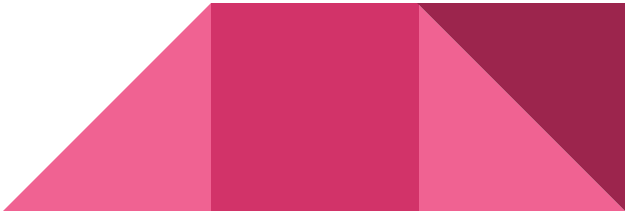


International Student Partners and Re-negotiation of Gender Relations

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Spouse/partner work permit policy context

- Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations: IRPR205(c)(ii) - Labour Market Exemption Code C42
 - Part of “Canadian interest” LMIA exemption – International Mobility Program (IMP) (created in 2014)
 - “The reasons for allowing spouses to enter Canada and work is to **increase the competitiveness of Canada’s academic institutions or economy** in post graduation work permit-eligible study programs and institutions” (IRCC, 2024)
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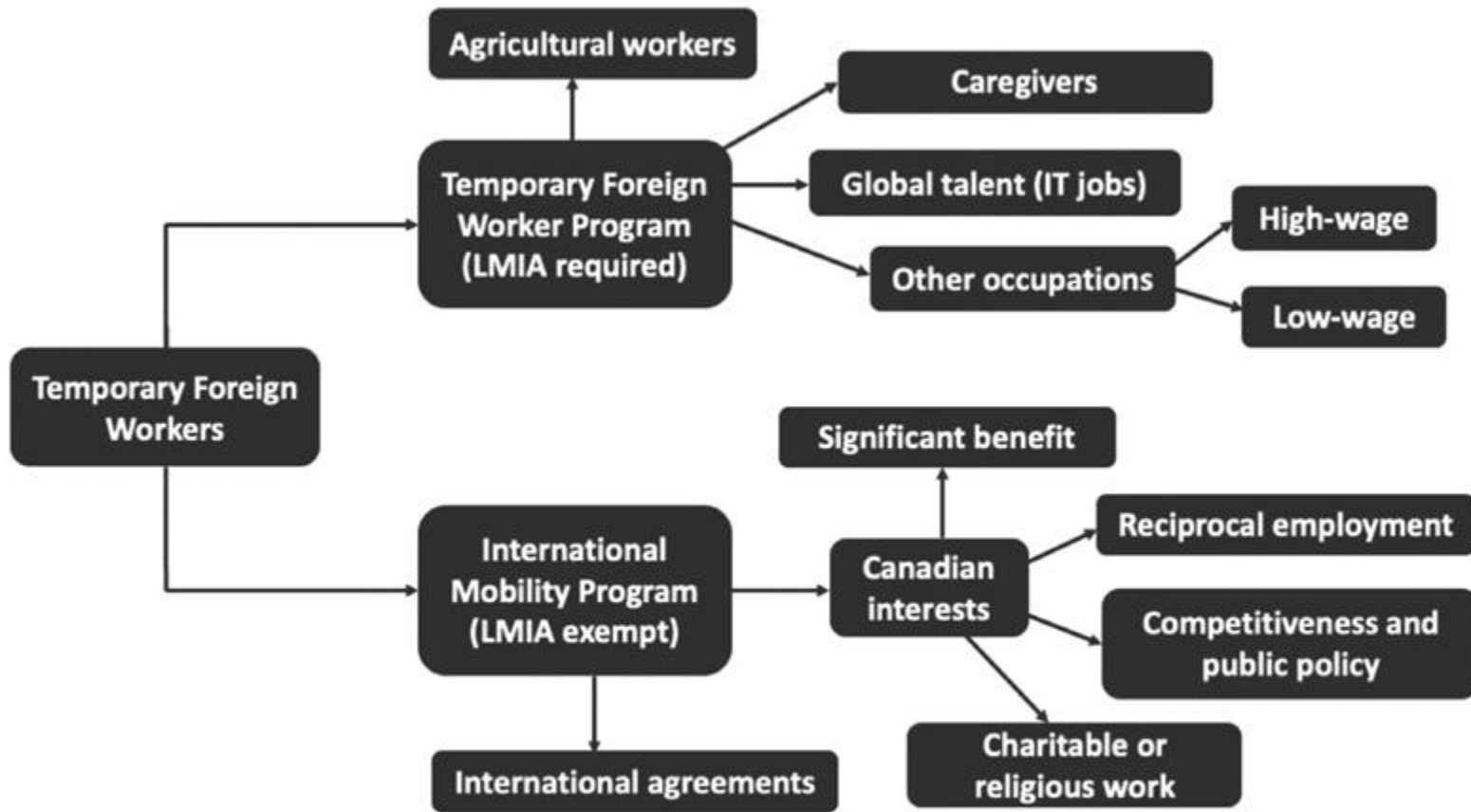


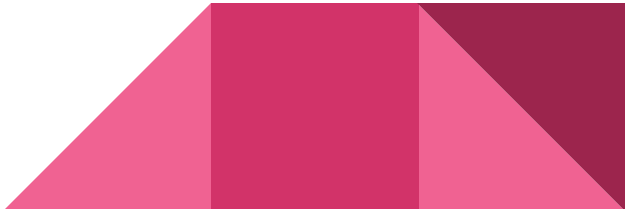
Fig. 3. Work permit categories under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and the International Mobility Program.

Source:
Haan & Li
(2023)

Canada's temporary resident population (6.2% of total population, end of 2023)

Temporary resident category	Proportion of temporary residents in Canada, 2023	
Workers (International Mobility Program)	44%	
<i>Post-graduation work permit</i>		26%
<i>Humanitarian (e.g., CUAET)</i>		26%
<i>Intercompany transfers, trade agreements, etc.</i>		17%
<i>Spouses of skilled workers</i>		12%
<i>Youth exchange programs</i>		10%
<i>Spouses of students</i>		9%
International students	42%	
Workers (Temporary Foreign Worker Program)	9%	
Asylum seekers	5%	

Recent spouse/partner work permit policy changes

- January 2024:
 - **SPOUSES OF STUDENTS:** Restricted to master's and doctoral programs
 - September 2024:
 - **SPOUSES OF STUDENTS:** For master's degree students, further restricted to programs at least 16 months
 - **SPOUSES OF POST-GRADUATION WORK PERMIT HOLDERS:** Restricted to:
 - management or professional occupations, or
 - sectors with labour shortages
- 

Focus on **post-arrival**, specifically **gender**

- Insistence on humanizing experiences
- Intentional refusal of econometric approach to immigration policy-making
- Post-arrival
 - What happens after pre-arrival decision making?
- Gender
 - Re-negotiations of roles and relations



Theme 1: Partner's sacrifices

- 1.1. Professional sacrifices for their partner*
- 1.2. Personal sacrifices for their partner*
- 1.3. Sacrifices for their children's future*

Theme 2: Re-negotiating the relationships

- 2.1. Relationships with parents*
 - 2.2. Relationships with partners*
- 

Theme 1: Partner's sacrifices

1.1. Professional Sacrifices for their partner

- *Prioritizing their partner's academic and career goals over their own.*
- *Experiences of underemployment or unemployment*

"... it's like, you know, he's studying. So you know that you need to prioritize him, like him studying and him like having all his necessities covered as needed, because we are here for, because of him. So yes, like, probably I take it like, instead of pursuing, for example, a career in like, continue studying, I decide to work, because it's not, it's really complicated to have a kid, plus two students. So I was like, Oh, okay, no, like, it's very if I get a job, and then we will see. And, and probably in the same way, probably he decides to move to continue in academia to somewhere else, I will move with him. Because I think he has like better like job opportunities than me." (Female participant 1 from Brazil)

"I never... I have never stayed at home for a long time like that because I used to be very busy in my country". (Participant 9, Female, 38 years, from Vietnam)

Theme 1: Partner's sacrifices

1.2. Personal Sacrifices for their partner

- ***Personal Sacrifices in Support of a Partner's Academic and Career Aspirations***

“... after his master’s degree, after two years, I wanted to return to Chile. But ... we returned for a couple months and then he won another scholarship to study doctoral, in university. And ... he talked to me and tried to convince me, and my first day I said “no”, I don’t want to go back. Because for you it’s fine, it’s okay, but for me ... it’s the worst.” Because I’m working in the house, or doing ... low paid jobs or whatever, and I don’t feel comfortable with that. But..... after a couple days, I changed my mind and say “okay, I’m with you, I’ll stay in Canada for another four years”. ” (Participant 12, Female, 40 years, from Chile)

Theme 1: Partner's sacrifices

1.3. Sacrifices for their children's future

- Participants were not able to find the same professional jobs in Canada, but were optimistic about their children future in Canada. They also talked about the lack of security in their country of origin.

.... They [children] always excited with school, and with new friends..... and for me, that's enough ... I know I have to get something, and, uh... give away something." (Participant 9, Female , 38 years, from Vietnam)

"...as long as we could settle down in Canada, and we could do our job. If you could give good education, provides a good future for our kids. That's the only hope...that's what we expect." (Participant 8, Male, 37 years, from Sri Lanka)

My mom would say, Yeah. But look at the other kids here... And I would respond, Mom, this, this, those are the other kids, not my kids. I, I want that they learn languages. Then they open their eyes to the world. They know another culture.... (Participant 2, Female, 44 years, from Colombia).

Theme 2

Theme 2: Re-negotiating the relationships

2.1. Relationships with parents

- **Parents not always supported the decision to come to Canada.**
- **The IS partners had good jobs and incomes before arrival in Canada. Had strong bonds with grandchildren.**

“... It was easier to travel the first time to Canada, but harder later on. ... Because my mother told me, yeah, you, you find a job here. You're a professional. You have everything here. I can take care of the kids. No problem. Um, but... .” (Participant 2, woman, 44 years, from Columbia).

“Yeah, I would say that for them [parents] it's more difficult than for us. Because like, Karin is the only granddaughter. So they miss her too much. And they are feeling they are missing like a lot of her life. And they are really worried of not being part of their lives.” (Participant 1, woman, 29 years, from Chile)



Theme 2: Re-negotiating the relationships

2.1. Relationships with parents

- ***Participants relied on grandparents to care for children (during visits). With this help, they could work***

"So, I started.... I went back to work when my daughter was several months. And I thought it was an opportunity which I've been looking for so long. So, with this opportunity, I wouldn't want to let it go. And then to that... fortunately, my mom was around, and we had been able to wait for her to get a visa, so as soon as I had my daughter she was around to help. So, she was the one helping care of my daughter, once I was away at work. And then, yeah, I worked with my company for a year, and then had my third child.." (Participant 10, woman, 36 years, from Ghana)

"It was very helpful when parents came to visit, and helped with the new baby". (Participant 11. Woman, 32 years, from Nepal)

- Grandparents helped financially, especially in the beginning (e.g., paid childcare fees, contributed to mortgage).

Theme 2: Re-negotiating the relationships

2.1. Relationships with parents

- **Care responsibilities for the older parents**

“The main worry for me is my parents, they're in Sri Lanka, and I'm having a long distance relationship with them. That's my main worry..... Yeah, it's emotional. And my mother and father, they are a little bit old people, like they're 60s. So, sometimes they got sick and I'm very upset about that situation. And I can't even visit them in a short time. That's my main drawback. Like, I'm so upset about that. (Participant 4, woman, 27 years, Sri Lanka)

“: Uh ... I would like to stay here for three years more. But the thing is, for me it's, I have my parents in Chile, and they are old now. So ... I need to take care of them. This is why I'm not completely sure about to stay here. I mean it's important for me to stay with them, so ... to spend time with them. Uh, this is why I'm not sure about to stay here or not, depends, for example my father, last month he had a ... paralysis, facial paralysis, and it was so bad for me, I feel like, what can I do from here? So, I'm not sure.”
(Participant 12, woman, 40 years, from Chile)

Theme 2: Re-negotiating the relationships

2.2. Relationships with partners

- ***Navigating relationships while being alone in the country, with no presence of extended family.***
- ***Parenting as teamwork. Challenges with childcare. “Only us” narrative.***

“But I think that at the same time, that this situation have forced us to be very present in her life [daughter’s life]. And like to fix our differences in order to like make things work. Because sometimes when you have like a lot of extended family around, it’s like, okay, like you let them play some solve problems for yourself. You avoid the situation. But in this case, we are like forced to say we only have like us.” (Participant 1, woman, 29 years, Chile)

“Well, we’ve become much more mature, and we know each other much better. In the dating phase, everything is beautiful. There are always different views and perspectives that we compromise, even when we are dating. But things changed after the dating phase and with marriage; it’s just the two of us after moving to Canada. We became more mature. But there were still disagreements. We know and understand each other much better, and I can say that our relationship has been progressive (Participant 16, woman, 35 years from Iran)

Theme 2: Re-negotiating the relationships

2.2. Relationships with partners

- **Dependency on partner.**

“I had to stay home... Yeah, yeah. Hard process because ... we came to Canada alone without family, without friends, and for example, the first time I came here, my husband was studying and I was all the time in the house, because we lived just with the scholarship, and this is why I decide to study for myself, English, and I think it was a mistake, to stay in the home all day. And in the ... yeah?” (Participant 12, W, 40 y, from Chile)

Interpreted by translator: *“As a second obstacle, what was very difficult for her, at first she was not understanding what was being said to her, and then not being able to express herself. And above all, the fact of depending on someone, because in Colombia, she did everything on her own. She didn't need her husband to be with her all the time. She just had him when she needed him. Here, what was very difficult for her was to need him [partner], to depend completely on someone, just to ask for a coffee, to buy something at the convenience store. That shock was very difficult.” (Participant 17, Woman , 41 years, from Columbia)*

- Constantly navigating uncertainties



Moving forward...

Moving Forward...

- Partners of IS are active agents (pre-migration and stay), however, they face numerous complexities
- In Theme 1 they take sacrifices: personal, professional
 - many do it for the betterment/future of children
- In Theme 2, we identified the complexities, how partners renegotiate their relationships with parents, and partners
 - Increased dependency, especially after arrival
 - Absence of extended families requires the partners to rely on each other more



THANK YOU!

