such as advocacy for immigration rights, asserting oneself at work and general communication skills, as well as locating advocates and utilizing resources in communities. The sample was selected by an advocacy organization in London that invited people who had previously used its services to the workshop in the belief that they would benefit from it. The participants were volunteers and were paid a stipend for participation so it was a convenience sample. The workshop consisted of a lecture by a professional association director; group and pair exercises on workplace rights and issues; and group discussions about the global care industry. All participants were given a packet containing information sheets about unions and other advocacy organizations to enable them to become more informed. Much of the workshop was spent on participants voicing their experiences about the difficulties they faced at work and in adjusting to English culture; this part involved videotaping the carers' perceptions and stories of deskilling.

The participants were tested with an assessment instrument at the beginning of the workshop (pre-assessment) and two months after the workshop (post-assessment), in order to gauge any changes in their attitudes as a result of or in connection with the workshop and to determine the extent to which they were able to change their situations.[11] The research team drew up the assessment measures. The content of the assessment was based on findings from the first phase of the study. The content was checked by a linguistics consultant and a statistics consultant at Lancaster University to determine whether the constructs in the assessment were valid and reliable, that is, whether the assessment measures reflected the workshop intervention; otherwise, participants would be tested on issues that were not applicable. The post-assessment was delivered over the telephone and consisted of questions additional to the ones the participants had previously answered, including a question concerning their evaluation of the workshop. They were also queried about workplace discrimination issues that surfaced in the workshop and which the team wanted to learn more about.

The second subset of phase 2 was also a convenience sample. This sample consisted of 12 skilled migrant carers from across England who had been selected by unions and other agencies through a snowball approach, that is, through participants inviting their friends to participate in the study. These participants were first interviewed over the phone about their workplace experiences, their settlement and any advancement they had made. They were also assessed three months later on their perceptions and skill levels, using the same instrument as that used for the first subset sample in phase 2. These participants were paid for their participation and informed about advocacy organizations that could help them with their workplace problems.

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11 The pre-assessment can be viewed at: www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/homework/Docs/Attitude%20survey-PRE-training%20group.pdf and the post-assessment at: http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/homework/Docs/Attitude%20survey-POST%20training%20group.pdf.

About the sample

The sample involved 54 participants in different regions of England, which allowed the research team to generalize about the situations and issues of migrant care workers and to compare this group to the populations described in the research cited in the literature review. Across the 54 participants, variables such as nationality, gender, former profession and visa status were available (see Tables 2.1–2.4), whereas more in-depth data existed on the 28 care workers from phase 1.

Table 2.1: Nationality of the 54 participants

Nationality	Phase 1	Phase 2	Total for phases 1 and 2
Filipino	9	19	28
Polish	6	7	13
Romanian	6	-	6
Indian	2	-	2
Other	5	-	5
Total	**28**	**26**	**54**

The nationality composition of the sample demonstrated that these care workers represented the national norm, as discussed in the literature review. The study sample was composed mainly of Filipinos (52%), nearly all of whom were health-care professionals prior to migrating to England. This choice of recruits perhaps indicates that recruiters and employers, together, were targeting Filipinos as health-care professionals and locating visas for care work positions.[12]

Table 2.2: Gender of the 54 participants

Gender	Phase 1	Phase 2	Total for phases 1 and 2
Female	22	23	45
Male	6	3	9
Total	**28**	**26**	**54**

The gender breakdown (see Table 2.2) shows that the majority of the sample is female (83%), which is typical of the population of both migrant and indigenous care workers, as discussed in the literature review. Since research has shown that there is a greater proportion of migrant males in the care sector than male

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12 Visas are required for all non-Europeans and they are granted through work, student status, or marriage. There were three marriage visas in the phase 1 sample.

nationals, this study included a small group of migrant males (17% of the sample). The men represented a mix of ages and nationalities; due to their small number, no clear patterns surrounding their activities, treatment or issues of deskilling could be detected, except for the fact that a few of them were in non-feminized professional fields (banker, gym instructor, engineering) in their former countries. Most of the males, however, were trained health-care professionals (e.g. nursing, radiography).

Table 2.3: Former professions of the 54 participants

Former profession	Phase 1	Phase 2	Nationality	Total number of participants
Nurse	11	14	Filipino, Romanian/ Filipino, Polish	25
Midwife	1	3	Filipino/Filipino	4
Nurse educator		1	Filipino	1
Graduated nursing student	2	–	Filipino	2
Insurance broker	1	–	–	1
Occupational/ physical therapist	2	3	Filipino/Filipino	5
Teacher at school or university	3	–	Polish	3
Occupational psychologist	–	1	Polish	1
Instructor at institution	2	–	Egyptian, Cuban	2
Journalist	–	1	Polish	1
Non-professional (nursing attendant)[13]	1	–	Filipino	1
Business owner	1	1	Polish/Polish	2
Student (economics)	1	–	Polish	1
Banker	1	–	Filipino	1
Engineer	1	–	Romanian	1
Radiography	1	–	Bulgarian	1
Human resources	–	1	Polish	1
Red Cross worker	–	1	Polish	1
Total number of participants	**28**	**26**		**54**

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13 This person had a degree in nursing but was a nursing assistant in a hospital.

Chapter 2: "I don't want to be stuck as a carer":
The effects of deskilling on the livelihoods and opportunities of migrant care workers in England

The sample breakdown demonstrates that the former professions of 68 per cent of the 54 participants were in the health-care sector – nurses, nurse educators and recently graduated students, midwives and physiotherapists, as well as occupational therapists. This group was mainly Filipino but also consisted of Eastern Europeans, demonstrating that health professionals may be prone to becoming care workers, either by being targeted as such by recruiters or through a process of self-selection.

Table 2.4: Immigration status of the sample

Immigration status	Phase 1	Phase 2	Total for phases 1 and 2
Student	4	11	15
Working or other, i.e. marriage	24 (including 3 marriage visas)	15	39
Total	**28**	**26**	**54**

The immigration status of the care workers was important to assess due to the fact that there were worries amongst this population about how to settle in England and prosper, amid such short-term and changing visa regulations in the period 2008–2010. In October 2008, the points-based system was introduced in England and nearly all non-EU workers, whether they were recently graduated students or working professionals, entered via student routes during this period. As the professions chart (see Table 2.3) shows, only two participants were actually recently graduated students, meaning that the remaining 13 participants who had student visas were working professionals who had to enter the country and act as "students". The student route mandates that the student work at a care home agency for 20 hours a week and study in a training agency or college (in order to gain National Vocational Qualifications or NVQs) for 20 hours. This directive put pressure on 27 per cent of the student sample, all of whom were Filipino, due to the rigid requirements and the fact that their visas were very short, not to mention the fact that a number of training agencies were rogue agencies and ended up closing their operations, putting participants in their training programmes in jeopardy of being deported. Those on working visas had problems renewing them and those on student routes wanted to change to working visas. Their focus in 2009–2010 was mainly on how to stay in England; as one carer complained, "it's hard to stay in England!"

Demographics of phase 1

The average age of the participants was 35 years. The older ages of the participants indicate that they migrated with professional expertise and experience, and desired to improve their standard of living as well as that of their family members. There

were only two recently graduated students, both in their early 20s and single. All of the participants had university degrees except for one – a Polish economics student who had not completed her higher education because she needed to work. Yet this woman worked at a high level as an insurance broker, similar to the other Polish woman who had a degree in engineering. Nearly all of the participants' degrees in a subject specialty matched their professions, albeit there were several who were unable to practice, such as the two aforementioned Polish women. Over 60 per cent of the study participants had health-care degrees and most were practicing these professions. In this group, most had nursing degrees and were nurses in their former countries. Only one of these nurses had a two-year certificate, which enabled her to practice nursing in hospitals in Zambia. The rest had three-year or four-year nursing degrees. As the findings will show, these health-care professionals faced considerable disadvantages in their workplaces, such as poor carer-to-patient ratios, poor technology and very low pay. Whilst most of these former professionals turned carers never progressed in their careers during the period of the study, three carers who were former nurses did succeed at becoming nurses in England. These three women were Eastern Europeans (Romanians). One of the main reasons they were able to advance was because they only had to convert their qualifications (i.e. they only had to translate their nursing documents from Romanian to English and submit them to the NMC), rather than adapt by taking a course at a university. Most significantly, as European nationals, these women were not required to take the IELTS exam (as per NMC policy).[14] However, the outcomes for them are grim. Most newly converted nurses end up working in nursing homes with pay scales that are only slightly above those of care workers, and for long and unsociable hours. For former professionals who are not in health-care fields (e.g. engineers and teachers), there are few professional adaptation (retraining) programmes to follow, or, like nursing pathways, they are drawn out and complex to the point of making people give up before they even start. A former engineer and a former teacher assessed their degrees and experience against the UK-NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centre) system (which assigns points to skills and professions for a fee), only to learn that their qualifications had been downgraded in terms of points and that they would need to completely retrain or adapt their qualifications (as an engineer and as a teacher) in order to be able to practice again.[15]

Analysis of the data

The analysis involved descriptive statistics (as shown in previous tables) to gauge basic demographic patterns amongst the participants. This technique was useful in

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14 It is not clear why the NMC requires all non-Europeans to take the test whereas European nationals, irrespective of their English qualifications, do not have to take the test. It appears to be a discriminatory policy. A petition to lower the passing score of the IELTS of the NMC can be found at: www.gopetition.com/petition/32898.html.
15 UK-NARIC information can be found at: www.naric.org.uk/.

pinpointing the types of populations that were most prevalent and which related to other variables that could account for institutional barriers blocking advancement, such as Filipinos who arrived in 2008 via the "student" route and the problems they faced as a result of their short-term visas. The descriptive data, in conjunction with the qualitative portion of the analysis that involved the creation of case studies and themes from open-ended anecdotal data, assisted in further delineating patterns by participant characteristics.

For the first phase of the study, transcripts of the open-ended interviews of the 22 care workers were made; these, along with observations and topics that emerged from the experiences, strategies and aspirations of the participants, were used to develop themes. This was conducted through the AtlasTI software programme that was used to initially code the data into groups; the code "stepping stones" was developed because it was recognized early on that so many participants used this term or referred to it, and it was then enlarged and connected to other issues in terms of a theme. Additionally, maps of the carers' social networks and the support they exchanged with one another locally and abroad were developed for the participants, to understand their worlds and to assess their resources. Using the interview transcripts, narratives about the participants' experiences of deskilling and advancement were constructed in order to give them a voice as regards their perceptions. The closed-structured interviews of the six new arrivals were determined through a coding scheme that illustrated changes over the year in a descriptive analysis.

The second phase of the analysis (featuring two subset samples that consisted of a total of 26 participants) first involved an evaluation of the workshop based on the responses of the 14 participants (first subset sample) and whether the workshop appeared to help them, as well as an assessment of the skills and attitudes which seemed to have changed before and after the participants attended the workshop. These assessments were analysed to see if the participants appeared to learn from the workshop and improve their scores on attitudes surrounding their self-efficacy to assert themselves, become more informed and understand their rights and situations. After this evaluation, a cohort analysis was conducted for both subsets; the assessment scores of the workshop members were then compared to the second subset sample (12 participants) and the completed assessments, which were analysed to gauge whether the workshop appeared to have an effect, since one group attended it and the other did not participate. In this report, the sample, rather than the assessment tools or outcomes, was highlighted.

The next section of the report consists of the findings, which were split into several subsections that detail the migrant care workers' steps to advance themselves, including their itineraries, routes and dead ends, their motivations for migrating, and their perceptions of deskilling.

Findings

Making itineraries and routes to migrate only to reach a dead end

Kingma (2006) discovered a course of action (or steps) taken by migrant nurses that all too often led to failure in their search for decent pay and conditions of work as well as opportunities in a receiving country. The female participants in this study, irrespective of their professions, followed this path. This section of the report details this pathway: the itineraries migrant nurses made (investments in higher education), the entry routes they followed (the recruitment companies they dealt with), and the dead ends they encountered in their attempts to advance and improve their livelihoods in a new place of settlement.

The women made itineraries for the future, first by obtaining higher education and then attending university to gain a professional degree in their countries of origin. One carer described her university experience and subsequent practice in different hospital settings as an "open opportunity", a type of "passport" to go abroad (Kingma, 2006). "I like nursing. If I go for nursing, I get a job. Nursing is an open opportunity," this carer said. Many of the migrants had relatives who recruited them into the nursing field. One woman's aunt inducted her into nursing: "Because, my auntie, she was a nurse – when I was a child I liked this career – that's why I chose it." At universities, these women made new contacts and became immersed in a new culture that viewed going abroad as the norm. This was particularly evident in the Philippines where carers described going abroad as an expectation. After these women completed their education, many could not obtain their anticipated jobs or they embarked on difficult internships or first years in hospitals where there was a poor nurse-to-patient ratio. "In the Philippines, there is only one nurse for 50 patients, and if it is school time, we use the school nurse students. But most of the time, it's only one nurse for a ward," a migrant said. One of these professionals became a nursing assistant/attendant due to the lack of nursing jobs in her country, despite the fact that she had a nursing degree.

The women created "routes" to migrate, which involved consulting friends about how to go abroad for work. Through these contacts, they often discovered a recruitment or employment agency to help them migrate.[16] At that point, few of them were informed about their prospects in England and assumed that the recruiter was correct in either telling them directly or suggesting to them that these jobs in care were "stepping stones" to something better in the future. For example, Alice, a carer who was once a physical therapist, reported:

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16 Most of the non-EU migrants migrated through recruitment agencies that were located in their countries of origin and were not regulated by UK standards. In comparison, while a majority of Eastern Europeans migrated through agencies, some of them arrived through networks of family and friends.

When I was offered this kind of job and I was selected from so many people who applied for this. I said 'ok I would like to go'. So then I came. I only thought of doing it for a few years, and I said, I would like to try and go back again to physiotherapy if I would be given the chance because I think this would be a stepping stone.

Another former nurse believed her agency when they told her she was migrating to become a nurse in England. She reflected on the false promises of the recruiter and her disappointment at being a cleaner and carer instead of a nurse:

I'm a nurse in the Philippines. I came here in 2004 for my adaptation. There were 15 in my group and the recruiter told us we were going to be working in a nursing home and would do adaptation so we paid money. When we came here, nothing happened. I lived in London for three months. I ended up doing work like cleaning and looking after the elderly.

Similarly, a Polish woman was told by her recruiter that her care work job would be "like social work". She described her despair at learning that care work was not social work, but she resolved to stay in the job for a year as a stepping stone to "something better":

What can I say because I am helping and I wanted to have this experience and I want to help people. But I feel deep inside unfulfilled because of the work. I am not using all of my skills. My goal right now is a one-year contract and maybe in the meantime I will find something better.

The women believed the recruiters when the latter told them they would have professional development opportunities (training for new careers in England). After a short time working as carers, however, many of them realized that they were working in a sector that is widely known as an "occupational dustbin" (poor pay, poor conditions and few opportunities) and that too in a country where they could barely afford to live. Immigration policies, particularly for non-EU migrants, threatened to end their stay in the UK before they even had the chance to make a real living and establish themselves, especially those who entered the country on two-year student contracts (as discussed in the "About the sample" section).

The migrant women began to see a downward trajectory in their careers and they panicked. After nearly a year, one carer in her mid-30s became so desperate to stay in the UK that she began searching for partners in an online dating service with the objective of meeting a British man who will support her and her children. She described her desperation:

> *I want to bring my children here. I put my real life on this [dating] service and I said I am separated and have three kids. Two men in their 40s and 60s are interested in me and I decided to give them a chance. The reason is because it is hard to stay in England.*

Other carers pooled their resources, saved and did not go out for fear of frittering away their meagre income in a country that made it difficult for them to survive and made it nearly impossible for them to thrive. One carer had this to say:

> *We need to work harder to pay for all these things. You have to save. We need to be wise on buying things. We don't really buy things we don't need. We don't go out. I only have one day off, so we clean the flat and cook, we don't go out. We don't go to the pub.*

Eventually many of the carers became disheartened by the realities of their jobs and felt like they had reached a dead end. One Polish woman, a former teacher who could not find a teaching post or a professional pathway to adapt her qualifications in England, exclaimed: "I'm still stuck in this job. You are just not moving forward. You are not developing yourself. I know it's difficult. It's going to last awhile...I'm so tired working these hours."

A blunter comment by another migrant – "I don't want to be stuck as a carer" – reflected the resolve of many who had reached dead ends in their time as care workers.

To summarize, these steps in women's migration processes illustrate the multiple dilemmas they face in terms of investing in their futures (the itineraries they developed at university) and enacting it (the routes the recruiters paved for them), only to experience disappointment in trying to create a new life in England (dead ends). The next section focuses on the reasons behind the itineraries, with case studies of carers.

Multiple reasons to migrate: Cases of carers' motivations

The course of action taken by the participants, of making itineraries and routes to migrate only to reach dead ends, also reflects their multiple reasons for migrating for work. Migration seemed to be a good prospect for them due to the high cost of education in their home countries and the debts they accrued. In addition, they needed to earn more to support themselves and their growing families, and they wanted to develop themselves professionally. There were other interrelated reasons, including a wish for personal development, a culture of going abroad and supportive family networks. For example, one carer who had a nursing degree but

could not find suitable work in the Philippines wondered if she could become a nurse in England like her sister-in-law, or if she would remain a carer doing work similar to that done by her "helpers" back home in the Philippines:

> *My aunt asked me to prove myself, to stand alone. I am a single parent and I came here to give my children a better future and to enhance my knowledge. My sister-in-law is a nurse at a care home in England. I have helpers in the Philippines, a maid and a nanny. [Yet here] I will do the work they're doing!*

As this example demonstrates, the motivations of the migrants are not straightforward or even mutually exclusive; these mixed reasons differ markedly from classic migration theories (based on research on male migration), which separate economic and occupational factors from psychological and familial ones (Ackers, 2004; Winkelmann-Gleed, 2004; Raghuram and Kofman, 2006). For the female participants in this study, these factors were inextricably linked, as they were breadwinners in their families and supporters of their communities. In addition, they wanted to develop themselves as human beings, to achieve their full capabilities, that is, "the full ability of people to be and to choose these very important things. Thus all capabilities have an economic aspect: even the freedom of speech requires education, adequate nutrition, etc." (Nussbaum, 2000). These mixed factors are inherent in the global feminization of labour migration (World Bank, 2006). Yet it is also important to note that while the reasons the women reported varied, there were strong underlying economic factors, including being able to afford a good education for children. As will become evident in the case studies to follow, economic inequality is one of the greatest causes of immigration (Nussbaum, 2003: 7).

The following aims illustrate the struggles of these migrant women to develop a career, earn a higher income to support their family, and become independent and self-sufficient. The logic is that as a skilled migrant woman develops her career, she increases her earning potential and becomes independent and self-sufficient enough to provide a greater quality of life for herself, her family and her community. The following cases provide a detailed analysis of the carers and how these expectations were not met.

"So I think I'm on the right path": Developing better career opportunities

Since many of the care workers were experienced professionals or had just graduated from schools with professional degrees, their desire was to acquire greater knowledge and professional development opportunities. Many of them felt that staying in their own countries would not enable them to fully develop their careers. However, upon migrating for care work, they soon realized that their care

work duties detracted from studying and becoming informed and networking to advance themselves. The carers initially thought that care work would be a type of survival employment while they settled in England; hence they investigated new opportunities, especially in social work or health care. While many carers quickly gave up their aspirations, others still hoped their dreams would happen. One carer who taught at university level in Cuba, for example, wondered if she was on the right path to becoming a social worker or an occupational therapist: "I would like to do social work or occupational therapy in the future, so I think I'm on the right path."

Many of the carers were directly told by recruiters that their care work jobs would lead to health-care or social work careers, and that providing care was an entry-level job, a mere stepping stone. Recruitment companies presented training to prospective care workers as a type of stepping stone mechanism. The carers, especially those on student routes/contracts, were told they would receive good training opportunities that would lead to other jobs. One carer was told that the NVQ system in the UK was an international degree transferable to other countries and therefore valuable.[17] "So I really wanted to learn and to widen my horizon because I think the NVQ here is known in Canada and Australia," the carer said.

Yet the qualification is neither legitimate in other countries nor did it count towards professional adaptation in England. The key to being recognized as a professional again in England was not passing the NVQ assessments, but rather the ability to pass the IELTS exam, which was demanded by professional associations as a prerequisite to enter a degree programme and to become a licensed practitioner (carers are not licensed). Most carers were surprised at the amount of retraining required to adapt their qualifications. One carer also described the convoluted path towards becoming a nurse: "You have to pay GBP 5,000 to do a course for three years at a university. Before you do that, there is the IELTS course, which involves a lot of procedures. It costs GBP 100 through the Internet."

Some of the carers tried to take the IELTS exam before they migrated. However, the pass mark had recently been upgraded by the Nurse Midwifery Council (NMC), making it very difficult to pass the test. Some carers came within half a point to one point of passing it.

One case demonstrates tremendous difficulties in passing the IELTS and testifies to the qualification obstacles that are not so much a function of the migrant carer's language abilities as they are the "linguistic penalty" (Roberts, 2010) imposed by professional associations and employers.

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17 The NVQ (National Vocational Qualification) is not recognized in Europe or in other countries. It is specifically for England's vocational system (thus, the name, "national" and "vocational") and is not considered for professional degrees.

Jana, in her late 20s and married, was from India and used to work as a nurse there. She wanted to become a nurse like her sisters, and she encouraged another sister to become one: "I pushed my sister to go for nursing; [I said] 'it is good for you, you will get a good job and a good career, you'll get a good experience.'" Jana reflected on why she migrated: "I wanted to work abroad and I wanted to study more here [UK] because here there are more advanced technologies and everything. I had to work with old technologies in India, which is why I came here."

Jana's ambition was to work in a British hospital environment rather than in a nursing home, where she was employed at the time of the study, so that she could build on her nursing skills. Furthering her nursing career was Jana's most important priority: "I have to improve my career. Money is OK, money is important, a very important matter for living standards, but my career is also important to me." Jana said she was asked by her manager to take the NVQ, but she reflected: "I don't need to do the NVQ because my nursing side of it is equal to NVQ3." Her manager also encouraged Jana to retake the IELTS test, but with little actual support. As a result of having little practical assistance, such as time off to study, Jana internalized it as a personal failing and subsequently felt "lazy". "Go and try to get that score and then you can do your adaptation," Jana recalled her manager saying. "She [the manager] will push me but I know I have to improve it a bit more because that score is difficult for me. So, I am very lazy but what can I do?"

Jana claimed that she felt "unlucky" with her failing IELTS score and knew that she had little choice other than to take it again. Her failure to obtain a score of 7 on the IELTS[18] prevented her from adapting her qualifications and becoming a nurse again because her registration from the NMC expired (the professional association demands that all prospective members take the IELTS if they are not European nationals). Jana explained:

> *That time, I had a registration with the NMC, and I can do my adaptation but I got only one month. Within one month my registration expired, so I am unlucky to do the adaptation here…I got a good chance to go abroad. But here then, because I was unlucky, I couldn't do my adaptation, so I lost my chance.*

Jana was not allowed to take blood in her role as a carer in the nursing home although in India she was qualified to do this. She could have applied her nursing skills if she were in a hospital setting in England, functioning as a nurse. "We know how to take blood but we are not allowed to. So, we have no chance to deal with it. We are losing our chance to do these things, because I think hospitals give us more experience," Jana said.

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18 The NMC has set a passing score of 7. The main difference in criteria between a score of 6 and a score of 7 in the IELTS is that a score of 7 indicates complex communication and reasoning, whereas a score of 6 indicates "fairly" complex communication and reasoning.

"I want them to have a bright future": Earning a higher income to support the family and provide the children with more opportunities

Being told that they would eventually earn more money in England was an incentive for the participants in the study to work abroad, because of the low wages in their countries of origin. "India is not a very rich country – we can come here [UK], we can earn money," said one carer. "The opportunity presented itself and the value of the pound to the peso is great, very big. I will be able to support my daughter and myself," noted another carer from the Philippines. Upon arriving, however, these carers became aware that their financial debts and obligations, combined with their occupation and lifestyle, meant that they would be barely able to afford the high cost of living in England, let alone send money home. One carer reflected on her financial obligations to her family and expressed her worries: "The conversion is a bit lower than we expected and it's gone down. I am the provider. I can't give more to them. I'm just getting the same salary as I used to, so the work gives no chance to give my family additional financial support."

For the mothers in the study sample, making money was often directly related to supporting their children's education, either by saving for the future or by paying for their children to attend private schools in their countries of origin. One carer described her daughter's education: "I gave her the best school possible for a good foundation, which is the best school back home. I enrolled her in a private school, which is expensive."

Another carer reflected on her daughter's future career, a career she felt she could not fully support even if she sent home half of her income. "[My daughter] said she wanted to be a doctor. I know I can't give her this because studying medicine back home costs nearly a fortune. It would cost a fortune! But then I'm not going to say 'no, you can't.' I will say, 'ok, but you need to study harder.'"

Some carers believed that sponsoring children (i.e. bringing over the family to live with them) to study in England would mean spending less money on remittances and upgrading the children's education. Christina's case illustrates this phenomenon.

Christina's story is one of survival. A 35-year-old widowed mother of three children without any public funds or support, she makes the most of her community resources to obtain a good education for her children. She arrived in the UK in 2004 and her family followed her in 2006. However, in 2007, her husband, an ex-miner who had become a carer like her, died suddenly from pneumonia, leaving her with three pre-teenage children. She began to question why she was in England. "And if my children never get educated, it will be my problem. I mean my husband died. I could have gone back home – what am I doing here? But I am here because I want my children to be educated. I want them to have a bright future," Christina said.

Christina recognizes her role as a lone parent and the responsibility of caring for her children. She knows that the choices she makes affect the whole family and she wants her children to have a good education. "I want the best for them!" Christina said. Her family life and her own professional journey encounter barriers. Nevertheless, Christina's religious faith, coupled with her strong will and sense of responsibility, acts as a support in all areas of her life. Joining the church enabled Christina to secure financial and emotional support, including help with her accounting and even financing the transport of her husband's body and the funeral costs in Zambia. "The church came, one of my friends came, to help me with the budget – they said they will pay this and that for me," Christina said.

Yet the church did not shield the family from everything. The loss of her husband put strain on Christina that the church was not able to alleviate; this strain relates to income and childcare needs. As the sole provider for her children, who do not receive any support from the State, Christina works long hours, often during the night, to be able to stay afloat financially. Aware of the fact that she needed someone to care for her children while she worked, Christina tried to secure permission on compassionate grounds for her Zambian niece to stay with her and look after the children, especially at night when she worked the graveyard shift. Yet the State did not allow the niece to stay in England for longer than a year and she eventually had to return to Zambia, leaving Christina in the same dilemma of trying to support her family with very limited means.

"To grow as an individual": Becoming more self-sufficient and independent

Many carers wanted to learn and develop themselves as people. One carer said she migrated because she wanted "more experience and culture". A number of the migrant women who were young and single saw England as an opportunity to develop freely, away from their families, and beyond gendered cultural expectations in their countries of origin. There was a strong desire to be independent from the family, particularly from supposedly overbearing mothers. One carer said:

> My mother, brother, sister and I are talking regularly on the phone. They love me so much and they are monitoring me. I am single. I have been separated for eight years. My mother protected me from boyfriends. This country [UK] is a free country. You do what you want. I am alone here so no one can see me. I feel free. I have no children, no mother. I never had that before – my mother is strict.

Although liking her newfound independence from her mother, this particular carer got help from family abroad for food and clothes in a pattern that could be considered as "reverse remittances" because she depended on family back home

to send her money; this carer could not fund her basic needs in England on her low salary. In other cases, such as the one presented below, money was refused from a partner who offered to send it when the carer declared herself penniless. She rejected the support on the grounds of wanting to remain independent from the sender. For the carers who are mothers, it was important to be a role model for their children, especially for their daughters. Yet some of the women did not tell their children they were doing care work, as they are ashamed of losing their professional status. One carer said:

> Sometimes you feel an inferiority complex not practicing. I am ashamed I am not a nurse. I always say I have to finish my exam to the children when they ask. It's degrading work, caring. My children think I am a nurse. The children are used to seeing me in the hospital. In their mind they think I am a nurse.

For those in unhappy marriages in Catholic countries such as the Philippines, migration is commonly known as a "Filipino divorce". One woman in the study migrated because she wanted a separation from her sea merchant husband whom she felt was neglectful of her and their daughter. Some of the migrant women had relationships that were physically and/or emotionally abusive; in such cases, migrating enabled these women to have more personal freedom and to escape from the perpetrators of abuse. The next case demonstrates the effects of abuse on a woman's migration experience and her desire for independence.

Amy is in her early 30s and hails from the Philippines. She is an occupational therapist, having completed her studies in 2001. She confirmed that care work was intended to support her family and was a livelihood strategy. "I do this work to support my family," she stated. Amy was partnered with an older man as part of a family arrangement to help her mother's failing business avoid imminent bankruptcy. This man was already married to someone else. She felt that her partner, who was in his 60s, was using their 12-year-old daughter (both were in the Philippines) to manipulate Amy. She described the circumstances of manipulation:

> My daughter doesn't know I am suffering in silence. If I tell her about him she would be hurt. When I tried to break the relationship, he used my daughter to get hold of me. He is controlling. Since I am away, he can't force me to do things. The only reason I get in touch with him is because he can turn my daughter's heart against me. He made sure he would get me pregnant when he and my mom were having problems. I was so naïve. He is emotionally abusive.

Amy's reasons for migrating were highly personal. She said moving to England allowed her to "find" herself, "to be financially independent" and "to grow as an individual". One of the obstacles that she felt was blocking her ability to become

fully independent was financial difficulty resulting from enrolling in a fraudulent training company. Since paying GBP 2,500 for her course, she never received any training and had little recourse to fight the agency, which was connected to a recruitment company:

> I hold a student visa. We have been paying tuition fees to a training centre, and paying since March, but there has been no assessor and no training materials given to us. I tried ringing them to get in touch, but I only get the answering machine. The training centre closed down and we are going to be in trouble if we don't find another training centre because of the UK Border Agency. We need a training centre that is accredited and I haven't found one yet.

Her partner offered her money but she rejected it; Amy did not want to feel tied to her partner because she wanted to eventually leave him. She had hoped to become an occupational therapist in England in order to secure a good quality of life for herself and her daughter. However, she felt she could not adapt her qualifications due to the extremely short visa she was given as a "student". Amy said: "I checked on the Internet how long it would take to become an OT [occupational therapist]. It would take five years before I finish. I can't enrol in that course because my status here is unstable – I won't finish it on time. I can't be full time because I have to work."

She reflected more on the job itself and whether her expectations of being independent could ever realistically be fulfilled:

> Before, I can't stand this job. I can't believe I am doing this to myself, this job, especially when clients are grumpy. Why I am putting up with this, the office ringing me for additional calls. I don't want to upset anyone so I say yes. Money doesn't motivate me, as long as I am happy, as long as I can sustain basic needs.

The cases of Amy, Jana and Christina demonstrate the extent that migrants will go to become autonomous women, with their goals of professional development (as in the case of Jana), of wanting to give children a good education (as in the case of Christina), and of being independent (as in the case of Amy). These women's cases illustrate the sacrifices they have made and the hardships they have encountered as they attempt to achieve their life goals. The next section will detail the nature and direct effects of deskilling on their lives – the effects of these dead ends.

"I've been stopped from doing the things I'm quite capable of doing": The effects of deskilling

A former physical therapist perceived her deskilling as akin to not being able to use her expertise in her role as a carer. "I've been stopped from doing the things I'm quite capable of doing. Let's say, for instance, this patient or this client has a stroke and I have dealt with a lot of cases like that in the Philippines, but, of course, the training says you can't do this and you can't do that," she said.

Similarly, another carer felt she was not practicing her expertise: "I'm not practicing my profession here, I'm *just* a carer here." The obstacles that the carers encountered made them feel defeated and unable to change their situations, and they felt they were suffering as a result of the dead ends they encountered. They experienced demoralization, shame, depression, boredom, loss of concentration, confusion, stress, compulsion to be whistle-blowers; they felt overlooked and trapped.

One carer described her demoralization after learning that she had to completely retrain to become a nurse again. She recounted her pain at the fact that her qualifications from her country of origin are invisible to England's system: "It's painful. I really want to get this, but it's painful doing the things that you have been through already." Other carers' comments demonstrated that the professional pathways to adapt or convert their qualifications were prolonged and not clear-cut. The carer quoted above, for example, estimated that it would take her five years to become a nurse in England, even though she had nursing expertise.

For migrants who do try to adapt their qualifications, there are many logistical hurdles, including problems with mentors, unsupportive managers, and expiry dates of the NMC that made it difficult to register in a timely manner. One woman paid a recruitment company for an adaptation course that included mentoring in her care company. Yet her adaptation opportunity never transpired:

> When it was my time to do the adaptation, my mentor left, so we asked management if they can do something about it. We were there for a year. We did care assistant jobs and waited to do adaptation as well. It didn't happen. I asked the company managers again. They were just making excuses. I'm still a carer at the moment.

Another common emotion was shame. "I am ashamed because I'm a carer here," said one migrant. With shame came a sense of depression especially when dealing with depressed clients. "I feel sometimes like I will start to have depression," said another carer. Part of the problem was that the job entailed easy and often

monotonous work. Another carer described it as "the same job and the same people every day – so boring." Another carer confirmed that the job was simple: "This job is easier than [my job in] China – I'm dealing with basic physical needs."

Yet the job was not effortless; given that the rotas of these migrant carers were full, they had little time off and were often tired. A combination of factors affected their concentration and possibly their ambitions. "Sometimes you have no concentration, thinking about clients. The office calls you to go to this client, on your break – somebody can't work, somebody's sick," said one carer. Yet another carer felt confused about how she could advance with such little support and time. "I don't have enough time to process this and collect the documents. It's my dream to become a physiotherapist here. That's my problem – time. Or nobody pushes me. What is the easiest way? I don't know really."

The longer they stayed as carers meant the less they felt they could develop themselves professionally on their own. "I think if I stay in the nursing home, I can't develop my skill. My manager knows I'm a qualified nurse but she didn't help me," said one carer. Another carer described her deskilling as forgetting her former skills and feeling disoriented. "I have training as a nurse, graduated as nurse but we are here as carers. We forgot something. We are not updated and we miss the hospital setting. It sometimes happens that there is an emergency but we can't apply our experience."

Even reading about their professions on their own was not helping due to the stress of care work. "I'm not ready for the test because my mind has to absorb all the things that I'm reading now. I am stressed about what I'm doing. I keep on reading but it doesn't help," one carer reflected.

Another stressor was that the migrants found that the vocational skills they had as carers would not translate back to their countries, as there were no care work jobs there. One carer who had an engineering degree from Poland but could not find suitable work in her home country decided to become a carer in England. However, she felt that she could not do this work in Poland because of the "unusable skills" she acquired. "You can transfer, of course, if you have useful skills. If you have unusable skills, you can do nothing really with them. In Poland there simply is no such thing as 'carers', just nurses. To be a nurse you have to finish nursing college," she said.

The carers could not understand why their recruitment companies required them to have professional qualifications – university degrees and extensive professional experience – for work that did not require much education or professional experience and where their British-born colleagues typically had low education levels. One

carer reflected on the levels of professional experience the recruitment company in the Philippines demanded from her:

> Because the recruitment companies have very high requirements…when they took me from my country – the Philippines – they said you have to have at least three years of experience in a hospital, and I wondered, 'hmm, why is that?'. Then when you get here, it's not recognized and then the people that you are going to be working with, the locals, didn't even go to college.

Whilst care work could be considered a highly skilled field in many ways because it entails intensive and close observation of challenging patients and requires knowledgeable and sensitized responses, the rules are to follow company care plans to support clients' basic physical needs rather than diagnosis or treatment. Thus, former health-care professionals are not able to use their professional knowledge to help clients. One carer, a former nurse, complained she could only observe clients' conditions rather than diagnose them. "We only follow the care plans. We can do only some things for them, but not beyond that. It helps when you see your client, you can easily tell, make a note. But you don't write a diagnosis in the report, it's just your observation," she said.

However, due to their professional ethic in treating patients, these former health professionals often give advice and extra care, making themselves even more valuable to the clients and to their employers. Other studies have confirmed that migrant carers give additional help to clients but this is "under the radar" of the company and none of it is remunerated. Other reasons that migrants tend to do extra work for clients is because they feel the need to secure a sense of credibility from clients and company managers as "outsiders", as Timmonen and Doyle (2010) found in their research. One carer used her professional expertise to give additional assistance to a client:

> I am not using my skills as an occupational therapist (OT). I am not allowed to. For example, I have a client who is a stroke patient. I know he is capable of dressing himself, because he has muscle strength, but he is not doing it. I can't encourage him although I know, as an OT [occupational therapist], I can teach the techniques he can use and positions of sleeping so his shoulder wouldn't drop. I was asked by him if I wanted to work outside of the company, if I wanted to treat him. I told him that as much as I wanted, I can't – it's the policy. But I can give him tips, small exercises that could help him and I showed him. Since it's not in the care plan, I'm not supposed to.

If they could not practice their professions, these carers would act as whistle-blowers in the company by demonstrating what was lacking in the clients' care

Chapter 2: "I don't want to be stuck as a carer":
The effects of deskilling on the livelihoods and opportunities of migrant care workers in England

plans. One carer challenged the company care plan when she saw a client who needed more assistance than what the plan stipulated. She called the office, and recollected what the staff said to her:

> One morning I went there, and the client's legs were rheumatoid so he knew the prognosis. He needed more care. It was difficult for him – so I did phone the company and said, 'look guys, the situation is like this' and then this person [staff] just said: 'no, we can't change the prescribed care.' I then took the trouble to phone the one who was in charge, and I told her, I said 'look, I've been to that man's house and this is the situation'.

Another former nurse challenged the attention paid by the doctors to the clients. "I think they need more attention from the doctors. We give all this attention to them. We wash them; we take care of them; we love them. I say to the doctors, 'listen, I don't want to be a nurse here, but like a nurse, I can see so many things.'"

Overall, the carers felt invisible and "overlooked". One carer was relieved that her trainer and the clients could see she was highly skilled because her colleagues and supervisor seemed unaware of her expertise. "Seeing me for the first time, it was difficult for the clients to trust me, even if I say I am a nurse. It is difficult to be recognized by all the people I work for. The clients recognize me, they actually see, 'this person must be experienced.' But they overlook you at work," she said.

Other carers felt upset about their situations, especially their working conditions, but were unable to change them and subsequently felt trapped. When one carer who had been in England for a year was asked why she migrated, she said her number one reason was the "good life" in England, but she found life in the country to be "miserable". As a result, the carers tended to feel ambivalent about their futures and confused about what to do, leading them to feel unable to take any action. They had few resources to advance and there were numerous obstacles to overcome, such as immigration and company policies.

Many of the carers felt that they were slipping into a sense of powerlessness by being in this low-status job. "I can't do anything about it, *because I'm just a carer*," one said. Another explained that her sense of development as a professional was becoming stagnant. "My development is not higher and not lower; [it is] just at the same level all the time." The feeling of being "stuck" in the job was entrenched; as one carer said, "still stuck in this job plus taking the course, plus not having anything else by doing it. I'm stuck!" Without support to make changes, these people felt they were all alone, like the Chinese carer who said: "I have to change my life by myself," because her manager "didn't care about us – we are from another country." Soon, many of the carers give up even thinking about adapting their qualifications.

"I have no plans to do the adaptation. It's very expensive and I have children to support. My brain is already stagnant. I never used my skill. I forgot so many skills," said one carer.

Another issue leading to migrant carers' sense of entrapment was that they felt obligated to clients, with whom many of the study participants had developed close relationships. "I can't tell them I want to go, to move to somewhere else," said one carer. "Some people here are attached to me," another said. These carers felt obliged, on some level, to take care of the elderly and this puts them in a difficult position from which it is hard to advance out of care jobs. The underlying factors in their caring-versus-advancement dilemma include the gender contract, their migrant status, and the professional care ethic that was previously discussed. Finally, company policies reinforced silence due to their strictness. Many carers opt not to speak up. "It's better to keep quiet and keep it to yourself rather than to tell them," said one carer. This silencing and sense of paralysis affects migrant carers' current and future sense of well-being.

Recommendations

There should be opportunities for migrants to become self-determined women who can fulfil their capabilities. As shown throughout the paper, the women sought out England as a place to migrate to because of its promise to support their professional development as well as their livelihoods – prospects that they believed were not available in their countries of origin. This value was strong and should have been built upon for their economic and social integration, rather than ignored. Recommendations for changing their situations arise from research and involve policies and practices.

The first, and perhaps most important, issue is the ethical recruitment of migrant care workers. The migrant care workers in this study were exploited by recruitment companies who told them that care work would be a stepping stone to finding work in their professions. The recruitment companies also expected these recruits to pay large sums of money and requested qualifications from them that were clearly beyond the job description for a carer. The women were not informed by the recruiters about the realities of their jobs and the limited opportunities for advancement.

The second issue is the treatment of migrants at the workplace. As the carers' stories demonstrated, they were often overworked and had little support to advance themselves, including studying for courses so as to progress their careers, as well as remitting and securing a good quality of life. Government regulations need to be

more finely tuned for this population and strictly enforced so their workplace rights are protected.

Third, migrant care workers' qualifications should be converted in a straightforward and practical manner in England and in Europe as a whole. The carers' comments indicated that the adaptation of their former qualifications was a prolonged and bureaucratic process that made them give up hope of ever becoming professionals again. They had little practical support to progress.

Fourth, improving the status and opportunities of professional women should be as important in developing countries as in capital-rich countries in the pursuit of equal pay, rights and opportunities. The carers' cases showed that they invested in higher education in their countries of origin and then migrated to improve their quality of life as well as that of their families. They migrated because they could not locate appropriate work or professional development in their own countries or were paid far less than they should have been. They took jobs in England for which they were overqualified, with the promise that these would convert into better outcomes. Neither the jobs nor the opportunities transpired as they had hoped, and they were faced with dilemmas about having to be "just carers". Lastly, an international approach is needed to secure "bright futures" for migrant women and their families, as Christina testified. This would involve systematic efforts to improve women's progress in a global labour market that clearly disadvantages them, as this study and other research have demonstrated.

Ethical recruitment policies

Ethical recruitment policies and practices in both receiving and sending countries enable prospective migrants to be more informed at the pre-migration stage. As this research showed, the women's English language skills were not deficient. In fact, the women in this study were highly proficient in speaking and using English at the workplace and in their communities. They had learned it in schools from when they were young and often used it at work and in other settings; this is especially true in former colonies of English-speaking countries such as India, Zambia and the Philippines. The fact that migrant care workers could not pass the English language exam in England at the upgraded score was an indication of institutional barriers. Institutional barriers in the receiving country, rather than language barriers, were the problems, in addition to the fact that these migrant carers' vast skill sets from their former professions and their educational expertise were not being used. Quantifying how many care workers are in this situation would be important in highlighting brain waste in Europe. Currently, these migrants are being set up as temporary guest workers if there is an implicit promise but no possibility of aspiring to better positions in society (Bach, 2007). Recruitment companies need to be

monitored, especially in the trafficking of student visas, so that women are not pushed to resort to desperate measures. Defining "highly skilled migrants" is also important and challenges why it is that some service sector positions like nursing are not labelled as such. Care work is a marginalized field. As Folbre (2006: 11) has commented: "Economists sometimes refer to the service sector and pay attention to specific industries such as health. Few even acknowledge there is something called the 'care sector.'" Policies should also consider to what extent individual States and labour market institutions regulate these controls, as Lowell et al. (2004) have suggested. A collaborative effort to formulate and enforce recruitment policies would involve unions, ethnic and professional associations, university advocate groups and feminist organizations to spread information across borders to counter exploitative recruitment and training agencies, bogus university and college programmes, and discriminatory employment and recruitment practices. High-quality risk assessments would be key to the decision-making process of recruits.

Treatment in the industry

The UK is viewed as a liberal model with market-oriented solutions to care work with low-paid migrant women filling these jobs (Rubin et al., 2008). Migrant women carry a "double disadvantage" in terms of the kinds of jobs they get and their conditions in terms of their unequal opportunities, with women from outside the EU receiving a "third axis" of disadvantage (Rubin, 2008: 44). This means that in a discriminatory labour market in Europe, gender and a migrant status, as well as being outside of Europe, are disadvantages to women. These non-EU migrants, in particular, often feel they have to prove themselves and are often forced by companies to take on more hours of work and difficult clients, and in conditions that others would reject. When these migrants arrive, their treatment in the industry and by government officials needs to be addressed too; as shown throughout the report, their non-EU migrant visas locked them into types of jobs that made it difficult to switch or move up, especially the hours they worked which slated little time for study or advancement. The poor pay made it difficult to accrue resources and to be able to progress, because without helpful sources, the main focus is on survival. "High-road strategies" are needed in the care sector; as Folbre (2006: 20) has suggested: "Organizations often face choices in the ways they can achieve efficiency: 'Low-road' implies low cost but high labour turnover and poor quality; 'high-road" implies higher cost but sufficiently higher effort and quality." Unionization across the EU, particularly for migrants, can assist this effort as well as better enforcement of conditions and hours through a multi-agency collaboration involving government regulation.[19]

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19 A recent report by the BBC 4 on migrant carer exploitation has shown that this might be an effective solution to deal directly with the companies' treatment of its workforce. See: www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00xf5dy.

Clear-cut conversion of qualifications so adaptation is possible

Next, European qualification systems, such as Europass, and other qualification systems need to involve non-EU migrants so they can easily convert their qualifications or be on workable professional advancement routes without having to completely retrain for their professions. Adaptation courses can be more widely available, easier to get through, and for different professions. Some courses may not be needed by some migrants, depending on the amount of time and experience they already have. The issue of why the education of migrants is viewed as second-rate is important to consider. Also, gatekeeping tests such as the IELTS need to be monitored for their viability and whether they are indeed necessary. As the study showed, three carers converted their qualifications from Romania to become nurses in England – and they did so without having to endure an adaptation programme. They also did not need to take the IELTS because of their status as EU nationals. Their exclusion from having to take this test had nothing to do with language issues and was purely a political decision on the part of the NMC. Genuine opportunities should be available to migrant professional groups, especially given the substantial shortage of nurses and teachers in England (Kingma, 2006).

Improving conditions for professional women in developing countries

Wages, employment, professional development, networks, and socio-economic and political conditions drive professional migratory flows, as Chappell and Glennie (2010: 1) have found. In particular, these researchers found that Indian nurses were more likely than Indian doctors to go abroad permanently, due to the lack of advancement opportunities at home. "Brain circulation" has been proposed as a means of resolving these issues, where migrants receive training and educational opportunities in advanced economies and then return, which can resolve temporary "brain drain" (the phenomenon that occurs when professionals migrate, creating a vacuum due to the loss of expertise) (Portes and Dewind, 2007). To what extent is migration an inevitable turn for professional women without decent opportunities for livelihood in their countries of origin? How can changes be made under globalization processes that often undermine skilled women's capabilities, like the global care industry that captures their labour? Improving the conditions and rights of professional women through regulation and enforcement needs to occur at the international level.

An international approach

An integrated approach is clearly needed to create more practical support for the migrant labour population so they can achieve their goals. As the women's stories show, their reception in England was unfavourable in terms of being handicapped

by their positioning in the care industry, and their trajectories were downwardly mobile. Institutional obstacles blocked their mobility in an industry and country that incorporated them as workers but did not enable them to advance. The European Femmage project found that "women migrants would benefit from support that promotes their independence and addresses gender-specific issues," but more support is needed at the global level to deal with the feminization of labour migration.

Women's education is often ignored and considered a background variable in neo-liberal policies that neglect their economic integration into the global labour market. The assumption is that education raises women's levels of labour market advantage. Yet, under globalization processes, this is not always the case, as the stories of the women in this study showed. Very little is done to address the mismatch of women's skills with wage differentials. As this study shows, the political and economic ramifications are large and should include a global perspective. While the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) initiatives are preoccupied with basic education for women and girls and improving access and quality of schools, as Walby (2005) shows, there is little analysis of the types of jobs and the progress that women make in the labour market, even with a higher education. There is little attention paid to any kind of gender empowerment and skilled women's labour market value.

A good place to start is the newly formed body called UN Women, which was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2010. The aim of UN Women is to "significantly boost United Nations efforts to promote gender equality, expand opportunity, and tackle discrimination around the globe." Whilst this entity is symbolically important, without tools, the mission of equality may be missed. "Gender mainstreaming" may be the most important leverage tool that should be adopted by UN Women. Introduced at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, the initiative of "gender mainstreaming" aims for gender equality in its incorporation of gender-based budgeting, assessments and instruments to assess women's capabilities in the system, as well as concrete outcomes for women's development in the labour market (Walby, 2005). With this robust tool, UN Women can target interventions such as the ones mentioned for skilled migrant women who become carers, thereby preventing their downward trajectories, or what can be called the "race to the bottom" (Walters, 2000).

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CHAPTER
3

THE PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPACT OF UNDEREMPLOYMENT IN THE LIVES OF SKILLED MIGRANT WOMEN WORKING IN GENEVA, SWITZERLAND:

An empirical study

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THE PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPACT OF UNDEREMPLOYMENT IN THE LIVES OF SKILLED MIGRANT WOMEN WORKING IN GENEVA, SWITZERLAND:

An empirical study

Luisa Marin de Avellan
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Introduction

The migration of women, either independently or to follow a family member, is a phenomenon that is deeply shaping the population characteristics of most European countries. As was estimated in 2009, 52.3 per cent of the over 69 million international migrants living in Europe were women (UN DESA, Population Division, 2009). With girls and women enjoying increased access to education in many countries around the world, a great proportion of women are well-educated and many hold university degrees (Rubin et al., 2008). Despite this relatively high human capital, women migrants are faced with important difficulties in their social and economic integration into their host societies (Piper, 2007). In particular, access to employment opportunities consistent with their levels of education and professional experience and the recognition of their credentials and skills are of particular relevance, as a combination of gender and socio-economic dynamics can limit migrant women to certain labour market sectors or occupations traditionally considered "women's work", such as domestic work, care services and catering, regardless of their educational background (Sassen, 1994; Piper, 2007).

The situation of underemployment is an important obstacle not only to skilled women's personal development, but also to their contribution to their families, as well as to their host and home communities. Paradoxically, however, it would seem that increasingly globalized and knowledge-based economies are to some extent supported and made possible by some of the low-valued and marginalized services which are often provided by migrant women (Sassen, 2000). In addition, authors have noted that in many high-income Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, changes in regulations restricting the entry of unskilled migrants and favouring the migration of skilled foreigners have coincided with an increased need for domestic and care workers, which means that skilled migrants are to some extent drawn to fill this gap (Raghuram and Kofman, 2004).

To give more visibility to the under-researched topic of underemployment of migrant women, IOM has undertaken a research project with the following objectives: i) to take stock of the existing literature on the topic, especially in the Swiss context; ii) to undertake some primary research about the psychological and social impact of underemployment on migrant women in the Swiss city of Geneva; and iii) to draw policy conclusions and recommendations to facilitate women's integration into the labour market and mitigate the impact of underemployment on their well-being, with the ultimate aim of optimizing the benefits of migration for qualified migrant women.

The current study takes place in Geneva, a European city which has a high rate of immigration for various historical reasons and where the problem of migrant underemployment has recently been studied from the angle of labour issues (Chicha and Deraedt, 2009). The current study aims to address this problem from the point of view of the psychosocial impact of underemployment on the lives of migrant women and to provide specific recommendations. These apply, in the first instance, to specific problems identified in Geneva. However, based on previous international studies, it is thought that many of these problems could also extend to other high-income OECD countries where migrant underemployment is a significant problem. The current report is based on the information yielded by an empirical study of 33 university graduate migrant women and a series of interviews in Geneva with local authorities and civil society organizations that have a mandate to support, or are likely to be in contact with, the selected population of women.

I. Literature review

1. Migration and immigration policies in Switzerland

Despite its small size, Switzerland has one of the highest immigration rates among European countries (Piguet, 2004), comparable to those in other high-income OECD countries such as Canada and Australia (Chicha and Deraedt, 2009). According to United Nations statistics, 23 per cent of the population of Switzerland is foreign-born (UN DESA, Population Division, 2009). Statistics from the Swiss Survey on Active Population also show that immigrants are currently quite skilled: as of 2010, 34.5 per cent of Swiss men above 15 years of age have a tertiary education, compared to 30.7 per cent of foreign men. Regarding women, the level of education seems higher among foreigners, as 26.7 per cent of them possess a tertiary education compared to only 19.5 per cent of Swiss women above 15 years of age.[1] These findings are not

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1 Enquête Suisse sur la Population Active. Data accessible at this link : www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/fr/index/themen/03/02/blank/data/03.html.

surprising, considering that recent immigration policies in Switzerland, like in other high-income OECD countries such as Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom, limit the right to stay of foreigners to those who are highly qualified or who meet the needs of the national economy (Kofman, 2000; Ho and Alcorso, 2004; Creese and Wiebe, 2009). These restrictions apply in Switzerland only to migrants from countries outside the European Union (EU-25, i.e. excluding Romania and Bulgaria) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA),[2] and are exclusive of asylum-seekers, students and individuals admitted under family reunification streams.

People from outside the EU-25 and the EFTA who are employed in Switzerland need to be granted a residence permit, which is automatically renewed based on continued employment.[3] Nuclear families also have the possibility of residing in the country, but their permit remains tied to that of the employed person; this means that, for residence permit purposes, spouses and children are considered as dependants. Approximately 43 per cent of men and women migrants are granted legal residency for reasons of marriage or family reunification and this is stated in their residence permit. Over 2 per cent of migrants enter the country as statutory refugees.[4] Spouses of employees and refugees are granted immediate access to work without legal restrictions.

2. Mechanisms leading to underemployment and deskilling in Switzerland and in other high-income OECD countries

The fact that migrants are allowed to work in Switzerland if they have a valid residence permit does not necessarily mean that they will be able to find a job. The 2000 Swiss census shows, for example, that foreign women are more affected by unemployment; their unemployment rate is 5.6 points higher than that of their male counterparts and 8.1 points higher than the rate for Swiss women[5] (OFS,

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2 Citizens of EU-17/EFTA (15 old EU Member States, Cyprus, Malta and EFTA) have enjoyed full freedom of circulation since 1 June 2007. The free circulation agreement has also applied, since 1 April 2006, to new EU States (EU-8), although they remained subject until 2011 to some restrictions on access to the labour market such as quotas, priority for Swiss nationals and control of conditions of pay and working conditions. At the time of writing, nationals of Romania and Bulgaria do not benefit from the right to free circulation. (Federal Office for Migration, *Etrangers et Requérants d'Asile en Suisse* (Bern, 2008). Updated with information from the Swiss Confederation, available from www.bfm.admin.ch/bfm/fr/home/themen/fza_schweiz-eu-efta.html).

3 Types of residence permits in Switzerland include: L permits which are short-stay permits; N permits granted to asylum-seekers and limited to the duration of the asylum process; F permits for temporary admissions on humanitarian grounds, which have a duration of one year and are renewable. The residence permits also include: B permits, which are granted to people entering as employees and their families, and which are valid for one year and are renewable; C permits, which are granted to people with B permits after ongoing residence in Switzerland for five to 10 years, depending on the nationality. Applications for Swiss citizenship can be submitted after 12 years of continued residency in Switzerland. Migrants who are employed by international organizations receive a Carte de Légitimation. Spouses need to exchange theirs for a Permit Ci if they wish to work in Switzerland (OECD, 2007).

4 Data from statistics from the Federal Office for Migration in the document "Etrangers entrés en Suisse par motif d'immigration, année 2010" , accessible at this link: www.bfm.admin.ch/content/dam/data/migration/statistik/auslaenderstatistik/aktuelle/2010/einwanderungsgrund-2010-12-f.pdf.

5 According to the 2000 census, the unemployment rate for migrant men was 5.9 per cent, while the unemployment rate for migrant women was 11.5 per cent, and only 3.4 per cent for Swiss women.

2005). In the case of skilled migrants, beyond unemployment, the problem lies in whether they can actually find work that corresponds to their education and level of experience. A study based on the same census showed that at least 30.5 per cent of foreign permanent resident women were occupying jobs for which they were overqualified, compared to 21 per cent of Swiss women (Pecoraro, 2010). The study also showed that the risk of being overqualified is higher for mothers, in general, increasing still with the number of children they have who are under the age of 6.

The main barrier that skilled migrants encounter in finding a job which corresponds to their qualifications is the lack of recognition of their academic degrees and professional experience, especially if they have obtained them in developing countries (Creese and Wiebe, 2009). Experts have used the term "deskilling" to refer to the loss of access to previously held professional occupations through the non-recognition of foreign education and credentials (Bauder, 2003). This results, of course, in an important loss of socio-economic status for individuals whose skills are no longer marketable and who are therefore forced to undertake a different type of activity, one that is generally below their level of qualification and experience, if they still wish to work. In cases where foreign degrees are recognized by the national system, studies show that full equivalence is rarely obtained, as four- to six-year foreign diplomas or licences are exchanged for three-year bachelor's degrees. These degrees, in many professions, are insufficient to practice or have low competitive value, as many people in high-income OECD countries undertake postgraduate studies after their bachelor's degree (Chicha and Deraedt, 2009). The result is similar to that of non-recognition of degrees in terms of the loss of marketable skills. Furthermore, De Coulon et al. (2003) found that Swiss education is, by all standards, more valued in the country than any other education obtained abroad, so even in cases where foreign degrees may be fully recognized, migrants are still in a situation of disadvantage with respect to national citizens when submitting their job applications.

The terms "downward occupational mobility" (Tang et al., 2007; Creese and Wiebe, 2009), "underemployment" (Asanin and Wilson, 2009) and "deskilling" (Man, 2004) have been used interchangeably to refer to the process of losing the social and cultural capital attached to one's profession. However, the term "deskilling" also implies the loss of skills due to lack of professional practice as a result of not having access to work in one's profession (Asanin and Wilson, 2009). The term "underemployment" will therefore be preferred in the current study to refer to cases where individuals are employed in jobs that underutilize their education and skills (Freiland and Price, 2003); "deskilling" will be used to refer to actual or perceived loss of professional skills through lack of usage. "Downward occupational mobility" will be used to indicate the fact of having to occupy a position much below one's previous professional status.

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National and international studies agree that there are other important barriers limiting skilled migrants' access to finding a job in their profession, apart from the non-recognition of degrees. These include employers' frequent requirement that job applicants should have professional experience in the country of destination; this implies an impossible situation for many foreigners because in order to gain this experience, they need to be given the opportunity to work (Chicha and Deraedt, 2009; Creese and Wiebe, 2009; Liversage, 2009). In cases where migrants do not master the native language, this factor is also considered part of downward occupational mobility because a person loses access to his or her previous professional activity owing to lack of language proficiency. However, this requirement often holds a discriminatory element. Studies in English-speaking countries, for example, show that native speakers are preferred to people who are simply proficient but not native speakers, and migrants from OECD countries who are native speakers are preferred over native speakers from non-OECD countries (Ho and Alcorso, 2004; Creese and Wiebe, 2009).

Other important obstacles that make it difficult for skilled migrants to enter the labour market in their field include other forms of overt or covert discrimination based on nationality or continent of origin, race, ethnicity and type of residence permit. Studies have also shown that age and gender, which are already factors of discrimination for the native population, cumulate with other factors to make it more difficult for older people and migrant women to get a job compared to their younger and male counterparts (Ho and Alcorso, 2004; Man, 2004; Kofman and Raghuram, 2006; Cooke, 2007; Riaño and Baghdadi, 2007; Chicha and Deraedt, 2009; Creese and Wiebe, 2009; Liversage, 2009).

3. The psychosocial effects of underemployment

Experts have claimed that the problem of loss of social and cultural capital through downward occupational mobility needs to be understood in the context of the person who experiences it (Kofman, 2000). General studies about the integration of migrants into the host society have found that failure to find suitable employment is an important factor increasing the risk of mental disorders, alongside other factors such as a drop in socio-economic status, an inability to speak the host country's language, separation from family and people of similar cultural background, discrimination and prejudice in the host country, possible traumatizing experiences preceding migration, and age at the time of migration (Canadian Task Force on Mental Health Issues Affecting Immigrants and Refugees, 1988; McDonald et al., 1996).

In the case of skilled migrants, there have been recent studies using qualitative methodologies, mainly based on narrative analyses of audiotaped interviews,

in order to try to capture the complexity of the emotional and social impact of underemployment and unemployment on migrants (given that they often alternate between these two situations). Many studies have taken place in Canada, although some were also based in Australia, the UK and Switzerland.

Findings show that skilled migrants who have experienced downward occupational mobility tend to display a variety of negative feelings in response to the anonymity they experience as a result of the loss of their professional lives, which also means a loss of part of their private lives (Asanin and Wilson, 2009). Related to this is the possible distress caused by the fact that these migrants earn lower wages, either because this implies risk of losing the right to stay in the host country or leads to financial dependence (Tang et al., 2007; Asanin and Wilson, 2009; Meares, 2010). In Canada, for example, migrants are required to have a minimum amount of savings to support themselves in order for them to be able to stay in the country. Hence, high levels of stress due to financial concerns are understandable. The case is different in European countries, where a minimum amount of savings is not required by immigration services. However, underemployed skilled migrant women have reported psychological distress and frustration due to the fact that they have to depend on state funds to support themselves. They explain that this challenged their dignity, as they had previously been capable of earning a living in their home countries and thus had a degree of independence in society (Liversage, 2009).

Of particular importance are the feelings of the study participants with respect to the often lengthy and highly unsuccessful job-hunting period. They refer, among other things, to their feelings of intense frustration, tension, irritation, stress, unhappiness and worry (Asanin and Wilson, 2009; Liversage, 2009). This phase seems to be preceded by an initial period of total convincement that they will be able to find a job in line with their academic qualifications and level of professional experience (Liversage, 2009). For those who accept underemployment, the actual work tends to evoke negative feelings. Many migrants describe their unhappiness at having to do manual or otherwise survival jobs which they had never done before (Asanin and Wilson, 2009). Others report concerns about their physical health due to strenuous jobs, as well as the stress that their occupational situation generates in them (Tang et al., 2007; Asanin and Wilson, 2009). Therefore, a link can also be drawn between the subject of underemployment and the literature on job dissatisfaction for both migrant (McDonald et al., 1996; de Castro et al., 2008; Asanin and Wilson, 2009) and native populations (see Faragher et al., 2005, for a meta-analysis of studies). These studies seem to report that job dissatisfaction tends to generate high levels of distress, particularly anxiety and depression.

In the case of women who were previously financially independent and who migrate as dependant spouses, the new situation of dependence often seems to affect their marital relationships in various ways. For example, one study described how some women tended to feel tense, distressed and resentful towards their spouses due to their financial dependence on them (Meares, 2010). Another study reported that women tended to feel that the quality of the relationship, including their spouses' appreciation of them, had changed in a detrimental way. They perceive that this change is linked to their loss of status as a result of them no longer having a good job and a professional role (Cooke, 2007).

4. Increased vulnerability of skilled migrant women to underemployment

Studies in Switzerland and abroad have shown that skilled migrant women are more vulnerable to situations of underemployment than their male counterparts (Bolzman, 2007; Pecoraro, 2007; Creese and Wiebe, 2009). However, it is only in the last 10 years or so that this population has been identified as a group requiring attention, as until then much research effort had gone to trying to understand unskilled and often undocumented migrant women (Kofman, 2000; Raghuram and Kofman, 2004; Kofman and Raghuram, 2006).

Studies have shown that in the majority of cases of migrating couples, women enter as the dependant spouse (Ho and Alcorso, 2004; Kofman and Raghuram, 2006). Authors argue that it is precisely their entry status which has made the problem of skilled migrant women invisible for so long. Because women's professional identity and status are concealed in their resident status, society does not take them into consideration as potential employees and they do not appear in unemployment statistics (Kofman, 2000; Kofman and Raghuram, 2006). In addition, these women do not have access to various government agencies that could guide them and help them in their integration into the job market or in accessing funds that are available for language and professional courses (Riaño and Baghdadi, 2007). These services and funds are reserved for the people who pay unemployment contributions, national students who have just completed their university studies and have been unable to find jobs, and migrants who have recourse to public funds (e.g. political refugees) (Riaño and Baghdadi, 2007). In addition, experts have noted a tendency among receiving-country agencies to privilege the head of the household, who is usually assumed to be the man (e.g. in terms of facilitating attendance to language proficiency courses) (Kofman, 2000; Creese and Wiebe, 2009).

Women who enter as dependants and who have children also have the responsibility of facilitating their family's integration in the new country (Yeoh and Willis, 2005). In the case of skilled migrant women, studies show that they tend to take on the role of a housewife (often referred to as "domestication" or

"feminization"), which is to a large extent unwanted. However, these women are pushed towards this role because they do not have jobs and often do not have help with childcare and housework due to limited financial resources (Riaño and Baghdadi, 2007; Liversage, 2009; Meares, 2010). In addition, in the case of Geneva, places in public nurseries are attributed in priority to households with working mothers. Authors have therefore commented on the issue of childcare as an important factor limiting the capacity of many skilled women who migrate with young children to embark on significant efforts to pursue their career in the host country (Bolzman, 2007; Cooke, 2007; Riaño and Baghdadi, 2007; Pecoraro, 2010).

Studies also show that among many migrant couples, although both spouses used to be working professionals in their home country, the husband's career takes priority at the time of migration. Experts have commented that, in some cases, this is due to the gendered ideas of both spouses on this and other family matters (Yeoh and Willis, 2005; Cooke, 2007). However, other researchers have found that the fact that the husband in this case becomes the only breadwinner means that the couple needs to maximize his chances of keeping his job (as the family's residence permits depend on it) or of progressing in his career, which is also beneficial for the whole family (Ho and Alcorso, 2004; Yeoh and Willis, 2005; Cooke, 2007). As a result, many women may be less inclined to use the family income or to take significant amounts of time away from their home duties to try to solve some of the factors affecting their employability (Man, 2004; Chicha and Deraedt, 2009; Meares, 2010). Many women find themselves in a dead-end situation with respect to being able to generate an income – even if only to pay for the costs of private childcare – and reinvest this money in courses, such as intensive language courses or postgraduate studies, to increase their capability in the host country.

5. The current study

The current study aims to investigate in a systematic way the impact of underemployment on the psychological and social well-being of a group of skilled migrant women in Geneva. Previous studies mentioned in this literature review were mostly based on small samples, often of mixed gender and containing subgroups that are in different work situations (i.e. unemployed, underemployed and appropriately employed migrants). However, as described above, this literature review has outlined the basic themes that seem to characterize the emotional experience of skilled migrant women facing downward occupational mobility and underemployment. This now permits the undertaking of a quantitative study with the assistance of instrumentation in order to explore the prevalence of these themes and the possible connections between variables using statistics. The ultimate aim is to describe possible trends in the group, as opposed to the specific configurations

of variables that characterize the individual case, in order to inform policies and suggest possible ways to ameliorate the situation of this group.

The current study also aims to expand the scope of data collection on the theme of migrant women's underemployment to include various demographic factors and life domains. Previous studies have tended to focus on women's experiences in the host country on the work side. By exploring in more detail both their personal background prior to migration and other aspects of their current lives, we hope to increase our understanding of the global significance of underemployment for these women, as well as its impact on their overall state of well-being and integration into the host society.

II. Methodology

1. Aims of the study

The principal aim of the study was to investigate the impact of underemployment on the psychological and social well-being of a group of university graduate and professionally experienced migrant women in Geneva. Based on previous studies, it was hypothesized that these women would show important signs of distress and low self-esteem linked to job dissatisfaction and frustration with unsuccessful job-hunting, as well as dissatisfaction with work relationships and indications of difficult integration in the country. However, an additional aim of the study was to contextualize these women's state of well-being and the significance of underemployment in their life history by exploring various demographic factors in the sample, including personal and family background, as well as current and past functioning in various life domains, in addition to work.

2. Design of the study

This is a cross-sectional study of a group of migrant women employed in jobs that are below their academic qualifications and level of professional experience. The participants completed a questionnaire about well-being and social relationships, and, in a semi-structured interview, provided further information on their life history and their personal, work, family and social functioning since they came to live in Geneva.

3. Recruitment of the participants and research procedure

The study aimed to recruit between 30 and 40 women aged 18 years and above who exhibited many of the factors that have been shown to limit migrant

women's access to jobs that correspond to their academic qualification and level of professional experience in high-income OECD countries. These factors include being born and raised for the most part in countries which are not part of the high-income OECD group. The women needed to have completed tertiary (university) education in these countries and have a valid residence permit allowing them to work in Geneva. Migrant women were included in the study if they were either working in a job in Geneva that was below their level of academic achievement and professional experience, or if they had been in this situation in the past. Basic proficiency in French permitting the completion of the study measures was also required.

The main way in which the sample was recruited was by contacting associations and local services in Geneva that are likely to have contact with the selected population for the study. These associations and services were asked to collaborate with the authors in identifying potential participants for the study. For the most part, these associations were active in the fields of women's rights and welfare, intercultural dialogue, migrants' welfare and defence of labour rights. Migrants' associations, professional women's networks, international workers' spouses' associations and various consulates of non-OECD countries and non-high-income OECD countries were also approached and asked to share information about the study with their members and networks. The list of associations and service providers that were approached can be found in Appendix 1. A brief description of the study and the participant selection criteria was also displayed in local shops, intercultural dialogue associations, trade union information offices, training institutions and language institutes in order to widen the possibilities of recruitment through self-referral. In addition, the study participants were invited to mention the study to their acquaintances in order to recruit new participants through a snowball effect.

Potential participants were first approached by officers of the associations, who discussed the study with them and asked for permission to pass on their contact details to the researchers. Découvrir, an association whose aim is to help qualified migrant women in their professional insertion into the labour market in Geneva, had a pivotal role in the study, as the majority of the participants were referred by them. In addition, this association granted temporary use of their offices to the researchers for the purpose of conducting the interviews. Only four participants were interviewed in their homes at their request. In general, the researchers met with the participants only once, although in some cases, two or more meetings were necessary because of the participants' limited time availability or when the interviews lasted longer than three hours.

A procedure was put in place to ensure protection of the data obtained during the interview and the participants' confidentiality, in line with IOM principles

on data protection. Upon giving informed consent, the participants were asked to complete a questionnaire about well-being and social relationships and were then interviewed using the semi-structured interview schedule. Depending on the subjects' authorization, the interview was also audiotaped and notes were taken, in order to complement the quantitative analysis with aspects of qualitative data.

4. Study measures and statistical data analysis

The following measures were specifically designed for the study, in consultation with the IOM Mental Health, Psychosocial Response and Intercultural Communication Section:

a) Questionnaire about well-being and social relationships

A 66-item questionnaire in French was specifically designed for the study. It aimed to explore current perceived psychological well-being, including personal and interpersonal functioning, as well as possible social integration difficulties. The items were derived from literature on both personality functioning and migration and integration, and from previous IOM research on the psychosocial well-being and level of integration of migrants and displaced populations (Ataya and Schininà, 2010). Items which were phrased as statements in the first person were coded by the participant as "absent" or "infrequent"; "sometimes"; "often"; "very often" or "always". Four scales were derived from grouping the items: 1) well-being and self-esteem; 2) distress; 3) social relationships; and 4) social integration. Appendix 2 contains the list of items for each scale that were translated into English for the purpose of this report.

Based on Faragher et al. (2005), who found associations between job dissatisfaction and depression and anxiety in a meta-analysis of almost 500 studies with non-clinical populations, two sub-scales were derived from the scale of distress that included statements which specifically referred to depression and anxiety. The scales aimed to assess self-perceived signs of depression and anxiety (i.e. current manifestations), as opposed to the possible presence of clinical syndromes, which was not in the scope of this study. This approach is similar to instruments such as the Symptom Checklist-90 (SCL-90) (Derogatis, 1994), which is widely used with general populations.

Preliminary measures of internal consistency of all the scales based on split-half reliability results (Spearman-Brown coefficient) showed good reliability for the distress, well-being, depression and anxiety scales (r=0.87, 0.74, 0.72 and 0.73, respectively, ρ≤.01 for all), as well as moderate reliability for the social relationship and social integration difficulty scales (r=0.65 and 0.58, respectively,

ρ≤.01 for both). In addition, the scales were correlated with each other in expected ways, as distress was negatively associated with well-being and social relationships (r=-.52 and -.31, respectively, ρ≤.01 for both) and positively associated with social integration difficulties (r=.59, ρ≤.01). Higher scores in well-being were associated with higher scores in social relationships (r=.61, ρ≤.01).

In order to assure the validity of the depression and anxiety scales, the item sets were written in accordance with the configuration of traits present in the fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV) (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). The DSM-IV criteria for depressive episode and generalized anxiety disorder were used because they represent widely accepted operational definitions of the constructs of depression and anxiety. However, the scales do not make reference to the history and severity of symptomatology, as the rating is not intended to lead to clinical diagnoses but only to refer to indicative emotional states.

b) Semi-structured interview

The semi-structured interview contained 76 questions divided into the following sections: 1) demographic information and migration details; 2) general details about partner and children, including current and past childcare arrangements since arrival to Geneva; 3) work trajectory in Geneva and current work; 4) opinions about current wages and use given to salary; 5) work relationships; 6) psychological impact of current and previous jobs on the state of well-being of the individual and her family; 7) physical and psychological health history since arrival in Geneva; 8) social network and support; 9) ways of coping with the current work situations and plans for the future. The interview was scheduled to last approximately two hours. The information collected was then categorized for computer data entry. The information specifically about the psychological impact of underemployment was categorized following predetermined categories used in previous qualitative studies about this topic. New categories arising from the material were also added.

Data analysis was carried out using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (SPSS), version 15. Part of the results, which are presented in the next section, is based on descriptive statistics, as the aims of the study were largely descriptive. Some aspects of the main aim of the study were addressed through exploring possible associations between various variables. For this purpose, Pearson correlation coefficients and Point Biserial correlation coefficients were sought for continuous variables and binary variables, respectively. For categorical variables, Phi coefficients were sought and t-tests were undertaken for the comparison of means between groups.

Chapter 3: The psychosocial impact of underemployment in the lives of skilled migrant women working in Geneva, Switzerland: An empirical study

5. Limitations of the study

The results of the study need to be understood in the context of the following limitations. First, although every attempt was made to recruit the sample from various sources, most of the participants came from Découvrir, whose mandate is to assist migrant women in their efforts to find jobs that correspond to their level of qualification and professional experience. It is possible that these women might have a higher sense of well-being because they are active in trying to find a solution to their work situation and are being coached and supported in various ways. Therefore, it would have been interesting to compare this group with women in the same situation who are not part of Découvrir or any other association for professional migrants.

Second, the women's time of residency in Geneva had a wide range (i.e. 2 years to 25 years). It is possible that this could have obscured some aspects of the impact of underemployment on the women's state of well-being and integration into Swiss society, because of factors such as time spent looking for appropriate jobs, number of years of underemployment and habituation to this situation.

Third, time constraints for the project also limited the possibility of obtaining a larger sample of women and comparing their results with possible comparison groups, such as indigenous underemployed women or skilled migrant men.

III. Results

1. Characteristics of the sample

Complete results were obtained for 35 women. However, results for two women could not be included because they did not fully meet the selection criteria of underemployment, as neither of them had previously worked in their original profession and they had both reconverted to a new profession whilst living abroad.

Thirty-three skilled migrant women who were either underemployed in Geneva at the time of the study or had been in this situation in the past formed the sample. The following is a summary of their characteristics and the full descriptive statistics can be found in Appendix 3.

The majority of the women in the sample had arrived in Geneva in their 30s and early 40s and had never lived abroad before. There was a wide representation of 17 nationalities. Figure 3.1 below shows the regions of origin of the sample based

on United Nations classification (UN DESA, 2010). Almost 60 per cent of the women came from Central and South America; 12 per cent from Eastern and Middle Africa; and 12 per cent from Western Asian countries. A few women were from Southern Europe and other parts of Africa and Asia. The specific countries of origin are not mentioned here in order to respect the anonymity of the participants, but a list of the countries comprising the regions in the United Nations classification can be found in Appendix 4.

Although federal statistics indicate that in 2009 only one migrant woman in 10 in Switzerland was from Latin America,[6] the high representation of this region in the study is consistent with recent studies undertaken in Switzerland, including in Geneva (Riaño and Baghdadi, 2007; Chicha and Deraedt, 2009). In the absence of statistics specifically about underemployed skilled migrant women in Switzerland, this replication of sample origins could be taken as an indication that Latin America represents at least one of the predominant regional backgrounds in Switzerland with respect to migrant women's underemployment. It is also important to consider that a possible bias in the selection of the sample could have been the women's interest in integrating into associations such as Découvrir and in taking part in this kind of study, which reflects the experience of Chicha and Deraedt (2009) of only being able to recruit their sample from various associations.

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6   Based on the authors' own calculations using the number of migrant women by age and nationality and OFS 2009 statistics, as presented by Geneva's Bureau de L'Intégration des Etrangers (BIE), www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/fr/index/themen/01/07/blank/data/01.html.

Figure 3.1: Regions of origin based on United Nations classification
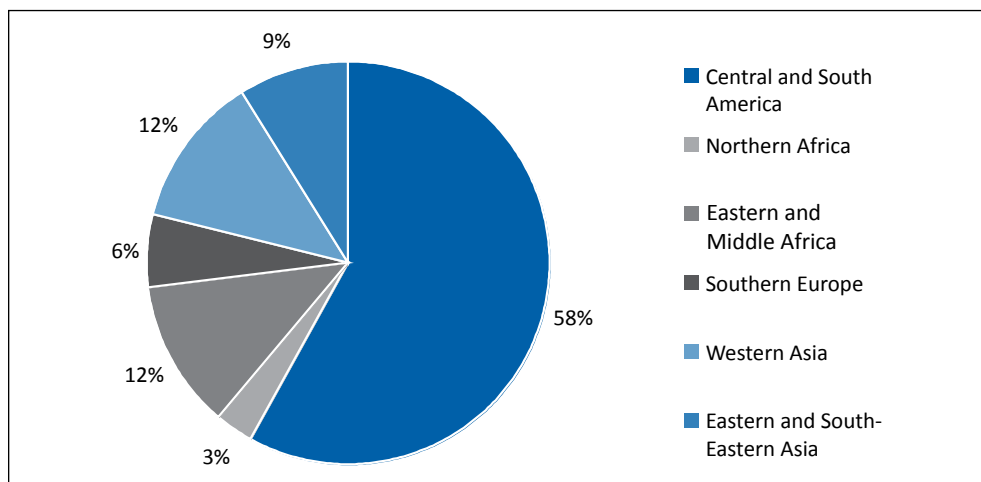
The women of the sample generally came to live in Geneva either to follow their spouses (because of the latter's profession or because they were Swiss citizens or political refugees), or to flee from political persecution in their country. Only one fifth of the sample purposely came because they had a job or because they wanted to study in Switzerland or to otherwise improve their opportunities in life. Consequently, the vast majority (88%) had legal status on arrival, and only four of the women migrants (12%) entered Switzerland without legal status, which they acquired shortly after by marrying a Swiss or other European national. Three quarters of the husbands of the participants were from the same country of origin or a neighbouring country, and over 80 per cent of them had a university degree.

Two thirds of the women also had children who migrated with them. In most cases, these women left their extended family in their home country, which means that the configuration of the family in Geneva was limited to the nuclear family. At the time of their participation in the study, the women had been living in Geneva for an average period of nine years, although the years of residency ranged from two to 25 years.

In terms of professions, the women who participated in the study had all completed four to six years of university studies and had, on average, 10 years of professional experience prior to migration. One third had also completed postgraduate studies, and 15 per cent had a second undergraduate degree. Figure 3.2 shows the categories of professions in the sample. Sixteen professions were represented; these fell mainly under the categories of social sciences and business and economics, and the rest fell under the health and social professions and natural sciences and engineering categories.

Figure 3.2: Categories of professions represented in the sample
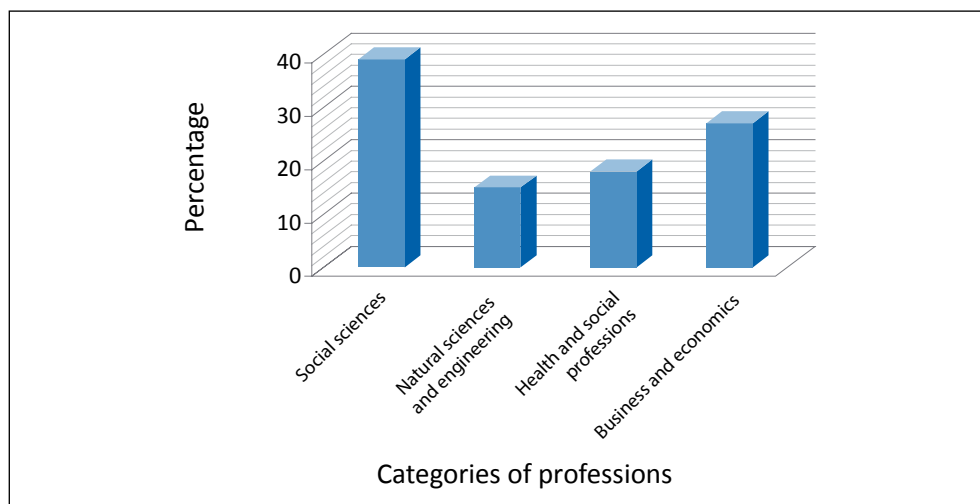
Note: Professional categories: 1) social sciences: linguistics, journalism, law, geography, public administration; 2) natural sciences and engineering: biology, chemistry, engineering; 3) health and social professions: nursing, psychology, social work; and 4) business and economics: economics, finance, accounting, business administration, tourism.

The vast majority of participants (94%) were of the same nationality as their parents, and most of the women in the sample had not lived abroad before migrating to Geneva (only 21% had lived in a high-income OECD country at some point before their relocation to Switzerland) – these can be taken as an indication of the women's homogeneous cultural identities. Their academic achievements seemed to represent a progression with respect to previous generations, as skilled professions were uncommon amongst the participants' parents. Half of the fathers had worked in intermediate professions (such as commerce), a quarter had been in manual jobs and just over a quarter had worked in skilled jobs. In relation to the mothers, almost 60 per cent had been housewives, just over 30 per cent had worked in manual or intermediate jobs, and only 9 per cent had had a skilled job.

Figure 3.3 shows the participants' current and previous resident status in Switzerland. Apart from the four women who did not have legal status on arrival, the rest held a residence permit (and one had Swiss nationality) granting them access to work in Geneva upon arrival. In the case of F permits, up until the reform in 2008, access to work was nevertheless restricted to defined, low-skilled occupations in the hotel industry, catering, agriculture and cleaning. Since 1 January 2008, the restriction on access to the labour market for F permit holders has been removed.[7]

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7   For further details about the entitlements for F permit holders, please see: www.geneve.ch/integration/doc/ publications/acces-des-permis-f-depliant.pdf.

At the time of the interview, none of the participants had illegal status, as holding a valid residence permit in Geneva was one of the criteria for inclusion in the study. Two thirds of the migrant women had the right to remain indefinitely in the country, either because they had acquired Swiss nationality or they had a C permit (long-term establishment permit). A quarter of the women held a renewable annual residence permit (B permit). Only 15 per cent had refugee status.

Figure 3.3: Initial and current type of resident permit in Switzerland
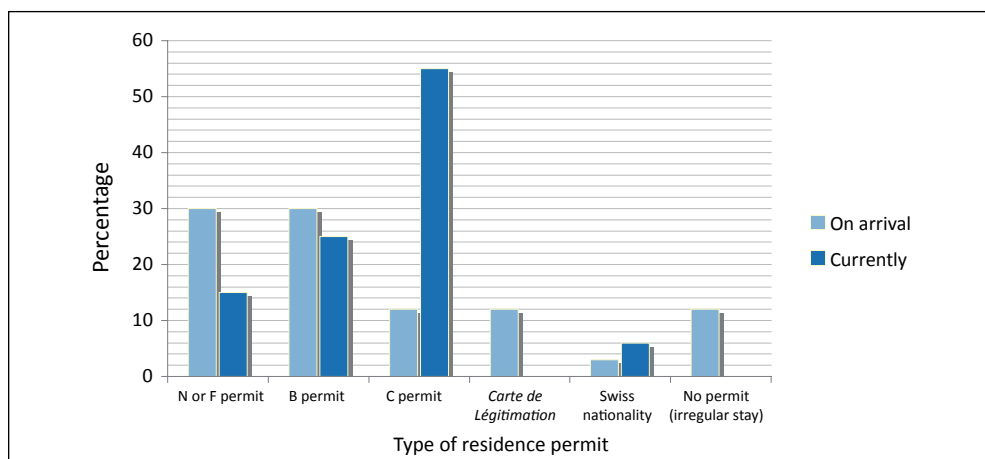
Note: Residence permits in Switzerland: L permits are short-stay permits; N permits are granted to asylum-seekers and limited to the duration of the asylum process; and F permits are for temporary admissions on humanitarian grounds, have a duration of one year and are renewable. Residence permits also include: B permits, which are granted to people entering as employees and their families, are valid for one year and are renewable; and C permits, which are granted to people with B permits after ongoing residence in Switzerland for five to 10 years, depending on the nationality. Applications for Swiss citizenship can be submitted after 12 years of continued residency in Switzerland. Migrants who are employed by international organizations receive a Carte de Légitimation. Spouses need to exchange theirs for a Permit Ci if they wish to work in Switzerland (OECD, 2007).

2. Statistical results

a)   Overall state of well-being pre- and post-migration

The majority of the participants (85%) reported enjoying good overall physical health. Three quarters of the women said they had no significant psychological difficulties prior to migrating to Geneva that could have impaired their daily functioning. The psychological difficulties encountered by the remaining minority related to the following causes: deaths of significant others, the political situation in the home country, marital problems and previous traumatic migratory experiences. Regarding the time they first migrated to Geneva, one tenth of the migrant women reported experiencing high levels of distress due to the political situation in their home country that had forced them to leave. A further 25 per cent of the women also reported being very distressed following their migration due to "acculturative

stress", which refers to the negative experiences that may result from immigrating to a new culture, such as financial hardship, discrimination and difficulty accessing basic services because of language barriers (Kiang et al., 2010). None of these women received psychological help at the time in relation to these experiences.

Since being in Geneva, 60 per cent of the participants reported having gone through periods of psychological tension and distress. Two thirds of the participants attributed their tension and distress to various situations related to their unsuccessful job-hunting and to the type of exchanges they had had with the State's unemployment agency. Many women reported that they had felt pressured by the agency to accept low-skilled jobs, and they were critical about what they perceived as lack of appreciation of their professional aspirations and lack of consistency in individual monitoring. Being unemployed or severely underemployed was also mentioned by these women as an important factor that caused them tension and distress. The remaining third of the participants also reported being distressed at some point since their arrival in Geneva, but they attributed this to other factors such as separation with their partners, divorce, deaths of significant others and personal problems, as well as to overall social integration difficulties following migration and the permanent effects of the distress suffered as a result of political persecution.

The results of the questionnaire about well-being and social relationships are presented in Tables 3.1 and 3.2. This questionnaire was used in the study in addition to the semi-structured interview to obtain a snapshot of the participants' overall state of well-being and self-esteem beyond their current work situation, as well as the possible sources of distress and integration difficulties (including acculturative stress). Table 3.1 lists the items that described at least 45 per cent of the sample – that is, the subjects who responded that the items applied to them either "often", "very often" or "always".

Three quarters or more of the sample were characterized by items indicating perceived control over their environment (e.g. having plans, feeling proud of their efforts, being able to both decide things in life and find solutions to their problems), as well as satisfactory social relationships (e.g. enjoying meeting new people and being able to approach others, feeling loved and having good friends). They also seemed to be healthy and to have a positive trusting attitude in life. However, two thirds of the sample thought the quality of life was better in their home country; this subgroup greatly missed their country and their old friends. Only half of the sample felt part of their community in Switzerland. Forty-two per cent of the participants said they did not feel good about their current life; half of the sample reported that they tended to think a great deal about their problem and that they worried too much, particularly about the financial well-being of their family.

Table 3.1: Questionnaire item characterizing at least 45 per cent of the sample

Item no.	Statement	%
1	I feel good about my current life	58
3	I can express my views easily	67
4	I worry about the financial well-being of my family	55
5	I trust life	76
8	I feel alone with my problems (reversed)	67
14	I am easily embarrassed or intimidated (reversed)	82
17	I enjoy doing what I do	64
19	I think a lot about my problems	49
20	I can communicate my needs to others	61
21	I feel people appreciate my qualities	67
23	I enjoy meeting new people	88
24	I am healthy	88
25	I often think about injustice	64
26	I tend to worry too much	46
27	I miss my old friends	61
28	I can express disagreements	55
31	I am capable of finding solutions to my problems	79
35	I think my quality of life is better in Switzerland than in my home country (reversed)	67
41	I take leisure outings (e.g. walks or visits)	67
43	My life is very stable	52
46	I am socially isolated (reversed)	94
50	I trust my friends	82
52	I am happy with the friends I have	79
53	I feel I can decide things	79
54	I miss my home country	64
56	I feel proud of my efforts	82
58	I have plans	91
60	I feel loved	76
62	I am happy with the number of friends I have	76
65	I feel part of my community	52

Table 3.2 shows the items that were not characteristic of the sample. Coherently, with respect to the items that best characterized the sample, the items that did not apply show that the women did not seem to have problems with their self-esteem or with trusting the people around them. In general, these women did not feel that people were hostile to them or were out to exploit them. They also did not report

feeling sad and unmotivated, or experiencing the traits that often accompany these emotional states (e.g. poor appetite or overeating, difficulty concentrating, or excessive smoking or drinking). They did not report feeling irritable or angry and did not manifest having problems with anger management.

Table 3.2: Items that did not apply to the sample (3 people or less)

Item no.	Statement	%
6	I eat too much	9
7	I feel irritable and get angry easily	3
11	I feel inferior to others	0
15	I feel sad	9
16	I smoke a lot	6
32	I have difficulty trusting others	9
33	I have poor appetite	6
34	I feel guilty too much	9
37	I feel worthless	0
39	I feel unmotivated	9
42	I feel other people are hostile or they do not like me	3
45	I drink a lot	3
47	I feel people take advantage of me	9
48	I find it difficult to contain my anger	3
49	I can hit others or break things when I'm angry	0
63	I argue a lot (reversed)	9
64	I am afraid for no apparent reason	6
66	I have trouble concentrating (reversed)	6

The scale score results are presented in Table 3.3. They were analysed using the maximum and minimum possible scores, as no norms were available to use as reference points. The well-being and self-esteem mean scores were two thirds up the scale, indicating that the majority of the women felt moderately well about their lives and about themselves. This is confirmed by the relatively low average number of distress elements the study participants reported in their lives. The average scores on social relationships were also almost two thirds up along the scale, in agreement with the quite low scores on social integration difficulties.

It is important to note, however, that the scores on the different scales spanned a wide range and that about one quarter of the sample had scores indicating much lower well-being and self-esteem and higher distress. Although the questionnaire aimed to assess the current overall state of well-being beyond the work situation, it is interesting to note that a statistically significant correlation was found between

the level of underemployment and the level of distress (particularly of anxiety) and social integration difficulties (r=0.38, 0.45 and 0.41, respectively, all at ρ≤.05). This held true even when the six participants who had reported psychological distress due to personal circumstances were excluded. This means that the more underemployed the participants were, the more they seemed to be distressed and anxious, and the more difficult they found it to integrate into social life in Geneva.

Table 3.3: Scale results

Scales	Maximum possible score	Mean (SD)	Range
Well-being and self-esteem	16	10.4 (2.5)	5–14
Distress	28	6.12 (5.0)	0–18
Social relationships	13	7.9 (1.9)	4–12
Social integration difficulties	10	3.9 (1.8)	0–7
Depression	15	3.7(2.1)	1–9
Anxiety	12	2.6 (0.7)	0–8

b)   Work situation since migration to Geneva

All of the women in the sample were in a situation of underemployment in Geneva at the time of the study, or had been in the past, as this was a selection criterion for the sample. In order to obtain a degree of differentiation of possible subgroups in the sample, which was also important for studying possible progress in their work situation across time, subjects were categorized according to their level of underemployment. Taking as a starting point the categories used by a previous study in Geneva of mild and severe underemployment according to whether or not the job required an employee to have a diploma (even if inferior to the one she already has) (Chicha and Deraedt, 2009), the current study defined the three levels of increasing underemployment from mild (level 1) to severe (level 3). Group 1 included women who worked in a job that corresponded to their level of qualification (either in the same domain or a closely related one), but at a lower level of responsibility than the one they had prior to coming to Geneva (e.g. women whose last job was a managerial one and who were working in Geneva as assistants with a correspondingly lower salary than the one they used to have). Group 2 included women who were working in jobs that required secondary education only (or technical studies at the most) and involved a low level of responsibility. These included mainly professions in the clerical and language courses domain (e.g. teaching their mother tongue, for which most of the participants had done brief teaching certification courses). Group 3 included women who worked in jobs that did not require any diploma and were mostly manual, such as domestic and unskilled care jobs.

Underemployment was coded for the participants' current job ("current level of underemployment") and their previous jobs ("previous level of underemployment"). In some cases, the participants held many jobs at the same time so a decision was made to code the principal job based on working time. In the case of previous employment, if there had been many changes in terms of underemployment levels, it was decided that the main first job after the migrant women's arrival in Geneva, or the one with the longest duration, would be coded.

Tables 3.4 and 3.5 show that the large majority of the participants in the study were in a situation of severe underemployment when they first started to work in Geneva. Eighty-two per cent of the women in the sample worked in domestic, unskilled care services. Only one person worked in an activity that was close to her profession; this meant that she was in a state of only mild underemployment. The situation of a few of the women has improved over time, as almost 20 per cent of the women were in a state of moderate or mild underemployment at the time of the study. However, two thirds of the women continued to be in a situation of severe underemployment.

Table 3.4: Previous level of underemployment

Level of underemployment	Frequency	%
3 = Severe (domestic and unskilled care services)	27	82
2 = Moderate (clerical and teaching mother tongue)	5	15
1 = Mild (in her profession or a profession close to it but with a lower rank)	1	3

Table 3.5: Current level of underemployment

Level of underemployment	Frequency	%
3 = Severe (domestic and unskilled care services)	21	64
2 = Moderate (clerical and languages)	3	9
1 = Mild (in her profession or a profession close to it but with a lower rank)	7	21
0 = None (appropriately employed according to education and experience)	2	6

Table 3.6 shows that the level of underemployment was equally low for almost all categories of professions in the early stages of migrant women's work in Geneva, with the exception of natural sciences and engineering. Table 3.7 shows that the situation of migrant women in natural sciences and engineering has improved over time, as only one quarter remained in severe underemployment. However, this finding has to be interpreted with caution due to the small size of the group. The situation of business and economic professionals has also improved, as almost half of the participants in this category were in a situation of mild underemployment at the time of the study.

Table 3.6: Previous level of underemployment by professional category

Category of professions	Previous level of underemployment			
	3	2	1	0
1. Social sciences (n=13)	85	15	0	0
2. Natural sciences and engineering (n=5)	60	20	20	0
3. Health and social professions (n=6)	100	0	0	0
4. Business and economics (n=9)	78	22	0	0

Table 3.7: Current level of underemployment by professional category

Category of professions	Current level of underemployment			
	3	2	1	0
1. Social sciences (n=13)	69	23	8	0
2. Natural sciences and engineering (n=4)	25	25	25	25
3. Health and social professions (n=6)	67	0	17	17
4. Business and economics (n=9)	56	0	44	0

In addition to their paid employment history, half of the sample (17 women) had also taken up one or more voluntary jobs for several months, mainly clerical and skilled jobs. The majority of the women (n=14) were in level 3 underemployment at the time of their decision to take up voluntary jobs. They all reported doing such jobs in order to increase their chances of obtaining a qualified job, either directly by getting themselves hired after their placement or by using their voluntary jobs to expand their professional network and learn more about the professional standards and culture in Geneva. Contrary to their expectations, only two people, who were previously in level 3 underemployment, have managed to obtain less underqualified jobs. However, these were only level 2 jobs, which meant that, overall, the participation of the two women in voluntary employment did not seem to have greatly helped their work situation in any significant way.

In terms of the associations between migration motivations and level of underemployment, the study showed that although the majority of the participants were almost uniformly severely underemployed, the women who came as political refugees (because of their husband's situation or their own) and those who migrated due to their husband's career were in a slightly better situation than the other subgroups at the time of the study, as only half of these women continued to be in a severe state of underemployment. The women who came to Geneva because they wanted to improve their chances in life or because they married a Swiss national were severely underemployed in higher proportions (over 70%). However, these subgroups were quite small so findings require further confirmation with larger samples.

c) Practical difficulties linked to the possibility of finding a job commensurate with qualifications

i. Factors limiting access to skilled jobs

The study participants were asked about the difficulties they had encountered in Geneva in finding a job that corresponded to their level of qualification and professional experience. Table 3.8 shows the most frequently reported difficulties. The main difficulty mentioned by three quarters of the women in the sample was the fact that they did not have a good level of proficiency in French. It is important to note that the majority of the participants displayed a good level of spoken French at the time of the interview, but they elaborated on this limitation, saying that working in their profession required high proficiency in the language (oral and written), as well as knowledge of technical terminology. This, they said, required enrolling in intensive language courses, which the majority could not afford for more than a few months. The women who spoke better French were the ones who had lived in Geneva the longest and had learned the language in daily life, including in their underemployed and often unqualified jobs. However, two of the women had been in closer contact with their professions by enrolling in university courses two years after their arrival in Geneva, and their experiences with fellow students could be taken as indicative of the type of experiences skilled migrants might encounter with professional counterparts in trying to enter the job market. These two women said that many times they had to work in groups to complete certain tasks. Although they were accepted in the groups they wanted to join, the women's contributions to the discussions

> "I applied to a job advert for which I was qualified and very motivated. I had two interviews that went very well. But then I received a letter telling me I was unsuccessful. After several phone calls, I managed to speak to one of the ladies and she told me I wasn't selected because of my foreign accent."

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and their suggestions were not taken into consideration. Both participants reported feeling excluded and being treated as if they were stupid and illiterate, which they attributed to the fact that they had limited vocabulary and poor grammar, as well as poor pronunciation in French.

The participants felt that the second factor affecting their access to skilled jobs in Geneva was discrimination based on their nationality (they were nationals of a developing country) and the type of residence permit they held (particularly the F permit for temporary admission, which is generally renewed on a yearly basis as long as the crisis lasts in the country of origin), in conjunction with other factors that also often apply to the native population such as gender, age and number of children. A study participant fluent in French and English commented that she was told at a job interview with a private company that they preferred a Swiss national or a Swiss-trained professional and was advised in a friendly manner that she was "more the material of international organizations". The third factor the participants mentioned was having a professional network and work experience in Switzerland. It is important to mention here that many participants said the latter factor had also been a requirement for being employed in manual jobs (e.g. as a cleaner), which means that in many cases this is a discriminatory factor as well.

Forty per cent of the women in the sample mentioned that they had experienced difficulty getting their degrees recognized in Switzerland, and some had either not obtained equivalence or withdrawn from the process. However, an associated problem the migrant women mentioned was the difficulty they experienced in obtaining complete and coherent information about the validation procedure and the places where they needed to submit their applications. In addition, the women whose degrees had not been recognized felt there was a void of guidance on what they could do to level their studies and training to meet Swiss standards or to use their professional background to convert their qualifications towards a different profession.

Some participants felt that the reason they had been denied jobs in their profession was due to the demand for a high level of specialization and training in specific aspects of their professions. Lack of financial resources is linked to some of the other factors, as it hinders women's prospects to enrol in language and professional courses and apply for validation of their degrees.

It is interesting to note that the participants hardly ever mentioned emotional and acculturative factors as obstacles to their chances of finding a skilled job, with the exception of discrimination, as mentioned earlier.

It is also noteworthy that the participants did not mention childcare problems as one of the main factors affecting their capacity to find an appropriate job. However, the question of availability and accessibility of childcare services seems to have been problematic for many of them. It is important to highlight that almost all women in the sample did not have any members of their extended family in Switzerland or in Europe. Half of the sample (16 women) had children under age 12 when they first came to live in Geneva; of these children, half were under 5 years old. Seven of the women did not have a nursery place or lunch and after-school activities for their children. Of these women, two mothers shared childcare shifts with their husbands so that they could both work, and five mothers had full responsibility for childcare, which they said limited what they could do in terms of their work situation.

Table 3.8: Main factors affecting the possibility of finding a skilled job in Geneva

Factors	%
1. Attaining good French proficiency	73
2. Discrimination (type of residence permit, nationality, age, gender)	67
3. Professional network and work experience in Switzerland	58
4. Lack of degree recognition and coherent information on validation and levelling	39
5. Job market is too specialized	21
6. High cost of courses and title validation	15
7. English proficiency	15
8. Personal emotional factors (e.g. acculturative stress, lack of self-confidence)	15

ii.   Finances and other motivations for taking underemployed jobs

The study also explored women's perceptions of the impact of their financial situation on their psychological well-being, which in turn is related to their work situation. Table 3.9 shows that just over half of the sample (55%) had depended at some point on state funds or charity organizations for full or partial financial assistance (with the "Hospice General" and "Caritas") and a further 18 per cent had depended on unemployment benefits. Fifty-eight per cent of the participants who depended on any of these funds described having felt actively pushed to severe underemployment, as they had been asked to get a job immediately, even if they were unskilled. Others were told that their degrees were not valid and were asked to join training programmes for unqualified people. Half of these women (n=8) actually did take severely underemployed jobs (level 3) and said their decision had been motivated by their desire to end their financial dependence on state institutions.

Table 3.9: Participants who at some point had to depend on state funds

Previous level of underemployment	Dependent on state funds at least once		
	No	Yes	Total
1	1	0	1
2	3	1	4
3	12	16	28
Total	**16**	**17**	**33**

Table 3.10 shows that despite the fact that the women who depended on state funds seemed to have experienced pressure and conflict due to their situation, no statistically significant difference was found in terms of initial level of underemployment when these women were compared to the women who reported that their spouse's salary was sufficient to support their family on arrival in Geneva. This means that many of the women who were financially supported by their spouses also had reasons for starting their professional life in Geneva in jobs that were well below their level of qualifications and professional experience. However, it is important to note that the women who were not in a relationship at the time of migration all entered the professional market at the lowest level of underemployment.

> "I had always been very active and busy, earning my own money. So when I did not have a job and was completely dependent on my husband financially, I felt as if a part of my body had been cut off."

Table 3.10: Spouse's salary at migration

Previous level of underemployment	Spouse's salary could cover life expenses		Participant was not in a couple relationship	Total
	No	Yes		
1	1	0	0	1
2	1	3	0	4
3	14	7	7	28
Total	16	10	7	33

The majority of the women reported using their salary for paying living costs (88%), and 42 per cent of the total sample also sent money to their home country to contribute to the payment of expenses of family members. The majority of the women who participated in the study thought that their salary was below what they deserved for the work they did. However, the majority (76%) saw significant benefits in their employment beyond the remuneration they received. These benefits include having social encounters in a professional environment (40%) and feeling useful (33%), followed by the possibility of learning new things (21%) and being somehow closer to their professional interests (18%).

d)   Work and social relationships

Two thirds of the sample reported having superficial but cordial and good relationships with their employers, while 30 per cent of the participants said they had closer and very good relationships. Only one person (3%) reported having negative relationships that she felt were overtly exploitative. It is interesting to note that many participants responded to the question "how do you feel about your boss and why?" by saying that they were actually grateful to their bosses for having given them their current jobs and that they felt their employers were not responsible for the many barriers that migrant women encounter in Geneva in trying to get jobs that correspond to their level of qualification. The women seemed to put the blame on "the system". On the question "how do you feel your bosses and colleagues perceive you?", the majority of the women thought they were seen as competent and responsible in what they do. However, half of the women said their work colleagues were not aware that they were overqualified for their jobs. The majority of the participants (70%) confirmed they did not discuss this issue at work.

The majority of the participants (85%) reported having satisfactory social relationships that were also supportive of their work situation. This coincided with their scores on the social relationship scale of the questionnaire. The participants' friends were mainly from the same country (85% had friends from their home country), or at least the same continent (60%). Only a third of the sample had Swiss or Northern and Western European friends.

e)   Emotional response to unsuccessful job-hunting and downward mobility

i. Common emotional patterns and the trajectory of the affective response

The women's initial emotional reactions to downward occupational mobility was specifically analysed and distinctive patterns of response emerged that could be grouped in the following way. Twenty-three per cent of the women surveyed reported that they did not mind the work they had to do because they valued the high quality of life they had in Switzerland with their family; this high quality of life compensated for the loss of their profession. The remaining 77 per cent of the women were very unhappy about their situation; this group could be divided further into four subgroups of more or less equal numbers of participants according to the aspects that characterized their main emotional response to downward mobility. A quarter of the women were particularly upset at having to do manual jobs (especially cleaning) which they never had to do before; another group of women reported that they longed for the satisfaction their profession used to give them, while yet another group said the most difficult part was feeling anonymous, since in their home country their identity was in large part derived from their

profession. The last group of women said they were in a state of powerlessness, despair and frustration in relation to the loss of marketability of their skills and other factors (e.g. discrimination) limiting their capacity to obtain an appropriate job.

However, the participants' emotional response to their work situation at the time of the study had evolved quite dramatically. Seventy-one per cent of the women for whom underemployment was

"The job I had when I was in my home country was what I had wanted to do since I was a little girl, a passion for which I had to work very hard. It is painful to see that all that effort to study, to excel, to improve my skills has come down to nothing."

still a problem said they had accepted the situation and the loss of the professional status they used to enjoy in their home country. Many said that they viewed their professional life in their home country as a closed chapter in their lives, and they were now focused on their current work situation. Eight women stated that they still had intense longing for their previous job situation, while two women did not express their feelings about their current level of underemployment.

It is important to note that 20 participants (55%) had pursued further tertiary studies in Switzerland with a view to improving their chances of finding a better job, either in their profession or by reconverting to a different profession. Three quarters of the women were in level 3 underemployment when they started their studies. However, only 40 per cent of them (eight women) have succeeded in moving to lesser underemployment (half to level 2 underemployment and half to either level 1 or level 0). Included in this group are the seven women who reconverted to a different profession.

In terms of professional skills and identity, one third of the women in the sample felt they had been severely deskilled as a result of not using their professional skills and not keeping up to date with developments in their professions. Forty-two per cent thought they would probably not go back to working in their profession if they were to return to their home country, either because of deskilling or because they felt they would not be able to regain their jobs due to their age and the loss of professional contacts.

ii. Impact of underemployment on family and marital relationships

The study also explored the women's perception of their current relationships with their children and the possible links with their situation of underemployment. The results showed that, although the level of underemployment was not significantly linked to having young children, the mothers who were severely underemployed at

the time of the study showed more signs of depression and anxiety and had less satisfactory social relationships (t=-1.005, t=1.553 and t=2.912, respectively, ρ≤.04 for all) than the rest of the sample. This seemed to imply that, for these women, the level of frustration and lack of satisfaction in their work, in addition to the fact of possibly earning a low income and concerns about the financial situation of the family, make them less able to enjoy their relationships with their children and friends.

In relation to the women's marital relationships, the results showed that the majority of the 26 women who lived with their spouses upon arriving in Geneva found their spouses to be supportive of them amid the distress caused by their work situation. However, half of these women also reported having gone through several periods of marital difficulty; they said there was a difference in the quality of their relationships before and after their move to Geneva. In some cases, these periods of marital difficulty lasted several years and were characterized by on-and-off problems; in three cases, these led to divorce. The women's perception of the situation was that their work-related anger and frustration led either to frequent arguments with their spouses or to withdrawal and distancing. In both cases, the study participants felt that their problems were to a large extent linked to their feelings about their situation of unemployment and intense yet unsuccessful job-hunting, or their situation of underemployment (because it involved, for example, financial dependence and the assumption of the housewife role as main activity, which the women felt had implications in terms of loss of status and appreciation in their relationships with their partners). It is important to mention that these cases include six couples who fled their country for political reasons and both husband and wife were in a situation of either unemployment or underemployment. Apart from frequent arguing in three of the cases, in two cases, both spouses seemed to have gone through extensive periods of depression, while in the remaining case, the woman said she had been subjected to severe physical and psychological abuse by her husband since their move to Geneva shortly after their marriage.

iii. Reconversion

The study also sought to describe the women who had reconverted to a new profession and to determine possible differences with the rest of the group, particularly in terms of the trajectory of their work situation and current state of well-being. The seven women who had reconverted to a different profession were slightly younger than the rest of the sample when they moved to Geneva (34 years old versus 36 years old); all but one were Latin American. These women had all started in the job market in level 3 underemployment; they had all tried to find a job in their professions and the majority had submitted a large number of job applications for jobs similar to what they had in their countries of origin, as well as

for other kinds of jobs (30–200 job applications). Having children does not seem to make a major difference in whether women reconverted or not, as four out of the seven women who reconverted had young children (three had children under the age of 5) when they first arrived in Geneva.

Like the non-reconverted group, the reconverted group had been very distressed with the job-hunting experience, as five out of the seven women reported significant psychological hardship due to their previous work situation. Despite the fact that their working time was 36 per cent on average (compared to 60% working time in the non-reconverted group), women in the reconverted group seemed to be more pleased with their overall lives, as they scored significantly higher in the questionnaire compared to the non-reconverted group (t=-.82; .061; -.945, respectively, for well-being, distress and relationships, ρ≤.05 for all).

IV. Discussion

This study explored the links between underemployment and psychological distress in two different ways: one was based on the participants' emotional state at the time of the study; the other, on their employment experiences since their arrival in Geneva.

1. Underemployment and psychological distress

The results for current emotional state showed that the level of overall distress reported by the women surveyed was significantly associated with their level of underemployment. Hence, the more severely underemployed the women were, the worse they seemed to feel about their overall lives. In addition, at this level of underemployment, the women with children under the age of 12 were also more prone to higher levels of distress compared to the women who were in the same work situation but who did not have children. This seemed to indicate that women's worries about their children (including having access to childcare or being able to meet their children's living costs) interacted with their difficulties with respect to employment (including low wages and job dissatisfaction). This situation would appear to make it more difficult for underemployed women to enjoy motherhood in the same way as women who, for example, obtain more financial and emotional benefits from their jobs.

It is important to note, however, that the overall level of well-being and self-esteem in the sample was moderate and that the average score with regard to distress was quite low. As explained below, it is possible that these findings have to do with the fact that most of the participants were employed at the time of the

study. Their jobs seemed to grant at least partial benefits to these women; as a result, they felt better than they did when they were unemployed and job-hunting.

The study showed that, for most of the participants, the process of applying for jobs was an extremely uncomfortable and frustrating process leading to various forms of distress, including despair, anger, sadness and a sense of anonymity. This corresponds well to previously reported findings with similar samples in other high-income OECD countries (Asanin and Wilson, 2009; Liversage, 2009). However, the current findings also concur with a previous qualitative study which found that these negative feelings are preceded by an initial phase of optimism (Liversage, 2009). The women in that study recalled how fully convinced they were that they would find a qualified job, or at least an intermediate type of skilled job to start with. This example, as well as the number of nationalities and trajectories represented in the current sample, can be taken as an indication of the persistence of optimism in terms of career development expectations among skilled migrant women, regardless of the reasons that pushed them to migrate. This seems to show that women's expectations regarding their potential to find a job are based on their identity as professionals, which dictates to them that they belong to a certain professional and social circle. Added to this is the fact that most of the women in the current sample had never lived abroad before coming to Geneva; some had even lived in the same city or village all their lives. This means that their reference points for professional expectations were based on their work experiences there and, possibly, on their professional status compared to that of their parents (and probably the previous generation altogether). It is also important to keep in mind that underemployment affected all women in the sample, regardless of their socio-economic background and the professional situation and status enjoyed by their spouses in Geneva. These aspects are important because they seem to explain the women's utterly negative reaction to the obstacles they encountered.

It is interesting to note that for some of the women, the next phase in the job-hunting process after they failed to land a qualified job was to submit a high number of job applications for any kind of job. This was described by one of the participants as "a personal challenge"; after being refused work in her profession several times, this woman felt she had to prove to herself that she could find a job – any kind of job. This seemed like a battle to restore essential aspects of the self-esteem which are linked to professional identity and independence. It is possible that finally finding a job in these circumstances produced a great sense of relief for these women and helped them to regain a sense of stability and well-being that is reflected in their answers to the questionnaire. Their feelings are possibly similar to those of any jobseeker who finally finds employment, except that in the case of these migrant women, they could not find a job at the level of their qualification. In the same vein, the satisfaction of succeeding in getting a job seems to be at the root

of the women's reportedly cordial and, in many cases, good relationships with their employers, since many of the women mentioned being grateful to their employers for giving them their current job.

The job-hunting process and underemployment also seemed to have had a considerable impact on some of the participants' marital relationships, as over half of them reported going through long periods of heated arguments, anger and frustration, on the one hand, or extreme distancing, on the other. These findings are in agreement with previous studies about the effects of skilled migrant women's underemployment (Cooke, 2007; Liversage, 2009), which undoubtedly interact with other possible sources of stress stemming from the migration experience (e.g. acculturative stress and difficult migration processes) (Canadian Task Force on Mental Health Issues Affecting Immigrants and Refugees, 1988).

A new issue also came up that future studies should address in more detail: the emotional situation in the household when both partners are in a state of severe underemployment. In the same way that couple support has been shown to be a mitigating factor against difficult situations, when both spouses are deeply affected by underemployment, the emotional impact seems to be multiplied, making it more difficult in this case for the woman to reverse the effects. A previous study of skilled Chinese migrant women touched on this issue, as it found that couple support when the husband was also underemployed or unemployed did not directly influence or even moderate the level of distress reported by the woman due to negative work experiences (Tang et al., 2007). The authors of this study suggested that social relationships can only have an appreciable benefit for the individual once lower-order needs such as stable employment and financial security are satisfied. However, the authors did not explore the possible effects of profound dissatisfaction with respect to work and the loss of a central motivational nucleus in the personality of both partners.

2. Possible protective factors against distress associated with the work situation

a) Sense of control and agency given by paid work

A closer look at the questionnaire items that were most frequently rated as present by the participants revealed that many of such items referred to the construct of perceived control, which is at the root of an individual's sense of agency. Interestingly, a previous study comparing women who had paid jobs (any kind of work) and housewives found that one of the things that differentiated the former from the latter was the significantly higher scores that working women had in terms of perceived control (Bird and Ross, 1993). In addition, previous studies have reported that a sense of powerlessness, which is the opposite of perceived

sense of control, was linked to higher levels of depression, anxiety, physical illnesses and alcoholism, among other things (for a review, see Bird and Ross, 1993). This therefore means that traits indicating higher perceived control are protective against difficulties in regulating emotions, somatization and substance abuse. This would seem to explain why the women in the current sample scored low in these aspects.

In light of the results of the current study, indicating an average moderate score of 10 points out of 16 on the well-being and self-esteem scale, it could be argued that the sense of well-being of the participants was to some extent associated with having a professional activity, in addition to having recovered a sense of balance in their lives after a very disappointing job-hunting process, as discussed earlier. Although all the participants who were moderately or severely underemployed said they were dissatisfied with their current jobs, their work seems to have given them a sense of control over their environment as well as a sense of agency.

Another element that perhaps also sheds light on the participants' sense of well-being are the answers they gave about the benefits of their jobs. The majority responded that, apart from financial remuneration, their jobs were rewarding because it allowed them to have social contact in a professional environment, to feel useful, to learn new things and to somehow be closer to their professional interests. This means that having a job allowed women to recover lost aspects of their professional identity despite the more silent detrimental effects of deskilling over time.

These reasons also seem to explain why higher levels of distress were significantly associated with more severe underemployment, as reported earlier. It is clear that for those who worked in what the participants described as the most unsatisfactory jobs (cleaning, for example), the benefits of work diminished dramatically. Along with this decline came weakening resilience to negative feelings and to various other manifestations of distress. Cleaning does not provide any opportunities for actual learning; in most cases, it is a solitary task that submerges women further in a state of anonymity and lack of social interaction. However, it is still a job that allows women to earn a living and to have a life outside the house. This probably explains why the women's levels of distress were not in the maximum range of scores, as the upper limit of the range for distress did not reach the scale's maximum possible score. Considering that the scales aimed to measure the participants' global sense of well-being, it is also possible that satisfaction in social relationships, for example, could be moderating or directly influencing feelings of dissatisfaction in the work domain.

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b) Satisfactory social relationships

During the interview, a large majority of the women reported that they had close and satisfactory social relationships which they found supportive of their difficulties in the professional domain. This was also reflected in the questionnaire scale about social relationships, which correlated significantly with the scale of well-being and self-esteem. A previous study of unskilled Mexican migrant women in the United States reported that satisfactory and supportive social relationships were significantly associated with reduced anxiety and depression resulting from both acculturative and general stressors (Kiang et al., 2010). This is an important finding in relation to the resources that these women seem able to create to help regulate their emotions, considering that the majority of the women in the sample did not have any members of their extended families in Europe to provide them with the support they needed.

3. The psychosocial impact of underemployment from the point of view of social integration

The focus of the current study was to explore the psychological dimension of underemployment among the women in the sample. However, the questionnaire that was used also included a social integration scale that yielded some elements about how underemployment can also affect integration into the host society.

The results showed that despite the participants' moderately high average score on well-being and rather low average scores on distress, some of the answers to the questions for the social integration scale showed that half of the women still missed their home country considerably and felt that their quality of life was better there. In addition, many did not feel that they were part of their local communities in Geneva. In this respect, a previous study reported that for skilled migrants, full and meaningful integration into a new country depended on their capacity to use their skills and education and to feel appreciated and valued at work (Creese and Wiebe, 2009). Experts have commented that until skilled migrants achieve this, the process of integration will continue (Tastsoglou and Preston, 2005; Liversage, 2009).

V. Interviews with local authorities and civil society organizations

Parallel to the empirical study with skilled migrant women in Geneva, informal discussions were organized with nine local state authorities and civil society organizations to grasp the activities and programmes existing in Geneva to support the professional integration of qualified migrant women. The details of these interviews can be found in Appendix 5.

Public institutions were selected on the basis of their mandate (i.e. social and cultural integration, gender equality, continued training and professional integration) at the local level, whereas civil society organizations were identified on the basis of the assistance they provide either to unemployed women and migrants, in general, or to skilled migrant women, in particular.

Interviews took place between September and December 2010 and consisted of informal discussions around the themes of underemployment and deskilling. The objective of the interviews was to learn about the organizations' experiences with and understanding of skilled migrant women's trajectories and potential difficulties in Geneva with respect to access to appropriate jobs. Interviews lasted approximately an hour to an hour and a half. Despite the small number of interviews, we believe these discussions provided a useful overview of the institutional context in which study participants find themselves, how they are perceived by these actors and the approach taken to address their needs.

Discussions with local state authorities showed varying levels of awareness of the needs of qualified migrant women on the part of the interlocutors. Some authorities expressed that access to skilled work for migrant women required tailored responses such as the individual coaching programme developed by Découvrir or other measures to nurture migrant women's access to local professional networks. They also acknowledged that efforts must be made to extend the offer of state-sponsored language courses designed for qualified migrants. In particular, local authorities in charge of integration admitted that the majority of state-sponsored or low-cost language courses tended to be geared towards unskilled workers, or even to combine French language skills learning with literacy classes. Such preconceptions on the general level of education of migrants and refugees can therefore be an obstacle to the satisfaction of qualified migrants' learning needs.

Other institutions seemed to be unaware of the phenomenon of underemployment of migrant women and of the specific obstacles they face in juggling family and work responsibilities, especially upon arrival in Switzerland, when the absence of a family and social network may be most strongly felt. In the same way, other institutions held the view that qualified migrant women had the same difficulties

as any other Swiss woman jobseeker in finding a job and the same chances of succeeding in getting one. For them, the decisive issue for success was the woman's wish to find a job and her motivation to deal with the difficulties that characterize the process, which could include having to retrain completely and work in unskilled jobs in order to fund her studies.

This latter view of the situation was also brought up by one of the association's representatives but with a different take. This person spoke about how the absence of clear strategies and mechanisms to help migrants face well-known barriers to qualified jobs (including various types of discrimination) left the chances of getting an appropriate job to the individual personality traits of the migrants. These included the migrants' skills and clarity of mind upon migrating to know what they want and how they can obtain it in a culture that was new to them; having high tolerance for frustration and high perseverance; being young; and having a good capacity to learn the national language which may, among other things, be influenced by age. In addition to these factors, this interlocutor mentioned that the migrants' capacity to persevere in the job-hunting process was mediated by their possession of good financial resources, as well as emotional and physical support.

With regard to the opportunities for retraining, discussions held with relevant services highlighted the absence of a specific strategy to support underemployed migrants in acquiring qualifications that could help them obtain a professional position in the country of destination comparable to the one they previously had.

Lastly, some interlocutors acknowledged the role that social support institutions such as unemployment offices can unintentionally have in pushing qualified migrants (men and women alike) into low-skilled occupations in sectors of high demand in the local labour market, such as unskilled childcare services, industrial cleaning and catering.

During the discussions, these professionals expressed their views on how migration could negatively affect gendered relations among spouses and how situations of underemployment and their consequences, such as the loss of women's financial independence or self-esteem, could lead to very tense marital situations, and even separation. Furthermore, they highlighted the need to attend to the effects of migration itself and complicated migration, in particular, in which a person has sequels of traumatic events which can affect his or her integration capacity into the host society, including the capacity to learn the national language. Lastly, the professionals interviewed cited the potential negative impact of current anti-immigrant political discourse on skilled migrants' sense of self-worth and value.

From these discussions, it seems that, in the apparent absence of a public strategy to facilitate the professional insertion of qualified migrant women, several civil society organizations are providing support to individuals and families affected by deskilling and underemployment. In this regard, the creation of Découvrir, an association whose mandate is to provide qualified migrant women with individualized support towards professional insertion, seems to fill a need for specific advice on credential recognition and professional issues. However, from the outside, such efforts seem to still lack visibility, resources and coordination. As one association leader put it, the trajectory of a qualified migrant woman in Geneva may be a very solitary and frustrating one. It is often characterized by the search for reliable information relevant to her situation and being continuously at risk of misunderstanding or being misled into what needs to be done in order to regain her qualified status and find an appropriate job and, as a result, often wasting her time and resources in trying to discover the relevant support services.

A global consideration in these discussions is the apparent lack of communication and coordinated approach between the different state services on the issues of underemployment and deskilling of migrant women. In addition, it seems relevant for state authorities with mandates of integration, gender equality, professional integration and continued learning to engage with the important network of civil society organizations involved in migrant women's welfare to take stock of existing activities and to support them, if possible, as well as to organize a systematized response to the problem of migrant women's underemployment.

VI. Conclusions

The current empirical study included 33 qualified migrant women who arrived in Geneva in their 30s and early 40s and who seemed to have been in quite a severe level of underemployment during their first few years in the country. The work situation for most of them, particularly for those with a background in social sciences, health and social professions, did not significantly improve. The study also confirmed previously reported findings in relation to the type of barriers that skilled migrant women tend to face when trying to access jobs at their level of qualification and experience. These include the lack of appropriate recognition of diplomas obtained in non-high-income OECD and non-OECD countries, the lack of proficiency in French, the lack of a professional network, and various sources of discrimination, including age and gender, which often affect nationals as well but seem to have an exponential effect for migrants when combined with the other factors. Importantly, the study highlighted the fact that although the prohibition to work has been lifted for holders of F residence permits, these permits still seem to be rejected by possible employers. In addition, the importance of financial barriers should be underscored,

as many of the women, particularly on arrival, cannot afford the prices of intensive language and professional courses that could help them to level with the national population in order to meet the demands of the local labour market.

The results revealed that, despite the difficult situations that these women have had to endure in trying to find a job at their level of qualification and experience, they have high social and emotional potential, which seems to have helped them maintain a good level of well-being and to mitigate possible sources of distress due to their work situation. The barriers that many of these women have been unable to overcome and the emotional costs that the job-hunting process have had on them – and on their marital relationships, in particular – seem to have made them content themselves with the minimum possible benefits and satisfaction of being at least employed even if underemployed. Being currently employed seems to be a central source of well-being and, possibly, a protective factor in these women's emotional state. However, the negative and possibly irreversible effects of this situation in terms of deskilling and loss of social status, as well as its impact on the full integration of migrants into their host society, should not be underestimated. In this sense, the study showed that despite being in many cases severely underemployed, these women had good relationships with their employers and did not express resentment towards their work situation. However, a sense of not belonging to society was particularly felt by the more severely underemployed women. At the same time, it is clear that the host society is not benefiting from the valuable contribution that this population could be providing in their professional areas.

The current study on the psychosocial impact of underemployment on skilled migrant women working in Geneva delineated the separate identity of this population based on its specific vulnerabilities and needs. Promoting increased sensitivity to these specific issues seems particularly appropriate, in light of experts' views that high-income OECD countries have inadvertently created a situation in which immigration policies that restrict entry of unskilled migrants and stiff barriers to qualified jobs for foreigners combine to draw migrant women to fill an increasing need for domestic and care workers (Sassen, 2000; Kofman and Raghuram, 2006). The concrete results obtained from the study sample could be particularly helpful in guiding Swiss authorities on how to best tailor an approach that facilitates the integration of skilled migrant women into the labour market and, in so doing, enhance their contributions and integration into society.

VII. Recommendations

The current study represents a first step in exploring the psychological impact of underemployment on migrant women in Geneva and points to areas that need further investigation. For example, the results seem to indicate that women's current perception of underemployment and emotional response is influenced by their experiences of unemployment and attempts to find an appropriate job. It would therefore be of interest to study in more detail the early stages of migrants' unemployment and job-hunting process and to compare migrant and national skilled women in this respect, as this could yield further elements of the different barriers to appropriate work and the impact of this process on women's well-being and careers. In the same vein, although a previous study in Geneva has already reported the possible differences between underemployed and appropriately employed skilled migrant women in terms of the factors limiting access to appropriate work (Chicha and Deraedt, 2009), a comparison of the psychological state of well-being of the two groups seems necessary in order to further understand the significance of the job situation in the lives of qualified migrant women, particularly its effects on their integration into Swiss society. Further studies are also needed to investigate this variable more extensively. It is also relevant to explore the views of the national population, as migrant integration is a two-way process that changes both the migrants and the host society (Berns-McGown, 1999).

The current study highlighted the complexities of the problem of underemployment of skilled migrant women and the need for a coordinated approach between the agencies that work with migrant populations in order to find effective solutions. Although time constraints only permitted the undertaking of brief interviews with authorities, these interviews revealed an important element, which is that each agency seems to be dealing with separate facets of the same human being: the migrant, the woman, the mother, the professional and the political refugee. It is clear that coordinated and effective plans need to be created for the person who reunites all or most of these attributes and that the various agencies need to liaise with each other in order to develop a systematized approach. Therefore, a successful plan would have to strengthen the capacity of existing services, including those provided by both state institutions and civil society organizations, and to promote a comprehensive approach to the specific needs of skilled migrant women.

In addition, in view of the lack of recognition of their professional status and their lack of proficiency in French, migrant women need to be able to access other services that can assist them in their efforts to integrate into the labour market. A qualified migrant worker mastering French and working in an appropriate job should be the goal for the benefit of all involved.

The recovery of a qualified status for skilled migrant women requires, first of all, mastering the native language to professional standards and levelling with their profession in order to meet local requirements. However, the cost of intensive training courses is too high for most unemployed migrant people, and partially sponsored high-quality courses tend to be available only to people who have the right to register with the State's unemployment and welfare agencies.

Second, state services should provide complete and coherent information to migrants about the validation process for university degrees and its requirements. It seems particularly important that a task force is formed to try to find solutions to address the problem of transfer of skills, particularly in the so-called "protected professions" that are very context-defined (e.g. law and health) and careers that require advanced proficiency in the French language (e.g. education). Approaches need to be developed to be able to advise skilled migrant women who are over-represented in these professions on the specific ways they can transfer or reconvert their skills to a different profession, or on retraining opportunities so that they can continue to work as qualified workers.

Last but not least, the vicious circle represented by the requirement for previous employment experience in Switzerland needs a fresh approach. First and foremost, efforts should be made to increase information outreach to employers with regard to the work entitlements of different residence permit holders, as differential treatment based on migration status had been mentioned by the study participants. Equally, authorities could work towards the promotion and visibility of migrant women's skills to employers, so as to reduce the influence of stereotypes. Second, if employers consider it necessary for the people they hire to have work experience in Geneva, it is essential that placement schemes are developed to meet the specific needs of skilled migrants for levelling or complementing their skills in order to meet the demands of the local job market. For example, one of the limitations of migrants with respect to their national counterparts is a deficit of "soft skills". These skills have to do with the styles and social codes in the professional environment that are culturally determined and meld with professional skills. In the same vein, migrants' skills associated with the way they used to work in their home countries (e.g. solving problems with very limited financial resources and multitasking), which could contribute to improving local performance, do not seem to have been sufficiently explored.

The recommendations of this report are in line with the Swiss Confederation Law on Foreigners, chapter 53, which states that the communities and cantons need to create the necessary conditions for the equality of chances and the participation of foreigners in public life.

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Appendix I:

List of institutions contacted for the identification of study participants

- Appartenances
- Association de Solidarité des Femmes Africaines à Genève
- Association des Equatoriens de Genève
- Associations Femmes Musulmanes Genevoises
- Camarada
- Caritas
- Consultation ethno-psychiatrique
- Croix Rouge Genevoise
- Découvrir
- Entraide Protestante Suisse (EPER)
- F Information
- Global Women in Trade
- Hospice Général
- Local Expatriate Spouse Association (UN LESA)
- Pluriels
- Pôle Femme et Emploi, Office de Formation Professionnelle
- Solidarité Bosnie
- Spouse Career Centre
- Syndicat Interprofessionnel des Travailleurs
- Tierra Incognita
- Université Populaire Albanaise
- Zeba Watan
- Garderie Zone Bleue
- Service des Mesures pour l'emploi, Département de la Solidarité et de l'Emploi (DSE), Office Cantonal de l'Emploi

Appendix II:

Scales of the questionnaire on well-being and social relationships

Table 1: Well-being and self-esteem scale

Item	Questionnaire statements
1	I feel good about my current life
3	I can express my views easily
5	I am confident with life
11	I feel inferior to others (reversed)
17	I enjoy doing what I do
24	I am healthy
28	I can express disagreements
31	I am capable of finding solutions to my problems
37	I feel worthless (reversed)
38	I exercise
41	I take leisure outings (e.g. walks or visits)
43	My life is very stable
53	I feel I can decide things
56	I feel proud of my efforts
58	I have plans
60	I feel loved

Table 2: Distress scale

Item	Questionnaire statements
2	I am very sensitive to criticism
4	I worry about the financial well-being of my family
6	I eat too much
7	I feel irritable and get angry easily
9	I worry too much about the future
10	I have a lot of frustrations
12	I have trouble falling asleep or sleep too much
13	I sleep poorly
15	I feel sad
16	I smoke a lot
18	I have back pains
19	I think a lot about my problems

22	I have lost interest in things that I used to like
26	I tend to worry too much
29	I am easily tired
34	I feel guilty too much
36	I have a lot of anxiety
39	I feel unmotivated
40	My possibilities are determined by others
44	I feel everything is an effort
45	I drink a lot
48	I find it difficult to contain my anger
49	I can hit others or break things when I'm angry
51	I feel stressed out and tense
55	I find that life is difficult
61	I think about death
64	I am afraid for no apparent reason
66	I have trouble concentrating

Table 3: Social relationships scale

Item	Questionnaire statements
2	I am very sensitive to criticism (reversed)
3	I can express my views easily
8	I feel alone with my problems (reversed)
14	I am easily embarrassed or intimidated (reversed)
20	I can communicate my needs to others
21	I feel people appreciate my qualities
23	I enjoy meeting new people
28	I can express disagreements
46	I am socially isolated (reversed)
50	I trust my friends
52	I am happy with the friends I have
62	I am happy with the number of friends I have
63	I argue a lot (reversed)

Table 4: Social integration difficulties scale

Item	Questionnaire statements
25	I often think about injustice
27	I miss my old friends
30	I resent the cultural differences in my interactions with others
32	I have difficulty trusting others
42	I feel other people are hostile or they do not like me
47	I feel people take advantage of me
54	I miss my home country
57	I feel that others do not understand me
59	I think a lot about what I have lost
65	I feel part of my community

Table 5: Depression scale

Item	Questionnaire statements
6	I eat too much
12	I have trouble falling asleep or sleep too much
15	I feel sad
19	I think a lot about my problems
29	I am easily tired
33	I have poor appetite
34	I feel guilty too much
37	I feel worthless
39	I feel unmotivated
44	I feel everything is an effort
46	I am socially isolated
55	I find that life is difficult
59	I think a lot about what I have lost
61	I think about death
66	I have trouble concentrating

Table 6: Anxiety scale

Item	Questionnaire statements
6	I eat too much
7	I feel irritable and get angry easily
12	I have trouble falling asleep or sleep too much
13	I sleep poorly
16	I smoke a lot
19	I think a lot about my problems
26	I tend to worry too much
29	I am easily tired
36	I have a lot of anxiety
51	I feel stressed out and tense
64	I am afraid for no apparent reason
66	I have trouble concentrating

Appendix III:

Descriptive statistics of the sample

Table 1: Basic demographic variables

Basic demographic variables	Mean (SD)	Range	Frequency (%)
Current age	45.4 (8.0)	26–63	
Age on arrival in Geneva	36.1 (6.0)	24–48	
Number of years in Geneva	9.4 (6.6)	2–25	
Married status on arrival in Geneva			23 (70)
Current number of years of marriage	14 (9.2)	2–35	
Had children migrating with her to Geneva			22 (66)
Current number of children	2 (1.4)	1–7	

Table 2: Nationality and migration variables of the sample

Nationality and migration variables	Frequency (%)
Region of origin:[1]	
1. Central and South America	19 (58)
2. Northern Africa	1 (3)
3. Eastern and Middle Africa	4 (12)
4. Southern Europe	2 (6)
5. Western Asia	4 (12)
6. Eastern and South-Eastern Asia	3 (9)
Had lived abroad before	8 (24)
Had lived in a high-income OECD country before[2]	7 (21)
All the extended family is in CoO[3]	24 (73)
Reasons for migrating:	
1. Improve her opportunities in life	6 (18)
2. Married a Swiss national	6 (18)
3. Political refugee	9 (27)
4. Husband is a political refugee	6 (18)
5. Husband's career	5 (15)
6. Employment or study	1 (3)

Notes: [1] Regions: based on United Nations classification (UN DESA, 2010).
[2] The definition of OECD high-income countries is based on World Bank classification (World Bank, 2010).
[3] CoO= Country of origin.

Table 3: Details about the nationality and profession of spouse and parents

Information about spouse and parents	Frequency (%)
Partner:	
• is from participant's CoO or neighbouring country	16 (73)
• is a university graduate	18 (82)
Father's profession:	
• Manual	8 (24)
• Intermediate (mainly commerce)	16 (49)
• Managerial/university graduate	9 (27)
Mother's profession:	
• Housewife	19 (57)
• Manual	4 (12)
• Intermediate (mainly commerce)	7 (21)
• Professional (teacher or nurse)	3 (9)

Note: Categories of professions: manual: agricultural worker, blacksmith fairer, shop attendant, security guard, seamstress; intermediate (requiring secondary or technical education at the most): administrator, plantation manager, real estate agent, accountant, manager of a family business, telecommunication technician, teacher, electricity technician, nurse; managerial/professional (requiring university education or tertiary education and high level of professional experience): navy and military officer, engineer, researcher, public official, economist, university lecturer, bank administrator.

Table 4: Education and professional variables

Education and professional experience	Mean (SD)	Range	Frequency (%)
Years of undergraduate education in CoO[1]	4.7 (0.6)	4–6	
Years of professional experience in CoO	9.8 (7.1)	1–25	
Had completed postgraduate education			10 (30)
Has a second undergraduate degree			5 (15)
Proficiency in English (intermediate/good)[2]			21 (63)
Professions:[3]			
1. Social sciences			13 (39)
2. Natural sciences and engineering			5 (15)
3. Health and social professions			6 (18)
4. Business and economics			9 (27)

Notes: [1] CoO: Country of origin.
    [2] None of the participants came from an English-speaking country (including those where English is either the official language or is widely spoken).
    [3] Professional categories: 1) social sciences: linguistics, journalism, law, geography, public administration; 2) natural sciences and engineering: biology, chemistry, engineering; 3) health and social professions: nursing, psychology, social work; 4) business and economics: economics, finance, accounting, business administration, tourism.

Table 5: Residency status in Switzerland, frequency (%)

Type of residence permit	On arrival	Currently
N or F	10 (30)	5 (15)
B	10 (30)	8 (25)
C	4 (12)	18 (55)
Carte de Légitimation	4 (12)	0
Swiss nationality	1 (3)	2 (6)
No permit (illegal entry)	4 (12)	0

Note: Residence permits in Switzerland: N and F are for asylum-seekers and temporary admissions on humanitarian grounds, respectively, which have a duration of six months or one year, respectively, and which are renewable; B is granted to people entering as employees and their families, is valid for one year and is renewable; C is granted to people with either F or B permits after ongoing residence in Switzerland for at least five to 10 years, depending on the nationality. Applications for Swiss citizenship can be submitted after 12 years of continued residency in Switzerland. Migrants who are employed by international organizations receive a Carte de Légitimation. Spouses need to exchange theirs for a Permit B or C if they wish to work in Switzerland (OECD, 2007).

Appendix IV:

Countries and territories included in the United Nations classification of the regions in the study

Africa				
Eastern Africa	**Middle Africa**	**Northern Africa**	**Southern Africa**	**Western Africa**
Burundi Comoros Djibouti Eritrea Ethiopia Kenya Madagascar Malawi Mauritius Mayotte Mozambique Réunion Rwanda Seychelles Somalia Uganda United Republic of Tanzania Zambia Zimbabwe	Angola Cameroon Central African Republic Chad Congo Democratic Republic of the Congo Equatorial Guinea Gabon Sao Tome and Principe	Algeria Egypt Libya Morocco Sudan Tunisia Western Sahara	Botswana Lesotho Namibia South Africa Swaziland	Benin Burkina Faso Cape Verde Cote d'Ivoire Gambia Ghana Guinea Guinea-Bissau Liberia Mali Mauritania Niger Nigeria Saint Helena Senegal Sierra Leone Togo

Americas			
Latin America and the Caribbean			
Caribbean	**Central America**	**South America**	**Northern America**
Anguilla Antigua and Barbuda Aruba Bahamas Barbados Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba British Virgin Islands Cayman Islands Cuba Curaçao Dominica Dominican Republic Grenada Guadeloupe Haiti Jamaica Martinique Montserrat Puerto Rico Saint-Barthélemy Saint Kitts and Nevis Saint Lucia Saint Martin (French part) Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Sint Maarten (Dutch part) Trinidad and Tobago Turks and Caicos Islands United States Virgin Islands	Belize Costa Rica El Salvador Guatemala Honduras Mexico Nicaragua Panama	Argentina Bolivia (Plurinational State of) Brazil Chile Colombia Ecuador Falkland Islands (Malvinas) French Guiana Guyana Paraguay Peru Suriname Uruguay Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Bermuda Canada Greenland Saint Pierre and Miquelon United States of America

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Asia				
Central Asia	**Eastern Asia**	**Southern Asia**	**South-Eastern Asia**	**Western Asia**
Kazakhstan Kyrgyzstan Tajikistan Turkmenistan Uzbekistan	China China, Hong Kong China, Macao Democratic 　People's 　Republic of 　Korea Japan Mongolia Republic of Korea	Afghanistan Bangladesh Bhutan India Iran (Islamic 　Republic of) Maldives Nepal Pakistan Sri Lanka	Brunei Darussalam Cambodia Indonesia Lao People's 　Democratic 　Republic Malaysia Myanmar Philippines Singapore Thailand Timor-Leste Viet Nam	Armenia Azerbaijan Bahrain Cyprus Georgia Iraq Israel Jordan Kuwait Lebanon Occupied 　Palestinian 　Territory Oman Qatar Saudi Arabia Syrian Arab 　Republic Turkey United Arab 　Emirates Yemen

Europe			
Eastern Europe	**Northern Europe**	**Southern Europe**	**Western Europe**
Belarus Bulgaria Czech Republic Hungary Poland Republic of Moldova Romania Russian Federation Slovakia Ukraine	Åland Islands Channel Islands Denmark Estonia Faroes Finland Guernsey Iceland Ireland Isle of Man Jersey Latvia Lithuania Norway Svalbard and Jan 　Mayen Islands Sweden United Kingdom of 　Great Britain and 　Northern Ireland	Albania Andorra Bosnia and 　Herzegovina Croatia Gibraltar Greece Holy See Italy Malta Montenegro Portugal San Marino Serbia Slovenia Spain The former Yugoslav 　Republic of 　Macedonia	Austria Belgium France Germany Liechtenstein Luxembourg Monaco Netherlands Switzerland

Appendix V:

List of local authorities and civil society organizations interviewed for the study and date of interview

Cantonal authorities
- Office pour l'Orientation, la Formation Professionnelle et Continue (OFPC), 26 October 2010
- Office des Mesures pour l'Emploi of the Office Cantonal pour l'Emploi (OCE), 29 October 2010
- Service pour la Promotion de l'Egalite entre Homme et Femme (SPPE), 18 November 2010
- Femme et Emploi of the Office pour l'Orientation, La Formation Professionnelle et Continue (OFPC), 18 November 2010
- Bureau pour l'Integration des Etrangers (BIE), 22 November 2010

Civil society organizations
- F Information, 29 September 2010
- Syndicat Interprofessionnel des Travailleurs (SIT), 5 October 2010
- Appartenances, 6 October 2010
- Pluriels, 1 November 2010
- Découvrir, 17 December 2010

Chapter 3: The psychosocial impact of underemployment in the lives of skilled migrant women working in Geneva, Switzerland: An empirical study

CHAPTER
4

RESILIENCE STRATEGIES USED
BY IMMIGRANT WOMEN
FACING PROFESSIONAL
DESKILLING IN QUEBEC:

A literature review and
a small-scale study

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Chapter 4: Resilience strategies used by immigrant women facing professional deskilling in Quebec: A literature review and a small-scale study

RESILIENCE STRATEGIES USED BY IMMIGRANT WOMEN FACING PROFESSIONAL DESKILLING IN QUEBEC:

A literature review and a small-scale study

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The aim of this study is to describe the identity and resilience strategies adopted by immigrant women faced with deskilling, in their attempt at social and professional integration in Quebec. Based on a review of relevant literature and research, the study examines how female migrant workers strategize their responses to the obstacles encountered when faced with deskilling, as well as the psychosocial elements that serve as the basis of these coping and reactive strategies. In particular, the paper outlines the methods and results of a research conducted in 2002 that analysed how deskilling is experienced from a psychosocial perspective, and described differences in individual experiences of deskilling related to particular cultural prisms.

Identity strategies are defined as "procedures established on the basis of certain assessments (socio-historical, cultural, psychological), and they are implemented either consciously or unconsciously by a stakeholder, which could be an individual or a group, to achieve one or more purposes" (Taboada-Léonetti, 1990; Camilleri et al., 1990); examples of identity strategies include internalizing an attributed identity, marginalizing oneself or conforming. The purpose here resides in integration and recognition, in continuity, despite professional deskilling. In this literature review, deskilling is defined as a non-correspondence between the level of the highest degree obtained by the migrant and the level of diploma required by the job exercised. For highly qualified migrants, it refers to the fact of occupying a lesser qualification (Chicha, 2009). Finally, the notion of resilience (Cyrulnik, 2001) designates "the capacity to succeed, to live and to develop oneself, despite adversity."

Immigration of women to Quebec: A statistical overview

Quebec welcomes some 49,000 immigrants annually (49,489 persons in 2009, according to the Institut de la statistique du Québec), of which 65 per cent are economic immigrants and 59 per cent are skilled workers. Of this number, nearly half are women (24,577), representing 18.7 per cent of the immigrant population in Canada (Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles du Québec, 2009). Some 59 per cent of these women migrants in Quebec belong to the "economic migrants" category, and the others are accepted as refugees or through

family reunification programmes. For the 2005–2009 period, 52.2 per cent of immigrant women were skilled workers: 35.6 per cent of them had 17 years or more of schooling, and 36.1 per cent had 14 to 16 years of schooling. For active women admitted to Quebec between 2005 and 2009 by expected profession, nearly half (49.4%) were new workers coming from the following professions: business, finance and administration (11.5%); social sciences, teaching, public administration and religion (9%); natural and applied sciences (7.4%); sales and services (7.3%); health (4.8%); arts, culture, sports and leisure (4.3%); and management (2%), manufacturing (0.4%) and entrepreneurship (0.4%).

It is notable that some recently landed immigrants are highly qualified and therefore should have access to professions that match their skills and training. However, there are many obstacles to professional achievement that hinder access to qualified professions for many immigrants. In the province of Quebec, the unemployment rate for landed immigrants is twice as high as that for the native population, a rate much higher than that for other provinces (Boudarbat and Boulet, 2010); furthermore, their wage rate is unsatisfactory (Picot, 2004). In Quebec, the CRARR (Centre de recherche-action sur les relations raciales) shows an unemployment rate of 29 per cent for African Maghrebins and 17 per cent for blacks, compared to 8 per cent for the population as a whole (Lynhiavu, 2009). Women from visible minorities have an unemployment rate of 13 per cent, compared to 7 per cent for Quebec women in general.

Several studies on women in the labour force (Mongeau et al., 2007; Chicha, 2009) have attempted to describe this phenomenon, including a comparison of the economic situation of immigrant women with that of the local population, using economic indicators such as labour force participation, rates of employment and unemployment, income, concentration by industry and profession and hours worked. For the years between 2001 and 2006, study results on immigrant women's lack of job security show, among other things, that the largest income gap between immigrant women and women in general occurs when education is higher, which is consistent with women migrants' deskilling and the fact that they often find themselves in positions which do not require much training. On average, the income of highly educated immigrant women (with university degrees) corresponds to 82 per cent of the income of women in the population as a whole. Full-time work does not protect them from such a disadvantage since they have lower incomes (70% lower) than resident Quebec women and a higher unemployment rate. In addition, the deskilling rate could be expected to increase by 44 per cent for women from visible minorities in Canada and is also a concern for immigrant women who generally have a very high level of education compared to the general population. Moreover, in Canada, immigrant women are heavily represented in jobs traditionally held by women (CIC, 2003; Lindsay and Almey, 2005) and unevenly

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distributed across skill levels (CIC, 2003, 2010). Vanderplatt (2007) states a number of reasons: first, immigrant women's credentials are often discounted; this can impact their career progression (Khan and Watson, 2005; Man, 2004; Salaff and Greve, 2003; Tastsoglou and Miedema, 2005). Moreover, access to the job market can be denied for religious reasons: for example, Muslim women who wear a *hijab* face considerable discrimination when applying for jobs (Vatz-Laaroussi, 2009; Cardu, 2008; Cardu and Sanschagrin, 2002).

In summary, gender is linked to professional deskilling, to increased irregularity in professional work (frequent job changes), to advancement difficulties and to less favourable work conditions.

Migration and the cultural transition that it produces (in terms of post-migratory adjustments) require major changes in social status, which produces a new dynamic in feelings of social and professional belonging. Professional identity is indeed an important subcategory of the self in working women. Self, significant others' and internalized attributions of competency within the professional identity all contribute to a high degree of self-satisfaction. During the process of integration, social or professional recognition diminishes, resulting in a weaker sense of competency. In this new objective social position, which transforms feelings of previously belonging to an organization (work organization, profession and professional experience, as an independent woman, as a mother and as a provider), the situation of having all aspects of identity being simultaneously affected can put great strain on women, particularly if they are facing professional deskilling. Of great importance in this process are the context of migration and previous work experiences, which, through *expectancies* or the automatism that they produce, form the *interpretation* and *internalization* of the confrontation towards a new social and professional environment.

Professional career paths marked by deskilling naturally seem to produce discouragement, isolation and depression. There is a distance between the professional expectations of immigrant women and the reality which they meet in the labour market (Lenoir-Achdjian et al., 2008; Cardu, 2008; Man, 2004; Belhassen-Maalaoui, 2008). Professional vulnerability can only colour one's vision of the future with bitterness, which is especially aggravated by the difficulties inherent to the migration path, a multiple obstacle course where a good understanding of particular job markets and business subcultures is needed and where mastering the language and specific codes is necessary, in addition to building networks. Several studies conducted in Canada have shown the great degree of difficulty that middle-class immigrant women have when they are highly qualified (Salaff and Greve, 2003; Man, 2004; Raghuram and Kofman, 2004; VanderPlaat, 2007).

Obstacles and discontinuity

Numerous studies have listed the obstacles that immigrant women face in Quebec which could lead to downward professional mobility (Godin, 2004; Cardu and Sanchagrin, 2002; Cardu, 2008; Chicha, 2009; Chicha and Charest, 2008; Vatz-Laaroussi, 2008, 2009; Mailloux, 2005; Torczyner, 2009; Ministère des Communautés culturelles et de l'immigration, 2005, 2008): diplomas and credentials from another country that are not recognized (closure and slow action from Professional Orders in this regard); foreign experience judged as "suspicious" or not recognized by Quebec employers; difficulty mastering the French language; limited knowledge of the English language; discrimination and prejudice; lack of professional networks and welcoming organizations; and ethnic and religious prejudice towards certain cultural groups, particularly Muslim women and women belonging to visible minorities.

Many women originating from sub-Saharan Africa and the Maghreb settle in Montreal upon their arrival in the province of Quebec. Paradoxically, despite these women's good knowledge of French, in Quebec, bilingualism (knowledge of both English and French) is often required in order to access employment opportunities; this is not the case in the other regions. The selection grid for immigrants to Quebec still largely rests on their employability and not on matching their skills to sectors where there is a shortage of labour: the potential of immigrants often exceeds the demands of the job in the most in-demand domains at the technical and professional levels (Mc Andrew, 2010; Chicha, 2009); this produces anger and dissatisfaction.

The cultural differences could potentially be discriminatory factors: statistics show that immigrant women's deskilling is very noticeable and their rate of unemployment is very high, despite the fact that many of them have university degrees when they arrive in the country (Mailloux, 2005).

Moreover, in this context of migration, these women often are radically cut off from their normal contacts. They can be profoundly changed, and this influences their social and professional integration. Relationships with others are transformed and the roles of everyone in the family may have to be redefined. Immigrant women could experience periods of isolation; they integrate new statuses and face devaluation of their old status (for example, the role of the mother in the household). Furthermore, they often undergo a substantial loss in human resources if they come from more traditionalist societies (including African societies and, more specifically, Muslim societies), while they are confronted with new intercultural contacts during their integration process in the workforce and in the job search market.

Resilience strategies

Resilience refers to protection factors and risk factors, which in turn refer to conditions hindering the migration path. In a study of 200 women from the Republic of Korea and their daughters on American soil, Lee et al. (2008) analysed resilience with respect to the theoretical relevancy of such variables as self-esteem, optimism, religion, cultural interdependency and belief in higher education. All these variables were significantly related to the resilience of mothers and daughters, with self-esteem and optimism predicted as being the most important variables in explaining resilience in this group. Similarly, Kanlou and Crawford (2006) and Kanlou et al. (2002) showed that post-migration experiences in Canada influenced the well-being of immigrant women: self-esteem can fluctuate not only according to attitudes related to the gender, immigration status, race and ethnicity of minority immigrants, but also according to their personal resources and the support they receive. Mental health problems can also emerge when strategies have to be used to make oneself "invisible" in public and not invisible in the private sphere, as has been shown in studies with women from the Caribbean (Jamaica, Barbados, and Trinidad and Tobago) who immigrated to Canada and who chose isolation and disconnectedness, according to the self-silencing theory and full-frame approach theory (Jack and Ali, 2010). According to these authors, immigrant women also have a tendency to believe that their lack of well-being is due to systemic and institutional causes. Their immigration path and the unknowns associated with it may have instilled a heightened consciousness of obstacles because of their gender, ethnic origin and status as part of a visible minority, and a third of the women state that they are, or have been, victims of racism or prejudice in the workplace. Studying the dynamic relationship between self-silencing, racism and emotional distress in the context of the social marginalization of women in Canada (discrimination at work, economic disadvantages, racism and prejudice, gender discrimination), Jack and Ali (2010) deduce that women's psychological well-being is, paradoxically, reinforced by the developments activated by the adversities they faced and what they learned responding to them; it is these skills that they implement when facing adversity in society (Papadopoulos, 2006). The most important protection factor here would be having a person whom women can confide in and talk to, and with whom they have a sustainable and trusting relationship. These conditions reflect those discussed by Vatz-Laaroussi (2009) and Vatz-Laaroussi and Rachédi (2008) concerning resilience strategies adopted both by North African women and by immigrant women during their immigration journey, notably relationship and meaning.

According to Rasouli (2008), the congruity between expectations and experience, the level of perceived discrimination, the level of acculturation and skill in knowing how to manage one's career are the psychological factors associated with positive career adjustments. Also, having a form of schooling in the host country, the number

of years lived in Canada and having received accreditation (from Professional Orders) constitute the predictive variables important to career adjustment for these immigrant women. Wanting to understand how professional integration can be a determining factor in the exile test among Algerians settling in Montreal, Hachimi Alaoui (2006) identified two states related to deskilling in this population: one, which is viewed as a misfortune, is associated with a "broken" career; the other, known as an "immigrant career", is when the trials of deskilling, loss of social visibility, and passage towards community professional mutual help associations and training associations are considered as normal steps in the immigration path. The Algerians, who view their professional deskilling as intrinsically related to their "immigrant career", have different expectations concerning the social and professional acceptance they face, and the deskilling they encounter as part of their migration path is a way for them to protect their self-esteem: they get back up on their feet, build a project and want to have access to new training. According to Hachimi Alaoui (2006), these different ways of interpreting reality are the result of three dimensions that mark the interpretation of exile: the meaning or significance of the departure, the relationship with the people there and the relationship with the self. It is the identification with the "immigrant" category that allows the deskilling to be perceived as a step in the immigration path which becomes more positive with time. In this respect, the migration project for exiled Algerians also influenced how they interpreted time and identity. Blain (2006), who has studied Colombians in their professional integration in a region of Quebec, goes in the same vein: although deskilling can sometimes generate a lack of confidence, it can also lead to acceptance, or it can be seen as a necessary passage which allows an immigrant to acquire Canadian experience while ensuring his or her family's economic survival. As deskilling is attributed to external factors like racism or difficulties in the recognition of credentials which diminishes individual responsibilities, it permits the development of a sense of mastery and compromise. Moreover, in an exploratory study of 12 qualified immigrant women integrating in Quebec City, Giroux (2010) found that although deskilling is related to negative perceptions about their downward mobility, those perceptions are temporary. Even if their expectations about their post-migratory professional life are not met, this will not diminish immigrant women's hopes of later finding a job adapted to their pre-migratory credentials. They consider this period of transition as a context for learning new cultural codes, which allows for the creation of social networks or re-orienting pre-migratory professional choices towards re-qualification (Giroux, 2010; Blain, 2006; Cardu, 2008).

Resilience: A dynamic process

Adopting an interactionist perspective towards the resilience concept as a dynamic process, Vatz-Laaroussi (2008, 2009) personifies the concept of "resilience tutor" as the significant other encountered during the journey, a model that the women pattern themselves after, a project. In contrast, the concept of "resilience vector" refers to knowledge – learned skills, abilities, attitudes and values that have been developed during the migration journey. Since they are intercultural skills, these acquired skills are supported by human qualities such as strong will, perseverance, pride and hope developed in survival situations, which are milestones in the appropriation of the power to act (empowerment). Several of these resilience figures are found in the accounts of the lives of migrants and refugees (Guilbert, 2010). According to this author, professional discontinuity would be felt by migrants as a challenge to overcome and continuity as a form of resilience and advancement in the host society, which results in strategies to channel energy in this direction in the search for similarities between the two countries. *Sustainable relationship* and *meaning* would be the two resilience vectors; the first relates to projecting oneself into a future that is less oppressive, while the second refers to the quality of models supporting women.

In an original study about the concept of resilience as it relates to empowerment, Chamberland (2003) showed that specifically in the context of immigrant women, the igniting element in their power to act was related to "relationships", that is, having a network available for these women in the context of their acculturation. In her desire to understand the development of empowerment among women who have just arrived and the methods they use, the author notes that professional deskilling and precarious work conditions are among the main obstacles encountered at the material level. Deskilling is also the result of employers' scepticism concerning the overqualification of immigrant women and prejudices about their status, which is a statistic supported by several research studies on professional deskilling among migrants (Chicha, 2008; Mc Andrew, 2010; Arcand, 2010). For immigrant women, the profound feeling of their integrity being attacked constitutes the ignition spark towards a posture of adversity, a feeling that is driven deeper in a context of low self-esteem, depression, isolation and contrasting climate conditions.

At the basis of women's empowerment to act in the face of adversity, the author states that these women have values that include equality, respect, commitment and unity, which help to develop and integrate knowledge, skills and action. The central element that helps these women get back on their feet is having some form of supportive relationship around them.

Vatz-Laaroussi (2009), who studied strategies used by North African women facing professional deskilling, listed two profiles that were characteristic of their experience. The first is a rapid deskilled integration, usually into a factory or sales job, allowing the spouse to return to further studies; the second profile is a strategy of returning to being a homemaker, with the woman's own return to further studies depending on the future wage-earning job of the husband. The same strategies were also reported by Chicha (2009) in his study of women who had immigrated to Montreal, with the constant being that the woman stayed in the deskilled job for a long period of time, which indicates that the actualization project as a couple was not very productive and did not provide much personal satisfaction for the women. The strategy of returning to studies for further education can also be undertaken, despite the associated costs; Boudarbat and Boulet (2010) have demonstrated how this strategy is associated with a higher employment rate for migrants. According to Vatz-Laaroussi (2009), these women would be more resistant to obstacles than their spouses because they have links to transnational networks of solidarity which could allow them to experience powerlessness and loss of control to a lesser extent, because they can refer to a social support network. They would therefore be able to confront the negative image of oppression attached to them because they wear a veil. These networks of family members, relatives and other immigrants they often meet at career orientation and job search centres would allow the women to develop important social links and learn useful strategies in a new context, for their various forms of identity (as women, mothers, Muslims and immigrants).

Research identifying some favoured identity strategies of immigrant women in Quebec and their possible link to cultural paradigms and identity group referral

Research trying to identify the identity strategies implemented by immigrant women in Quebec was conducted through interviews with immigrant women who were integrating in Quebec City (Cardu and Sanschagrin, 2002). Throughout the analysis of the subcategories of immigrant women's identity representation (related to ethnocultural affiliation, profession, religion, gender and parenthood, i.e. being a mother), the following topics were identified: the emerging identity themes in relation to migration and deskilling, the obstacles women faced and the methods they implemented to confront them. The theory of psychosocial identity (Zavalloni and Louis-Guérin, 1984, 1988; Louis-Guérin and Zavalloni, 1987) conceives identity as a motivated construction reflecting an individual project and a vision of the world. The contents reflect a model of identity that allows us to discern the identity representations at work in the integration phenomena and also to compare the role of the various dimensions of the identity structure (self/non-self, with a positive or negative inclination of the association of self or the dissociation of self from certain

contents related to the representation of the social world and the work world) that testify to the identity reconstruction process of immigrant women undergoing a process of professional integration.

Method

One hundred and thirty interviews (N=130) were conducted through an ego-ecological approach (Zavalloni and Louis-Guérin, 1984, 1987; Zavalloni, 1996, 1997, 1998). Interview outcomes with respect to identity were categorized within a system that represented the self, the other and their context, with the triple variables of gender, ethnicity and profession. Judgement samples were also used, according to biographical approach rules (Digneffe, 1995), by determining the typical work schedules of the participants (full-time, part-time, on call and not working) and by adapting the sample according to sociodemographic and socio-occupational variables (length of stay, age, diploma obtained, field of study and training). Moreover, a theoretical sample (Mucchielli, 1996) was included, in order to give representation to life-events partially representative of the difficulties experienced during integration in Quebec (exclusion, obstacles, support available). Among the respondents, 31.7 per cent experienced professional deskilling, including women from Central and Latin America and Western Europe.

A tool called "l'Investigateur Multistade de l'Identité Sociale" (LIMIS), developed by Zavalloni and Louis-Guérin (1984), was used. L'IMIS is a 10-item measure that asks participants to identify spontaneous representations of identity groups corresponding to conditions such as "We the… (group)" and "They the… (group)" are… (representation given or identity word). For example, a respondent might describe his/her original ethnocultural group as "We the Colombians, we are: *unified, focused on family, hard-working*, etc." Secondly, the exercise asks the respondent to evaluate to what extent the representation also characterizes himself/herself as a person (self) or does not characterize himself/herself as a person (non-self), whether the representation is positive, negative or neutral, and whether it is considered essential. For each identity group in this project, for each participant, researchers collected 10 representations or identity words related to the ethnocultural identity of origin, five representations related to the host society (Quebecers or Canadians, according to their choice), 10 representations related to women as a group ("We women…", "They, the other women…") and 10 representations related to their professional identity. In total, for ethnocultural identity, gender, professional and host society groups, we collected 35 representations for each respondent, which we grouped into themes. We also studied to which reference these groups were pointing and, for each identity representation, whether it applied to the self or not (self/non-self), its personal value (positive, negative or neutral) and its importance

(very important or not). The primary social identity of the respondents could therefore be illustrated on two axes: the axis of application to self (self/non-self) and the axis of personal value (+/-) (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1: Primary social identity
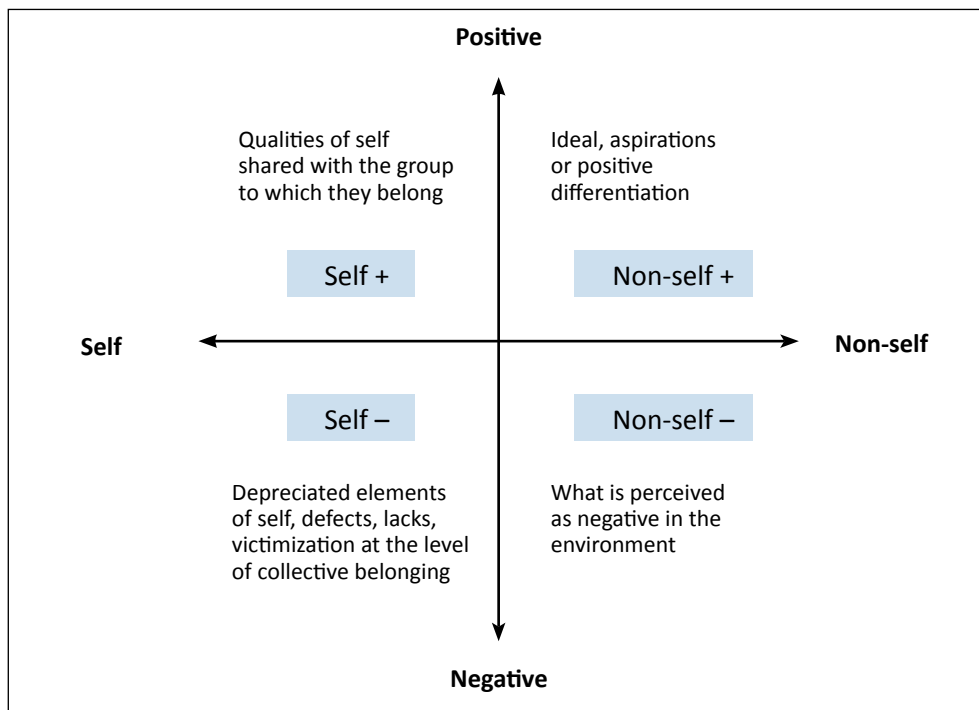
The ego-ecological approach states that each identity representation is associated in deep thought with a series of experiences, memories, images and emotions which form the framework of the meaning of the representation and give it value. The way to access this deep thought is through a protocol of pre-established interviews and, in this study, the interest resides in the questions pertaining to identity strategies that are implemented by the respondents while reacting to a new environment during their integration. Therefore, for each representation, questions are asked related to the value of the representation, the identification models associated with it, the referential images related to it (such as memories associated with the representation) and the strategies or methods used in reacting to the environment. For example, a woman could describe the identity group of women in the representation by saying that "women are *adaptable*" and then refer to a particular memory during her time of integration. These are the biographical aspects that we are interested in for this study: in particular, they provide us with information about favoured socio-professional identity and integration strategies

used during the integration journey by the women we met, according to their personal experience.

Cultural identity representations of Asian women were solicited from 10 women, who accounted for 12 per cent of our sample. They came from Japan, the Republic of Korea, China and the Philippines. Three of these women were facing professional deskilling; 10 per cent had a university degree. The representations in the "we" and "they" conditions were 90 per cent positive, which indicated a very positive view of the group and of themselves. Values of *hard work*, *hospitality, loyalty* and *respect* were considered to be very important in the discussion describing the group (and the self). The host society was described by representations in the opposite, negative self (non-self) as *close-minded*.

Ethnocultural identity representations of African women were solicited from 23 women in our sample (28%). These women originated from Morocco, Algeria, Burundi, Rwanda, the Congo and Tunisia. Two of the women were facing deskilling; 39 per cent had a university degree. The proportion of representations of the national identity group associated to self was very high and positive (90%) and included such values as *motivation* and *resistance*. Describing the self as women, we found themes of *openness, cooperation, dynamism, courage and helping one another*.

Ethnocultural identity representations of Central and South American women were solicited from eight women from Central America and 15 women from South America (28% of our sample). They came from Chile, Colombia, Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, El Salvador, Guatemala, Costa Rica and Cuba. Eleven of the women (48% of the group) were facing deskilling; 65 per cent had a university degree. The representations of the group and the self were 75 per cent positive and pointed to themes such as *helping one another*, *cooperation, unity* and *pride*, whereas the negative, non-self themes showed characteristics such as *politics, civil conflicts, aggression* and *arrogance*.

Cultural identity representations of Eastern European women were solicited from eight women from Eastern Europe, who made up about 10 per cent of our total group of respondents. They came from Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Russian Federation, Poland, Albania and Slovakia. Four of these women, or 50 per cent of the group, had to face professional deskilling. Most of them (80%) hold a university degree. The representations of the group, which were also attributed to the self, were 65 per cent positive, with the *ability to face constraints* being valued, as well as *unity*, *openness* and *warmth*, whereas characteristics such as *conservatism* were attributed to the self, but judged negatively. The negative non-self referred to *intolerance* and *close-mindedness*.

Cultural identity representations of Western European women were solicited from 18 women, who made up 22 per cent of our sample. In descending order, they came from France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Italy. Six of these women faced deskilling. Most of them hold a university degree. The proportion of representations of ethnocultural identity associated with the self that were positive was 70 per cent in the "we" condition and 30.6 per cent in the "they" condition. These representations referred respectively to *adaptation*, the importance of *hierarchy* and *warmth*. Some 40 per cent of the representations given to describe the group were negative (non-self) and referred to *chauvinism* and *conservatism*.

Loss of support

For respondents from all continents, but slightly less so for women coming from Western Europe, the loss of family support in searching for a job was felt in a striking way, particularly because this type of extended family support and informal mutual aid networks (friends and the community) had been lost during migration. Women arrived in the host country lacking this type of mutual aid, which exists in Quebec in the form of childcare services and domestic help, but for which there were waiting lists and costs. Therefore, for women to be able to integrate into a profession, they need to request the services provided by institutions (day-care centres and school day-care services) to care for their children and, having done so, they need to redefine their role as the educator in the family. Being able to benefit from such services would greatly impact their professional integration and therefore their economic independence.

After the professional deskilling that many of the women have faced, returning for further training seems to be one of the integration strategies that help to counter the obstacles they face in the labour market (lack of recognition of educational equivalence from the country of origin, closing of professional orders, mistrust of technical skills acquired in the country of origin and their transferability to the workplace in the host country). This lack of skills recognition frequently experienced by women, in addition to the prejudicial expectations of employers, often manifests itself as a lack of confidence on the part of immigrant women with respect to the needs of the job.

In addition to these obstacles specific to immigration are the obstacles of gender and maternity, which are not culturally specific, meaning they can be encountered by all women, whatever their origin. However, the strategies used to face them could be different because of the fact that immigrant women are more strained due to the loss of cultural references and a lack of knowledge about their rights. Also, they must often reconcile their family responsibilities with their occupational

responsibilities; this is a great obstacle in their job search. Similarly, another great obstacle is the waiting lists that exist for childcare services, which slow down integration. Childcare services are all the more crucial for these women since they lack the human and monetary resources to be able to entrust their children to the care of relatives or private service providers (babysitters).

Language

Another major obstacle, often the main obstacle for many immigrant women, is language: they often stumble in their discourse due to the fact that they cannot understand everything and they have come to distrust themselves because of other people's reactions to their race or accent.

Wearing a veil often constitutes an obstacle to integration. As a respondent from Morocco said:

> In my experience about integration… it's difficult. It's always difficult to integrate, but on a professional level, it's not a question of qualifications or a diploma for me… it's because of the veil. When you're not accepted because of the veil that you wear, you say to yourself 'if you take it off, maybe you will be accepted, you'll be like the others.'

We realize that the obstacles encountered are related to a lack of knowledge of the appropriate codes to allow effective integration into the labour market, in addition to a lack of knowledge about the labour market and its medium-term opportunities. Hiring procedures within companies also constitute an obstacle because of the xenophobia that employers sometimes have as they express their fear of hiring a "foreigner". Other difficulties involve the family in the integration of immigrant women: waiting lists (sometimes of up to a year) for childcare, and the fact that the paid job of the spouse is often favoured at the expense of women's autonomy. Negative reactions to skin colour were mentioned by 27 per cent of African women, 25 per cent of Asian women and only 4 per cent of Latin American women. Cultural differences producing negative reactions were mentioned by all groups of women: 59 per cent of African women, 26 per cent of women from the Americas (both North America and South America), 25 per cent of Asian women and 44 per cent of European women. Accent was also an obstacle in communication for 36 per cent of African women, 34 per cent of American women, 50 per cent of Asian women and 43 per cent of European women. Wearing a veil was an obstacle mentioned only by African women. Thirty-one per cent of African women mentioned it, and in this group, 85 per cent of the women were from Northern Africa. Pronunciation of the last name and style of dress were mentioned by one woman (originating from

Central Africa), whereas poor knowledge of the country's language was an obstacle encountered by 49 per cent of all the women we interviewed.

These representations are anchored in the empowerment process of creating a new "we" that marks rooting on the host soil, a "we" often associated with disassociation between the personal and collective gender identity. The representations created refer to the internalization of the relationships that the self entertains with significant others who constitute a part of one's psychosocial identity.

How to react?

Women from Western Europe, who are confronted with new ways of life and methods of measurement (selection interviews) that are different from the ones they knew in their countries of origin, with their diplomas not being recognized and their subsequent deskilling experience, find integration particularly difficult to deal with, especially since many of these women expect to be integrating into a society that seems not very different from their own (France, Switzerland, Italy). "At the beginning it was hard because […] often when we went to see friends who had some experience in this, mostly bad experiences actually, they would tell us 'yes, it's difficult… oh no… they won't hire you, they are going to hire a Quebec woman'… and things like that," a respondent from Italy said.

However, several immigrant women that we interviewed had some preferred strategies that helped them integrate into the workforce as they turned to formal professional integration assistance networks. For example, they frequently made use of the services provided by job placement centres and workforce integration centres.

It is sometimes difficult to find work to survive financially; immigrant women in this situation tend to look for support, specifically from the people close to them. For professional integration, they often need to have contact with formal job search networks. This is different from social and community integration, which often occurs through informal networks of families organized into mutual help groups (or cell groups). For some women, this type of support is found in the host community, whereas others are welcomed by family or relatives and by associations comprised of people of the same origin. The last example is often the case with African families and Muslim families immigrating to Quebec.

Our analyses identify some accommodation strategies to implement during deskilling. These strategies aim to: reduce the feelings of vulnerability associated

with identity adaptation due to the assimilation of new cultural codes; maintain a continuing relationship with familiar people; and help provide a certain degree of continuity in roles during this turbulent time.

Among these strategies is the prevalence of the representation of the woman as mother (or educator) for women from the former Eastern bloc of Europe, and reversing discrimination.

Living with deskilling and numerous losses in the area of identity at the cultural level, some of the immigrant women that we met confided that they were using withdrawal strategies to facilitate integration. As mentioned above, we saw that some women went so far as to make themselves "invisible" in the eyes of the majority by removing their veil, which is often a symbol of submission to Islam and perceived as a hindrance to the autonomy of women. To reiterate Manço (2002), we notice women implementing a defensive management strategy, resulting from a process of negotiation and confrontation with the sociocultural environment, an environment which, for the most part, resists any negotiation on cultural differences in this context. If openness and negotiations are possible, such a strategy would lead to the development of interaction with the environment. As a respondent from Algeria said:

> *My children were the only foreigners at their school. It was hard for them to see their mother arrive… I think the other kids teased them too. At first, it was hard on my daughter to stand out like that. "Why does her mother have to be dressed like that? Why is she not like other mothers?" And then there was what happened in Algeria, the mass killings linked to Islam beliefs, and the very negative image… that veiled women sent all around… about themselves. So, with all these things, I saw my little daughter so sad and then, because of all these things, I said, 'well, if this is what's making our integration so difficult, I'm going to take it off and then we'll see.' After that, things changed enormously.*

For women coming from Africa, professional identity representations are strongly linked to themes of resistance to the sociocultural environment. Dealing with fear of foreigners (xenophobia) and regular discrimination, living with professional deskilling and stigmatized with an often devalued image of their being, they establish ways of being and of acting that allow them to move forward despite the obstacles they face. To face discrimination, competition and a different work pace, in a culture that does not acknowledge them, these women face each day with motivational strategies and resources that they possess (such as dignity and loyalty to their original ways of doing things). Refusing to be identified as victims, they resolutely display the accomplishments associated with their new experience, but they encounter resistance and discriminatory constraints from Quebec employers.

This is what a woman from Rwanda told us:

> I experienced obstacles at the selection level at various places where I applied for a job. When time came for [an interview], that's when I sensed what I consider to be discrimination on the basis of colour of skin. For example, they called me to tell me that I was to have an interview in two days. I had no time to prepare for it. I went to the interview and it went very well, but then I received a letter telling me that I didn't have enough experience. I think that since they had my resume, they would have known that I didn't have enough experience and they wouldn't have called me for an interview if that was the case. I thought that they were just looking for a way to exclude me. I concluded that you need more than qualifications; you need recommendations, someone who knows you and can say 'this person is worth hiring.' You have to know somebody from here because they have the trust of their co-workers, which we as foreigners don't have. You have to find some people who have learned to live with you, who know you and who can help you. You have to go to them.

When loss of motivation was encountered as an obstacle, we noticed various strategies that the women adopted, such as using formal and informal support networks to help with professional integration, returning to studies to further education, abandoning traditions (such as wearing a veil), and seeking support from networks within their community of origin, as well as overvaluing their original culture and their integrated roles, which often include educating the children, a role that most of the women can identify with.

Conclusion

In this review, we presented some studies about the professional deskilling of immigrant women in Quebec. Adversity in the life path of these highly qualified women through the mazes of integration reveal some common resilience strategies in the face of deskilling, with immigrant women often choosing to return for further training either immediately or after their husbands have received training. The immigrant husband and wife must often be able to deal with instability and poor working conditions as a couple, along with requirements for food to survive and obtaining Canadian professional work experience, which is often a prerequisite set by employers. The strategies immigrant women put into action will depend on their expectations of their integration project, the presence of friends or family as a support system, a previous encounter that has prepared them to live with insecurity (e.g. women coming from countries where wars have raged), and the presence of a potential network. We found that women coming from countries with similar organizational cultures, particularly women from Western Europe, were profoundly

deceived when facing deskilling because of their high expectations that they would face a similar environment while migrating. Beyond cultural differences marking privileged options to react to deskilling, it is facilitating conditions, associated with personal characteristics of strong will, determination and sociability, which permit differentiation from their professional path.

The themes related to identity reconstruction and which are at work among immigrant women who are in the process of being integrated into the workforce in the region of Quebec show important differences in their respective experiences and a clear difference in their perceptions of "we" (the women from their society of origin) and "they" (the women from the host society).

The refuge immigrant women find in their values from their country of origin and the lifestyle attached to them allow them to reduce the shock experienced during job integration, where accommodation strategies, which sometimes include conforming to the society of the majority, are required to lessen the mistrust produced by differences. The values of solidarity and strength are therefore required and women actively make use of numerous service organizations available to them in their area, which are generally referred to them by people who are immigrants themselves. However, they must contend with prejudices and a significant lack of human resources that would allow them to integrate more easily into the workforce through company networks. The family constitutes a refuge for these women, a refuge which can also turn out to be a trap because the family is often the cause of delayed integration into society (immigrant women learn the language of society at a slower rate if they remain in the family environment) and delayed integration into the workforce (immigrant women choose to look for work later and their career development is slower if they remain in the family environment, although this factor is not specific to immigration). Through school institutions and their children, these women's social integration is encouraged with the silent realization that implementing strategies to conform to the population of the host society is necessary to interact with the majority.

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CHAPTER
5

CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

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CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

Sylvia Lopez-Ekra

In recent decades, international migration theory and research have made great progress, moving from the near invisibility of women as migrants (Boyd and Grieco, 2003) to today's situation where increasing efforts are being made to better understand why and how women are on the move. Although the general tendency to automatically categorize women migrants as dependent family members is being increasingly challenged, it cannot however be said that gender considerations have permeated all areas of migration management and research.

This publication has modestly attempted to help remedy the situation by expanding the knowledge base in the area of migration and the transferability of skills and access to skilled labour markets in destination countries. In doing so, it has confirmed many previous findings on the global character and the ramifications of the phenomenon of underemployment and deskilling among skilled migrants. In addition, the publication tried to further explore the specific implications for women and the psychosocial impact on their lives – two dimensions often overlooked when discussing labour and migration challenges.

Deskilling is an issue of migration, gender, race and ethnicity

The case studies, in particular those in Canada and Switzerland, have underlined how migrant women fare worse than migrant men and native women in terms of unemployment and earnings. For the highly educated, the risk of lagging behind their native-born counterparts is even more pronounced (Rubin et al., 2008), with migrant women receiving a smaller "earnings premium" for formal education and work experience than native-born persons (Reitz, 2001). The same can be said regarding the risk of working in occupations for which they are overqualified.

This is a typical symptom of what has been referred to as migrant women's "double disadvantage" when it comes to integrating into the labour market. This concept has been explored by numerous studies which show that, for migrant women, finding employment means overcoming obstacles generally faced by the foreign-born population, while also surmounting the difficulties that women from the host society experience in social, political and economic spheres (Kats, 1982; Beach and Worswick, 1993; Boyd, 1984; Dumont and Isoppo, 2005; Rebhun, 2008; Rubin et al., 2008). Women from "visible minorities" face even more difficulties

and could be said to be "triply disadvantaged" since they also often face challenges related to ethnicity.

The publication also highlighted that underemployed women had feelings of hopelessness, powerlessness, confusion and paralysis, exhaustion, stress, anxiety, depression, unhappiness, tension, frustration, worry, isolation and a feeling of not belonging, and shame vis-à-vis their families and children (including those left behind) and the host environment. The intensity of these feelings seemed to be proportionally correlated to the women's level of underemployment and, interestingly, to their original expectations: women who expected difficulties and considered them as part of the normal process of adjustment were more resilient than women who thought that their investment in education would immediately pay off in their countries of relocation. This highlights the importance of having access to quality pre-migration information responding to the specific needs of skilled and highly skilled workers.

Root causes of deskilling and required responses

The different chapters of this publication have offered an extensive inventory of the many reasons for the underemployment and deskilling faced by skilled migrant women. The variety of these reasons shows the complexity of the issue at hand, while also demonstrating how imprudent it would be for policymakers and other stakeholders to believe that finding an appropriate job is something that depends solely on the women's willpower and desire to succeed.

One of the central factors of underemployment underlined in this publication is that of the recognition of foreign credentials and foreign education and experience. Indeed, and as acknowledged by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers in 2011,[1] many migrants' skills, competences and qualifications are still not properly validated or recognized. In many destination countries, processes are either not in place or are too weak to recognize qualifications acquired in foreign countries, especially in countries of the global South, with the nature and standards of curricula available in these countries often not known and being arbitrarily evaluated (Kelly, 2010).

Needless to say, the process can be extremely difficult (Collett, 2008) and in some cases constitutes a maze that is almost impossible for newly arrived migrants to navigate. For example, according to *Who Does What in Foreign Credential*

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1 Recommendation CM/Rec(2011)2 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on validating migrants' skills, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 19 January 2011 at the 1103rd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies. Available from https://wcd.coe.int/wcd/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1734833&Site=CM.

Recognition: An Overview of Credentialing Programs and Services in Canada,
13 jurisdictions, 55 ministries, 50 regulated occupations, 400 regulatory bodies, 5 assessment agencies and 240 post-secondary institutions were involved in foreign credential recognition in the country in 2008 (Fernandez, 2008). The shortcomings and complexity of the assessment or validation of skills systems can also have the detrimental effect of generating employer mistrust of foreign credentials and consequently feed their reluctance to hire foreign nationals (NIACE, 2010).

Streamlining the system would, however, prove to be a daunting task since a variety of different scenarios need to be managed, ranging from the recognition of foreign credentials in the context of licensed and non-licensed occupational fields, to the recognition of general foreign education and foreign experience (Reitz, 2001). Likewise, other factors such as gender also intersect with re-accreditation barriers. Indeed, re-accreditation has a very particular dimension for migrant women (Boyd and Kaida, 2009), who are often specialized in education, health-care and social sectors where occupations are frequently licensed and regulated by national professional bodies (Kofman and Raghuram, 2010). This may make pursuing further studies in the country of destination to obtain local educational credentials more pressing for women than for men (Creese, 2010).

In the case of the licensed sectors (e.g. health professionals, lawyers, accountants, engineers), Reitz (2001) notes that not only can underemployment occur when licences from the host country are denied, but also when they are granted but the migrant's background is still deemed not to be as good as that of native professionals. This raises the issue of the depreciation of migrants' educational and professional credentials and the role played by discrimination in migrant women's underemployment. As again highlighted by Reitz (2001), there appears to be a systematic devaluation of education obtained in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America, and this may be explained by Friedberg's (2000) analysis of the correlation between economic development at origin and devaluation of qualification at destination: "The more similar the origin and destination countries are in terms of their levels of economic development, industrial and occupational structures, institutional settings, and so forth, the more likely it is that education and work experience received in the origin country will be highly valued in the destination labor market." This is certainly a plausible explanation as to why those with at least some education in the host country seem to secure better labour market outcomes than those educated abroad (Wanner, 2001).

Focus should not only be placed on the normative and procedural aspects of recognition of credentials since hidden discriminative elements are also at play. In addition to discrimination based on the place of education, skilled migrants often have to face "linguicism", namely discrimination based on language or accent.

Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1995), who coined the term, rightly note that linguicism makes affected groups appear handicapped by turning their language skills into non-resources which cannot be converted into other resources or positions of structural power, in this case access to skilled employment. The case studies in London and Geneva both highlighted that language issues transcend the issue of migrants' command of the host country's idiom. Indeed, research has shown that women who share the same native language as their host society do not necessarily fare better than others who may be linguistically challenged (Kontos, 2009) as discriminatory practices may intervene to "erase" their language competency (Creese, 2010). Here, although language may be presented as the issue during recruitment, what is in reality being established is a power relation to the disadvantage of the migrant.

Linguicism is unfortunately a very subtle form of discrimination which limits migrants' access to certain jobs, even when their accent does not impair communication. This has negative impacts on the migrant's labour market integration, especially when language was not expected to be a problem. This also creates an additional source of frustration and resentment, in particular in humiliating situations, for example when a native English speaker is directed to English-as-a-second-language classes designed for those with little or no command of English (Creese, 2010). Again, efforts should be geared towards options that take into account previous educational and professional levels, skills sets, time availability and immediate gap-filling needs, especially when it is known that immigrants with strong language skills receive higher returns on their foreign-obtained human capital (Schalm and Guan, 2009).

Addressing the issue of language proficiency and its assessment should be seen as a matter of urgency since difficulties in mastering the host country language are strongly associated with unfavourable labour market outcomes. In this publication, the three case studies have all presented the issue of language as one of the major stumbling blocks faced by skilled migrant women.

Women may face particular additional challenges since they often engage in social-type jobs and seek employment in occupations that require communication with customers. For this reason, language deficiency may more frequently be an obstacle to their finding employment. Women may also have their language proficiency questioned more often, with migrant women being more likely than their male counterparts to be subject to demeaning attitudes towards their language skills, such as intrusive and infantilizing attempts to correct what appears to be proof of their foreignness (Creese, 2010). Gender inequalities are also observed in terms of family responsibilities and the negative impact they can have on capacity to access language training, with women being more affected than men (Chiswick and Miller, 2007).

In the area of family dynamics and how they influence access to skilled employment, the Swiss and Canadian case studies both highlighted the availability and affordability of childcare as one of the most significant institutional determinants of migrant women labour force participation, with foreign nationals being more likely than natives to cite family responsibilities as a reason for remaining outside the labour force (Heron, 2005). Although reconciling work and family responsibilities is an issue that most women in the destination countries also face, for migrant women living with children, especially young children (Marr and Millerd, 1988), a higher penalty is paid when it comes to entering the labour market (Reyneri and Fullin, 2011). The same applies for making up for the loss of social and cultural capital after migration, with family responsibilities coming in the way of migrant women's efforts to access and build new networks (Kofman and Raghuram, 2009).

For women from cultural backgrounds where the extended family plays an important role in offering child-raising support, the loss of the family network through migration will often be extremely disorienting, adding another layer of stress in already difficult times of transition. Studies have shown that the presence of adult relatives in migrant households has a positive impact on the labour force participation of migrant women with young children (Duleep and Sanders, 1993). For other women, obstacles come in the form of the exorbitant cost of childcare coupled with strained resources, the long waiting lists – which are often made longer by an increased or traditional disengagement of the State in providing public childcare services – and difficulties when navigating the system. In any case, failing to find new solutions to deal with changing or accrued childcare responsibilities means that these women have to make hard choices, often leading them to postpone technical or language training or job seeking with the known repercussions – especially considering the conclusions of some research about the significant benefits of early employment on long-term labour market integration (Heron, 2005). Some opt for the middle way of accepting often feminized jobs that do not fulfil their expectations, but fit in with their schedules (Purkayastha, 2002).

The same cases studies, especially the Canadian one, mentioned what has been referred to as the family investment strategy, wherein an intra-couple negotiation takes place to decide whose chosen career will be privileged (Green, 1997). According to Iredale (2005) (but also Duleep and Sanders, Baker and Benjamin and others as cited by Lee and Harrison (1999)), skilled migrant women are most frequently the ones to delay their careers in order to stay at home and care for the whole family, while their male partners look for jobs commensurate with their skills and education. Other studies have, however, argued against the family investment strategy theory (Basilio et al., 2007; Blau et al., 2003; Cohen-Goldner et al., 2009).

What are the challenges and how should stakeholders respond?

As mentioned earlier, in January 2011, the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers adopted a recommendation to encourage Member States to validate migrants' skills, clearly identifying the issue as one of integration. Owing to its significant implications for migration management, this problem should not be left to employment and professional bodies to address.

The case studies in the United Kingdom and Switzerland both highlighted how respondents resented their inability to use their acquired educational and professional skills and expertise and, for those engaged in menial jobs, what they considered "intellectual" skills in general. Whether we refer to this phenomenon as brain waste, skills waste or human capital waste, the consequences of deskilling commonly involve the wasting of the deskilled migrant woman's potential, with consequences for her and her family, her country and community of origin and her host society. Respondents in the United Kingdom and Switzerland raised concerns about their return prospects and chances of reintegrating in their professions if they returned home. After years of not working in their chosen fields, they will not only have lost their skills and the necessary social and professional networks, but will not be up to date on latest developments, which will not be the case for younger, more recently trained competitors.

Although this publication has mainly focused on the impact on migrants and contributed to broadening the knowledge base on the topic by providing new insight into the psychosocial impact of underemployment and deskilling on qualified migrant women, other studies have raised specific concerns about the impact of this phenomenon on sending and receiving nations. Batalova et al. (2008) discuss the worst-case scenario of brain waste coupled with brain drain. On the one hand, developed countries do not benefit from skilled migrants' potential contribution to their economies, a loss that Reitz (2001) has estimated at 2 billion Australian dollars annually; on the other hand, developing countries lose their skilled human resources without benefiting from financial and social remittances or knowledge circulation.

Interestingly, the recommendation by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers stresses that the costs related to validation or recognition procedures should not constitute obstacles for migrants. The recommendation does not, however, provide detailed information on how this is to be achieved. Resolving this issue would provide invaluable support to migrant women, for whom cost issues are often central in their search for satisfying employment. Indeed, previous research has shown that only those with sufficient financial resources can afford the "domestication" of their experience (Guo and Andersson, 2005). For migrant

women, the early years after migration – corresponding to the years where they are more likely to engage in a process of accreditation or validation of their skills – are when they are still paying (Kelly, 2010) or feeling the impact of the costs associated with their migration (Raghuram, 2006). Many migrant women cannot bear these costs, especially when they were not expected when the decision was made to migrate. This pushes many of them to accept "survival jobs" that cannot even cover this domestication type of expenditure, thus creating a vicious circle (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson, 1995) whereby they may become trapped in the secondary labour market (Reyneri and Fullin, 2011).

In the context of shrinking welfare states, it is increasingly difficult to obtain support from public authorities. The research in this publication confirms the worrying trend that public agencies lack the capacity to properly address the issue of deskilling. Skilled migrant women are too easily pushed into low-skilled and low-wage survival jobs. This deficiency in public employment integration programmes can be explained by many reasons, including lack of commitment and resources (Creese and Wiebe, 2009). In addition, despite host countries' growing interest in skilled migration and the establishment of specific programmes to attract skilled migrants, coordinated strategies to efficiently use the skills of migrants already settled and/or those who entered through means other than skilled migration programmes – where many women can be found – still seem to be lacking (Dumont and Monso, 2007).

There is an urgent need for governments in destination countries to invest in innovative, flexible and responsive programmes that respond to the challenges identified in this publication in order to support skilled migrant women in fulfilling their professional aspirations. Considering what is at stake, for migrants and their families – and also for sending and receiving countries – the tendency to let non-governmental and civil society organizations fill the void through helpful, but often limited and poorly resourced projects, is not viable.

This requires all actors to cooperate with each other, which is not always what occurs in practice. Indeed, the interests and priorities of governments do not necessarily match those of regulatory professional bodies (Raghuram, 2009). The same applies to private employers, which means that a satisfying response to the issues raised by the underutilization of migrant skills cannot be left to regulation by the market forces (Reitz, 2005). Considering the diversity of the actors involved – various government agencies with overlapping mandates and no clear leadership when it comes to skilled migrant underemployment (Reitz, 2005), educational institutions and academic credential assessment services, employers, unions, professional regulatory and licensing bodies, non-governmental organizations and skilled migrants and their associations – the State emerges as the only entity able to

coordinate accordingly, transcend corporatist interests and prioritize broader socio-economic interests (Alboim et al., 2005).

Future research agenda

The findings in this publication clearly demonstrate that the consequences of the deskilling and underemployment of skilled migrant women have far-reaching implications and call for multi-pronged innovative approaches.

However, considering the still somewhat limited empirical and theoretical knowledge on this subject, especially in terms of the specific outcomes for and impact on women, it should be seen as a first step towards gaining a better understanding of this complex issue.

It is hoped that this publication will serve as a catalyst to generate further research, not only into the underutilization of migrant women's skills, but also on the impact this has on them, their families, their host societies and the countries they have left behind.

Future research could endeavour to shed light on very interesting points that the authors only broached in their respective studies:

- **The intersections between the global care economy and the phenomenon of deskilling of migrant women** (see Chapter 2): How is the unmet demand for care observed in most developed countries today? Is the recruitment of migrant women workers creating niches where women migrants are segregated regardless of their educational and professional profiles?

- **The impact of different entry channels and migration and marital status on the severity of migrant women's deskilling** (see Chapter 3): How are migration regimes and labour migration policies ignoring or integrating skilled migrants' wives into their strategies? Are married women who enter as their husband's dependant better off than those who migrated independently in search of professional opportunities?

- **The psychosocial effects of deskilling on intra-family relations** (see Chapter 3): What is the impact of the negative psychosocial effects described in this publication on the affected migrant women's marital relationships? To what extent can it lead to intimate partner and domestic violence? How is this affecting deskilled migrant women's motherhood?

- **Resilience strategies or how to better mitigate the psychosocial side effects of deskilling** (see Chapter 4): What makes some migrant women more resilient than others to the negative impact of being trapped in low-skilled and low-wage jobs? What kind of supportive factors can better alleviate deskilled migrant women's plight? Are they informal or formal? Endogenous or exogenous? How can States support them?

- **Assessing the options** (see Chapter 3): What are the most efficient strategies for migrant women to mitigate the effects of deskilling, reduce job-hunting difficulties and decrease the severity of their underemployment? Are reconversion, retraining and the use of paraprofessional avenues such as volunteering efficient?

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