REDEFINING “ENTERPRISING SELVES”:
EXPLORING THE “NEGOTIATION” OF SOUTH ASIAN IMMIGRANT WOMEN
WORKING AS HOME-BASED ENCLAVE ENTREPRENEURS

by

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Abstract

This study examines the experiences of highly educated South Asian immigrant women working as home-based entrepreneurs within ethnic enclaves in Toronto, Canada. The importance of their work and experiences need to be understood in the context of two processes. On the one hand, there is the neoliberal hegemonic discourse of “enterprising self” that encourages individuals to become “productive”, self-responsible, citizen-subjects, without depending on state help or welfare to succeed in the labour market. On the other hand, there is the racialized and gendered labour market that systematically devalues the previous education and skills of non-white immigrants and pushes them towards jobs that are low-paid, temporary and precarious in nature.

In the light of the above situations, I argue that in the process of setting up their home-based businesses, South Asian immigrant women in my study negotiate the barriers they experience in two ways. First, despite being inducted into different (re)training and (re)learning that aim to improve their deficiencies, they continue to believe in their abilities and resourcefulness, thereby challenging the “remedial” processes that try to locate lack in their abilities. Second, by negotiating gender ideologies within their families and drawing on community ties within enclaves they keep at check the individuating and achievement oriented ideology of neoliberalism. They, therefore, demonstrate how the values of an “enterprising self” can be based on collaboration and relationship rather than competition, profit or material success.
The concept of “negotiation”, as employed in this thesis, denotes a form of agency different from the commonly perceived notions of agency as formal, large-scale, macro organization or resistance. Rather, the concept is based on how women resort to multiple, various and situational practices of conformity and contestation that often can blend into each other.
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Dedication

Dedicated to my parents without whose love, aspirations and many sacrifices I would have never been able to pursue higher education.

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Chapter One:  
Introduction

On a warm Sunday afternoon, I walk towards a buzzing neighborhood in Toronto to meet Rehana, one of my research participants from South Asia, who runs a small, informal sewing business from home within her own ethnic community. An ex-school teacher who immigrated to Canada with her husband from Pakistan in 2005, Rehana and her husband now live in Toronto with their two sons. They live in a predominantly Pakistani neighborhood, in the Thorncliff area of Toronto. Her husband Hamid is a former bank officer who now works full-time in a drug store as an assistant manager. He earns a little more than the minimum pay on an hourly basis. While trying to locate Rehana’s apartment, I linger for a moment in front of the long line of South Asian ‘ethnic’ stores, groceries and restaurants stretching along both sides of the street for a few blocks. As I enter her building and walk towards the elevator, a typed red flyer on the notice board catches my attention: ‘ Newly arrived salwar kameez¹ and dress materials from Pakistan at an affordable price. Stitching and fitting also done. Contact Rehana at ... ’ Rehana, along with the twenty-four other women whom I interviewed at various periods during my fieldwork, run small businesses like that of sewing, catering or babysitting from home, almost always living in those areas of Toronto with a high concentration of South Asians. Their businesses are specifically geared to function within their own communities. For example, women running garment businesses mainly sell salwar kameez, sari² and other dress materials either stitched by them in Canada or brought over from their home countries. Many of them also do sewing, embroidery, crochet work, or stitch baby clothes, trousers, skirts, dresses and household items like curtains, pillow covers and cushion covers. For those involved in catering, most of the food

¹ Dress commonly worn by South Asian women.
² Traditional dress in India, Bangladesh, and also worn by women in Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
items exclusively relate to South Asian cuisines, although a number of women also advertise their skills in preparing “western” dishes like various kinds of sandwiches, pies, pastries etc. They usually cater for small functions and family events within their own communities.

It is these South Asian women, mostly unrecognized and unknown (technically defined as own-account, self-employed), and their necessity to create a niche for themselves, however small and informal, within their own community as well as in the larger mainstream society, that has propelled me to write this dissertation. It is necessary to clarify here that the appellation South Asian does not constitute a homogeneous group but differs in terms of religion, language, diet, cultural habits, caste or class status as well as national identities. In North America, the diversity of people collectively described as South Asian includes those coming from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan. Although there is no inherent commonality among this group, scholars argue, the term South Asian is generally accepted by the community to denote a collective, tied together by their history of immigration, experience and treatment in North America (Jamal, 1998; Mohanty, 2003a). In this thesis, while remaining aware of the diversity, I use the term “South Asian” to refer to my research participants, who come primarily from Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan and differ widely in terms of their ethno-cultural and religious backgrounds.

Highly educated with university degrees and professional experiences, these women immigrants, whom I had a chance to interact with, came to Canada along with their spouses in expectation of an improved quality of life and socio-economic opportunities. However, given the gendered and racialized nature of the labour market that exists in Canada (Reitz, 2004), none of the women could get into a job that was commensurate with their previous educational or professional backgrounds. Home-based entrepreneurship was often a last resort to economically
survive in Canada after multiple failures to enter into the mainstream labour market. In the light of the exclusion and marginalization that they have experienced in the post-immigration period, this thesis highlights a) their struggles vis-à-vis the gender-race and class-based barriers the women immigrants encounter in the Canadian labour market, and b) the strategies they deploy in contesting these barriers in their everyday lives as racialized immigrant women living in Toronto.

**Setting the Background:**

*Exploring the Discourse of Neoliberal “Enterprising” Worker in Relation to Race, Class and Gender Relations*

The importance of the work lives of my research participants running small-scale businesses from home has to be situated in terms of two important factors structuring the Canadian labour market. First, in the current post-Fordist neoliberal Canadian labour market, the concept of the “enterprising self” has become important for defining workers’ subjectivity and ability to succeed in the increasingly fluid and precarious labour market (Aguiar, 2006). Under this new framework of the enterprising self, individual responsibility, competitiveness, and self-sufficiency have become the hegemonic discourses, encouraging citizens and workers to take charge of their own lives and become more “active”, rather than seeking any state or other forms of social securities (Belkhodja, 2008). This new citizen or worker-subject is constituted in the image of the active entrepreneur-- a subject who is autonomous, self-reliant and not dependent on state welfare.

A number of scholars have tried to map the processes that actually go into the making of the enterprising worker-subject (e.g., Fenwick, 2001; Garrick & Usher, 2000; Ong, 1996, 2003; Pun, 2005; Rose, 1992). These scholars have drawn attention to how in the neoliberal era,
training allied with the labour market crucially regulate and discipline individual citizens while instilling in them the values oriented towards a market-centric “enterprising agent”. Deploying Michel Foucault’s notion of “governmentality,” they argue that these regulatory procedures and strategies meted out by “experts of subjectivity” or professionals are seemingly geared towards managing and improving the “quality of life” (Rose, 1992, p. 146). Furthermore, through these strategies newly arrived immigrants and/or refugees are refashioned to conform to the hegemonic Eurocentric codes underlying normative citizenship (Ong, 1996). This practice is particularly pronounced in the case of non-white immigrants who, being identified as “lacking” and “deficient” as compared to white normative ideals of education, culture and deportment, are increasingly being pushed towards a process of ‘whitening’, apparently to ease their integration into the host country, its society and labour market. Underlying these whitening processes are the inherent assumptions that with Canadian training and learning of Canadian values, immigrants of colour will be prepared to overcome any perceived “lack” that might deter their labour market integration.

Second, scholars (Galabuzi, 2001; Jackson, 2002; Kunz, Milan, & Schetagne, 2000; Ornstein, 2000) who have studied the links between immigration status, unemployment, poverty and racial origin in Canada, have demonstrated the existence of a racialized and gendered labour market where people of colour, particularly women, are over-represented in low-paid occupations in various precarious sectors. One of the reasons behind this over-representation of non-white women in such sectors can be explained by the several labour market barriers created by both the state as well as non-state professional organizations (Bambrah & Fernandez, 2004; Jackson, 2002; Tastsoglou & Miedema, 2000) that restrict women’s entry into the mainstream labour market, forcing them to take up precarious jobs for survival. These barriers include lack
of Canadian experience or education (Chakkalakal & Harvey, 2001), devaluation of foreign credentials (Tatsoglou & Miedena, 2000), lack of proficiency in English (Council of Agencies Serving South Asians [CASSA], 2000), inconsistent evaluation processes for new immigrants (Basran & Li, 1998), and employer’s negative attitude (Sadiq, 2005) that consistently depreciate the foreign qualifications and skills of the immigrants of colour. The situation is even more difficult for immigrant women of colour, whose rates of entering the labour market are significantly lower in comparison to Canadians of both sexes and for immigrant men (Alboim & Maytree, 2009; Bauder, 2003; Gilmore & Petit, 2008; Iredale, 2001; Slade, 2008a). Exploring the reasons behind such under-estimation and under-utilization of women’s qualifications, Mojab (1999) points out that racism and ethnicism affect immigrants from different countries in different ways. For example, women from developed countries like USA or Britain get a different treatment from those who belong to “third world” countries. These findings have been corroborated by several other scholars who conclusively show that compared to European born immigrant women, those from Asia and Africa experience further devaluation of their qualifications, and increased barriers to high-income occupations (Guo & Andersson, 2005-2006; Picot, 2004). They also receive significantly less employment income compared to other immigrant women or immigrant men of colour (Das Gupta, 1994; Hou & Balakrishnan, 1996; Lo & Wang, 2003). This discounting of the work experience and credentials, therefore, particularly affect non-white immigrant women, who consequently face precariousness, downward mobility and in many cases spiraling poverty. In order to survive, they take up part-time, non-permanent, low-paid, and flexible kind of work as sewers, cashiers or domestic helpers (Man, 2004; Ng, 1993; Salaff & Greve, 2004a).
The starkness of these women’s segmentation into this kind of precarious labour market is further complicated by the processes of economic restructuring and trade liberalization (Creese, Dyck, & McLaren, 2008) that has led to severe job losses and the rise of a very “contingent” labour market in Canada. Under these labour market conditions, most of the jobs have become impermanent, low-leveled, with hardly any social security or prospects for career development (Vosko, Zukewich, & Cranford, 2003). The creation of this unstable labour market has disproportionately affected women, mainly non-white immigrant women (Vosko, 2006), so that according to Sassen (2000), one can see today a growing presence of women from “developing economies” (p. 505) in the so-called shadow economy of contemporary developed nations. Households and communities are becoming increasingly dependent on these women for their survival even as their role as a stable force in such an economy is sought to be negated, minimized and rendered invisible. While these jobs reveal the exploitative face of post-Fordist capitalism, scholars contend that they also arise out of worker’s own demand for flexibility—“demands that in many ways [in fact] precipitate capital’s own accession to interminable restructuring and rescaling, and in so doing condition capital’s own techniques and regimes of control” (Neilson & Rossiter, 2005, para. 2).

In foregrounding the experiences of South Asian home-based women workers, my dissertation explores the crucial interstices, elisions and conjunctions between neo-liberal ideals of becoming “entrepreneurial selves” and a restrictive labour market vastly devaluing immigrant women of colour’s previous educational qualifications and entry into the upper echelons of the labour market through certain racial and gender barriers. In particular to the above objective, I examine how from the moment the respondents started to look for jobs, they were thrust into various training, workshops and other “tutelary” (Cruikshank, 1999, p. 234) programs by many
of the community centers and training organizations. Apparently, these workshops and training programs were to assist these immigrants overcome any lack that might hinder their entry to the Canadian labour market and optimize their possibilities of becoming productive and self-reliant members of Canadian society. The women respondents were thus encouraged to invest in their education and training and to adopt Canadian norms and values to be able to successfully contribute to the economy as soon as possible.

Concurrently, I also highlight the associated process of “whitening” that incorporates learning Canadian values, norms and ways of doing things. Women respondents mentioned going from one workshop to the other, learning how to write a résumé, how to present oneself in front of the employer, what to say in an interview, as well as norms of greetings, presenting, talking, dressing-all to increase their prospects for getting hired and to facilitate their seamless integration into the Canadian labour market. Assumed to be in need of “training” and correction (Goldberg, 2007), the existing knowledge and education of these South Asian immigrant women were hardly recognized and ranked inferior when compared to the hegemonic white Canadian system. Thus the overall goal of many of these training programs and workshops was to impose on the immigrants the obligation to become not only “enterprising selves” but white selves.

What is most puzzling is that despite undergoing several months or weeks of training, sitting in workshops, to learn about how to “correct” their deficiencies, none of the South Asian women interviewed could get into jobs that related to their own area of expertise. A few women could avail such positions as part-time cashiers or call centre workers, jobs that were way beneath their qualifications and abilities. Similar findings have been reported by other scholars (Mirchandani et al., 2008; Ng, 2005) studying immigrant women of colour and their labour market experiences in Canada. Caught up between these processes that, on the one hand,
encourage them to become active producers, and on the other hand, restrict their entry to the labour market, how do South Asian immigrant women respond to their predicament?

**Negotiating the Barriers:**

**Redefining the Enterprising Self**

Following from the above, my aim in this research is to examine how, while subjected to neoliberal discourses of the enterprising self and simultaneous exclusion from the mainstream labour market, South Asian women also end up contesting those very discourses—contestations that emanate from their own racial, gendered, and class positions. I argue that in the process of setting up their home-based businesses, the South Asian immigrant women in my study negotiate their barriers in two ways. First, despite being inducted into (re)training and (re)learning that was meant to correct their “deficient” selves and to make them at par with white ideals, South Asian women actively thwarted such processes of whitening. Their agency was evident in the way they demonstrated a confidence and belief in their capabilities that contradicted any correctional process that tried to locate lack in their abilities. By remaining critical of such processes of whitening and related processes of racialization, my respondents thus posited what Leela Fernandes describes as “ideological resistance” (1997, p. 156) that arises at moments where it might be difficult for women to take any collective action or embark on an open confrontation. Ideological resistance makes sense in light of the many constraints, competitions and dependency on employment for survival that women experience in the neoliberal market economy (Fernandes, 1997). In the face of immense odds, struggle for survival and structural constraints in their everyday life world and work lives, the women participants felt compelled to “adopt a pragmatic view of their everyday lives” (Fernandes, 1997, p. 156) and their negotiation strategies surfaced from this pragmatism and understanding of the constraints.
Second, while being engaged in home-based enclave entrepreneurship, South Asian women negotiated gender ideologies within their families and evoked community ties within enclaves that kept at check the individuating and achievement-oriented ideology of neoliberalism. None of the women had planned to work from home before migration. But when they did take it up, they valued and loved their work. By valuing their home-based businesses, women posed a direct challenge to the neoliberal market economy that tends to highlight paid work outside the home as the only form of productivity. Their belief in their own competencies and capacities to create opportunities for themselves also challenged those assumptions within the literature on enclave economy that often devalues women’s casual work within enclaves as too small and informal to be recognized. While there is no denying the fact that the particular form of home-based work that they had adopted should be considered as precarious or non-standard, I contend that in light of the simultaneous operation of race, gender, class and migrant status, it is through this form of work, however small and informal, that they charted a new sense of “enterprising self” not dependent on the neoliberal ideals of an individuated, highly competitive, and market oriented worker-subject. By deploying community ties and friendship network within ethnic enclaves, valuing their roles within families, and reinvigorating the cultural codes of community formation, they could successfully re-define the very notion of an “enterprising” worker-subject.

The concept of “negotiation”, as employed in this thesis, denotes a form of agency different from the commonly perceived notions of agency as formal, large-scale, macro organization or resistance. This particular form of agency as negotiation, constitutive of the simultaneous processes of conformity and contestations, is guided by Ong’s concept of “subjectification” that involves the dual process of “self-making and being made by power relations”
These dual processes of subjectification stem from the fact that the individual and the structural manifestation of power relations always work simultaneously and in conjunction with each other so that there is always a loop connecting one to the other; where “[t]he individual is never totally objectified or rationalized by state agencies and civic associations, nor can the individual totally escape the power effects of their regulatory schemes” (Ong, 2003, p. 17).

In highlighting the negotiation of South Asian immigrant women working as home-based entrepreneurs, my research makes an important contribution to the field of studies that examine the labour market experiences of highly educated immigrant women of colour in Canada (Iredale, 2001; Man, 1995, 1997, 2002; Mirchandani et al., 2010; Mojab, 1999; Preston and Man, 1999; Salaff and Greve, 2003, 2004b, 2006). Amongst these, a few studies document how immigrant women of colour transition into precarious work in the absence of any other economic opportunities (Man, 2004; Mirchandani et al., 2010), while others focus on how immigrants of colour learn to refashion themselves to find a bearing in the host society (Maitra & Shan, 2007; Maitra, 2009; Ng, Man, Shan & Liu, 2006; Shan, 2009). My study adds to both areas of existent literature by focusing on how, in the absence of labour market opportunities, many educated and professional immigrant women of colour are increasingly becoming home-based entrepreneurs. It further documents how South Asian immigrant women, who are forced to adopt a relatively precarious form of work, actively negotiate their exclusion and marginalization by challenging the ideological discourse of “deficiency” or “lack” that remains associated with immigrant women’s past training and learning. They also actively refashion the gender ideologies within families, as well as the larger community ties to redefine the notion of what constitutes an “enterprising self”. Far from being the “self-absorbed” neoliberal “enterprising agents”, these
women thus portray new forms of a worker-subject who can actively negotiate various exploitative ideologies and barriers to sustain and survive in Canada.

Furthermore, my study also adds to the literature on enclave entrepreneurship. Within this literature, there is a lack of focus on immigrant women of colour working as entrepreneurs within enclaves. Except for a few (Bhachu, 1988, Dallalfar, 1989; Dallalfar, 1994; Westwood & Bhachu, 1988), most focus on either women’s paid employment in enclave enterprises or their unpaid work for family-owned businesses (Boyd, 1989; Fernández-Kelly & García, 1990; Zhou, 1992). My study, therefore, contributes to the understanding of the nature of the enterprises often undertaken by women within enclaves. It highlights how women build their own gendered and ethnic resources, kin network and keen analysis of racial and gender domination while trying to establish themselves as entrepreneurs. My focus on women’s resourcefulness, as well as their abilities to create a productive employment niche for themselves, challenges those assumptions that look at women within enclaves as mere victims of gender and racialization.

**Thesis Overview**

Chapter 2 begins with an exploration of the neoliberal ideology and techniques behind the making of an “enterprising self”. In this chapter I discuss two theoretical perspectives. First, I employ Michel Foucault’s notion of governmentality to demonstrate the regulatory processes involved in the making of an “enterprising self” in the neoliberal present. Next, I argue that inherent within this enterprising subject-making is a process of “whitening,” imposed upon immigrants, especially immigrants of colour residing in Western countries based on their assumed “difference” from the normative white “ideal” citizen-subject. In relation to the above processes, I also demonstrate how, despite going through such whitening processes, women
experience several gendered and racialized barriers existing in the Canadian labour market. These barriers prevent their entry to the mainstream, white collar jobs, relegating them to informal and contingent work. I conclude the chapter by arguing that South Asian women are not mere victims of such processes but actively negotiate such barriers. However, this negotiation is not based on any macro resistance or political organization but on a dual process of conformity and contestation, a simultaneous process- a continuous give-and-take.

Chapter 3 is a description of the methodology I employ to understand the negotiating processes undertaken by South Asian immigrant women. I use the framework of “feminist interpretive inquiry” to develop a critical inquiry of how South Asian immigrant women’s lives are mediated by such factors as race, gender, class or their immigration status. Feminist interpretive inquiry is best suited for this research, as it not only recognizes the lived experiences and interpretations of the individual, but situates at its centre the gendered dimensions of those lived experiences (Jansen & Davis, 1998). Along with gender, the emphasis is also on race, class, nationality and the interaction or interplay of these social forces on the lives of women. Thus, in this research feminist interpretive inquiry exemplifies that to understand the diverse and lived experiences of women, such categories as gender, race, or class need to be at the centre of the inquiry.

I present my data in Chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 traces the process of the women’s migration into Canada, their attempt to enter its labour market and their induction into various training processes, offered by the state and non-state agencies to facilitate their integration into the Canadian society. By examining how women negotiate their labour market integration and training processes, I argue that although driven by the desire to be self-sufficient and productive, South Asian immigrant women do enroll in various training and learning of Canadian norms and
values, they also demonstrate a confidence and belief in their abilities that hinder them from accepting any hegemonic discourses of “whitening”.

Chapter 5 describes women’s entry into enclave entrepreneurship, their starting of the home business and how they deploy their cultural ties and ethnic networks to help sustain in an economy that marginalizes them from the formal labour market. In the concluding Chapter 6, I argue that through their home-based work, these South Asian women demonstrate a proactive response to the racial and gendered exploitation and marginalization they experience in the Canadian labour market. By successfully negotiating gender roles and hegemonic whitening processes these women redefine ‘enterprising self’ as based on “collaborative, [and] meaningful work and relationships” (Fenwick, 2001, p. 717).
Chapter Two:
Examining the Discourse of “Enterprising Self”
vis-à-vis a Gendered and Racialized Labour Market in Canada

Introduction

This thesis focuses on how, under conditions of racial, gendered and class-based exclusions in the Canadian labour market, South Asian immigrant women running small-scale, low-income, own-account businesses from home negotiate various forms of regulation, exclusion and marginalization in everyday work and domestic lives. I trace this negotiation in relation to an important conceptualization that has gained ground in recent years in the context of neoliberalism, market and capital: the concept of the “enterprising self”. Based on “openness of markets and the initiative of individuals” (Lord Young of Graffham, 1992, p. 29), the assumption behind an enterprising self lies in the fact that the neoliberal, free market is open to all, that there are opportunities for everyone, and that it depends on individual initiative and resources to succeed in this kind of an economy. Consequently, those who can successfully take advantage of the opportunity and compete in the open market are described as enterprising selves, contributing to a “productive economy” (Sayers, 1992, p. 122) and subsequent development of the state. On the other hand, those who remain unemployed or underemployed are blamed for their individual inability and deficiency to compete with others in becoming “productive” members of the state and the society.

Given the high regard for “enterprising selves” within the neoliberal economy, my first intention in this thesis is to examine the ways in which South Asian immigrant women in Canada are being moulded to become such enterprising selves. In what ways do women internalize various regulatory and normative discourses that go into the making of the enterprising self? My
second intention is to find out how South Asian immigrant women based on their everyday experiences of race, gender and class relations that mediate their entry into the labour market, contest such regulatory discourses thereby delineating a new concept of the worker-subject for them? My argument in this thesis is that South Asian immigrant women in the context of their home-based work remain in a state of fluid induction into the principles of neoliberal enterprising selves while operating in the Canadian labour market. This fluidity is evident in how they constantly move between conformity and subversion to the attempted moulding and regulation necessitated by neoliberal dynamics of enterprising selves.

In examining the regulatory processes that go into the making of an enterprising worker, I draw on Michel Foucault and other Foucault-inspired scholars who base their analysis on mechanisms of governmental rationalities to show how under neoliberalism, individuals are regulated and controlled through “[technologies] of the self” that encourage them to be “self-responsible, self-enterprising, and self-governing subjects of advanced liberal nations” (Ong & Zhang, 2008, p. 3). In the following sections, I will discuss the concept of the “enterprising self”, viewing it through the notion of governmentality as used by Foucault in order to reveal how discourses of such a self pervade individuals through various workings of institutional and state forces. Next, I will highlight how the neoliberal discourse of entrepreneurial self remains intertwined with older politics of race and gender circulating as residues of Canada’s colonial history. This intermingling between the politics of colonial subjection and contemporary socio-economic imperatives of neoliberalism is, I would argue, a crucial element in determining the continued marginalization of immigrant women of colour in the present day Canada. I will conclude by arguing that in order to understand the making of South Asian immigrant women into negotiating worker-subjects, we cannot just focus on the binaries of domination or
resistance, but must remain sensitive to the intricacies that reside in spaces of “encounter and enmeshment” between the state, immigrant subjects and the labour market (Ong, 2003, p. 16).

The Shift to Neoliberalism and the Rise of “Enterprising Self” in Canada

Since the last two decades, neoliberal restructuring policies and global competitiveness have led to vast economic and labour market changes around the world (Belkhodja, 2008). The rise of neoliberalism is said to have dramatically transformed the Canadian state as well (McBride, 2001). During the initial years of its social and economic development, Canada followed a Fordist policy that not only led to its establishment as a welfare state but also resulted in the implementation of various macro policies to boost its national economy. These policies based on Keynesianism were developed with the goal of ensuring that Canadians enjoy “nationally protected workplace [as well as] social welfare rights” (Aguiar, 2006, p. 17). While in the 1970s, the uneven processes of restructuring of the Canadian state had already begun, it was in the 1990s, that the process became more substantial (McKeen & Porter, 2003), drastically decreasing the role of the state and promoting free market policies, privatization and deregulation (Larner, 2000). The state in order to remain globally competitive shifted to flexible labour arrangements (Galabuzi, 2004) and no longer guaranteed secured employment and other welfare provisions previously provided (such as childcare, elderly care) under Keynesian welfarism (Aguiar, 2006; Man, 2004).

One of the key effects of the adoption of neoliberal policies has been the deterioration of labour rights as well as the working conditions and wages of the workers across Canada. Previously, under the Fordist welfare state, workers enjoyed higher wages, better living standards, safe working conditions, and protection by the union as well as the state. However,
with the emergence of the new economy under neoliberalism, most of these rights and benefits disappeared (Church, Fontan, Ng, & Shragge, 2000). Moreover, the flexible work arrangements led to the creation of conditions for the expansion in informal and precarious forms of work that were primarily temporary, low-end, low-waged and with exploitative working conditions (Aguiar, 2006). Church et al. (2000) explains that such an expansion in informal work was due to the “just-in-time” production system under post-Fordism that led to flexibility in the labour market as well as a lesser number of permanent jobs, worker’s rights and benefits. Scholars further add that although these informal forms of work also existed in the Fordist era, they remained almost hidden and were considered to be experienced by only a small population of the workers (Aguiar, 2006; Sawhney, 2002). However, in the neoliberal present, these precarious forms of work became more “generalized” (Aguiar, 2006, p. 21), with more and more Canadians having no other option but to work in these sectors.

In this neoliberal world of uncertainty and precariousness, many state governments adopted “entrepreneurialism” as a solution to unemployment or underemployment (Church et al., 2000). By reducing support for the unemployed and the poor, these governments have promoted programs administered by different departments to develop initiatives for those who are either unemployed or relying on welfare (Church et al., 2000). In Canada too, entrepreneurialism is promoted as an effective response to the problem of work (Shragge, 1997) so that people expecting to enter the labour market are made to depend on their own initiatives and abilities rather than on any kind of cushioning provided by the state. An entrepreneurial subject, commonly defined as the “enterprising self” thus constitutes a “liberated” and “aware” individual (Sharma, 2008, p. 16), who, by simply pursuing self-interest and self-governance, “can enhance the well-being of societies as a whole” (Sharma, 2008, p. 16; see also Cruikshank, 1999).
In the current post-Fordist, neoliberal Canadian labour market, the concept of the “enterprising self” has not only gained momentum, but has also come to define worker-subjectivity and ability to access the labour market (Aguiar, 2006) by promoting individual initiatives and resources as the most useful qualities needed to enter the labour market (Church et al., 2000). The rationale behind an enterprising self is that in the present free market economy with increasing reluctance of state agencies to provide long-term support to its citizens, individuals, rather than depending upon extraneous factors, should strive to become “autonomous, self-governing” (Komulainen, Korhonen, & Raumlt, 2009, p. 645) and competitive worker-subjects. Through continuous innovations, training and ingenuity, such a subject should seek to maximize her/his own latent potentialities as an individual to be able to become self-sufficient and prosperous even in the most adverse of economic scenarios (Fenwick, 2002a).

Therefore, crucially, such “subjects of autonomy [must be] equipped with a psychology aspiring to self-fulfillment and actually or potentially running their lives as a kind of enterprise of themselves” (Rose, 1996, p. 139) in order to succeed in the everyday venture of life. So, the same logics of risk and growth that drive the market must become the cornerstone of everyday life itself for the individuals to self-develop. Instead of mourning the loss of welfare securities, individual entrepreneurs should start taking responsibility for their own actions and achievements, exhibiting enterprising skills. They should be ready to seize opportunities that flare up amidst the uncertainties of a market-driven capitalist economy (Gill, 2008; Leslie & Butz, 1998). Capable of choosing their own path to development and economic growth against
all odds (Gill, 2008; Kabeer, 1994), individuals are thus shaped as subjects, “free to choose, [emphasis original] who consider their lives worthwhile to the extent that they can choose that which makes for self-enhancement and self-realization- in other words who are active subjects” (Garrick & Usher, 2000; para. 33).

From the above discussions, it can be concluded that three features seem to characterize an enterprising worker-subject:

a) Individualism: individuals are expected to take control of their own lives and compete with each other to gain wealth and resources from the free market;

b) Enterprising: individuals should not be dependent on state resources or welfare but actively look for jobs, exercising their own will, choice and resources to achieve success;

c) Productivity: wealth creation and productivity should be one of the most important aims for the individual as the success of the self is measured in terms of her/his ability to create wealth and make a profit. This thereby also implies that any kind of economically non-productive activity would hardly fall under the gamut of the enterprising self whose sole focus is to remain extremely “productive” (Heelas & Morris, 1992) in terms of wealth generation as a form of self-development.

An enterprising individual is constructed as an independent, self-regulated person who aspires to autonomy, desires “personal fulfillment”, believes in “individual responsibility” and “find[s] meaning in existence by shaping its life through acts of choice” (Rose, 1992, p. 142). It is then “the discipline and rigour of the market [that] helps to construct a mode of selfhood defined in terms of the virtues of enterprise” (Heelas & Morris, 1992, p. 5). It is this empowered and enterprising self, who has become the compelling identity of the new economy, that is seen
as capable of enabling “goals of free market, good governance, democracy, and the rule of law and rights” (Sharma, 2008, p. 17).

The pressure to become an enterprising individual is so strong that some scholars argue, every citizen is compelled to feel that she/he should be able to construct her/his own success by being more active, responsible and self-governing (du Gay, 1996). The responsibility for self-development and self-fulfillment is squarely placed on the individual (Fenwick, 2002a), rather than the government or the society in general. Consequently, those who are unable to do so continue to be seen as a burden on the economy and unable to promote the state’s success in the global competitive market (Aguiar, 2006). The unemployed or underclass are hence labeled as “unenterprising” (Heelas & Morris, 1992, p. 8) and are made to believe that they “have only themselves to blame if they do not bother to set about improving their circumstances” (Heelas & Morris, 1992, p. 8).

This particular discourse treats social ailments such as poverty or unemployment (Fenwick, 2002a) as a “lack”, based not on any kind of social, economic or political inequalities (Garrick & Usher, 2000) but on individual failure. Thus, citizens are expected to “pull themselves up by the bootstraps” to stop being a burden on the state and “build up his or her own human capital- in other words, to ‘be an entrepreneur of her/himself’” (Ong, 2003, p. 12). Those unable to use their personal initiatives or develop their skills to become more competitive, risk-taking and autonomous subjects are seen as incapable of becoming the quintessential “enterprising self”, lacking abilities to turn their lives into a “success”. 
Regulation and Self-Governing: How Individuals Get To Become the “Enterprising Self”

A number of scholars have tried to map the processes that actually go into the making of the enterprising worker-subject. In analyzing this process, most scholars (e.g., Fenwick, 2001; Garrick and Usher, 2000; Ong, 1996, 2003; Pun, 2005; Rose, 1992) draw attention to how different modes of regulation and disciplining instill within individual citizens the values encompassing the enterprising agent, the urgency to be the master of one’s self as soon as possible. Here many scholars have found Michel Foucault’s notion of “governmentality” particularly useful in examining the regulatory processes involved in the making of this enterprising self.

In a series of lectures, Foucault developed the notion around what he described as the “art of governing”. In delineating the process of its development from the sixteenth century to the present neo-liberal era, Foucault highlighted how the notion of governing has shifted from the specific control over territory or property to a more pervasive attempt at governing individuals, their relations, customs, habits and even the way they act and think (Foucault, 1991). The essential logic behind the deployment of this notion of governing is not coercion or utilization of force, but the “management of population in its depths and its details” (Foucault, 1991, p. 102). According to Foucault, individuals are governed through certain non-coercive techniques that “permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality” (Foucault, 1988, p. 18). Foucault defines these techniques as “technologies of the self” (1988, p. 18) and underscores that the process includes certain modes of training and
modification of individuals, “not only in the obvious sense of acquiring certain skills but also in the sense of acquiring certain attitudes in living out life” (1988, p. 18).

Nikolas Rose (1992), drawing on Foucault’s work on “governmentality” presents a nuanced analysis of how this particular neo-liberal enterprising subjectivity is being nurtured within a space of what he describes as “regulated freedom” (p. 160). According to Rose, the ideology of the enterprising self is all about individual actions, how individuals would act on themselves out of their own choice, regulating and disciplining their selves to develop into competitive, efficient and prosperous citizens. What really inculcate such qualities within them are certain regulatory procedures and strategies provided by a range of experts such as social workers, counselors, advisors, or psychologists. These experts, through different work-related training and programs encourage individuals to steer their own selves, to govern and control it in such a way that they are able to become “that which it wishes to be”, so that “fulfillment of any final telos [emphasis original] of self-development lies entirely within the domain of one’s own action” (Rose, 1992, p. 146).

Orchestrating the various activities of the self, these practices thus “shape, channel, organize and direct the personal capacities and selves of individuals” (Rose, 1992, p. 147) to be in control of their careers and turn themselves into high achievers. So with citizens who are unemployed or underemployed, this expertise promises to “break through the blockages that trap … [them] into powerlessness and passivity, into undemanding jobs and underachievement” (Rose, 1992, p. 151). Yet, at the same time, these regulatory practices are not for creating compliant individuals absolutely dependent on these services, but only to equip them with certain tools so that they are able to manage their affairs, take control of their goals and make plans for achievement (Rose, 1992).
Similar to Rose, Aihwa Ong, in her study of Asian immigrants in the USA (1996, 2003), also reflects on how the neoliberal discourse of enterprising self, defines “good citizenship” as the “civic duty of individuals to reduce their burden on society and build up their own human capital- to be ‘entrepreneurs’ of themselves” (Ong, 1996, p. 739; see also Gordon, 1991). She, too, refers to a variety of programs, policies and practices that instill within the immigrants, values of self-reliance, “freedom, individualism, calculation or flexibility” (Ong, 2003, p. 6). Following Foucault, she describes these practices as “technologies of government” (2003, p. 6) and identifies several domains such as the refugee camp, American welfare state, labour market, etc., where such regulatory procedures are carried out on immigrants and/or refugees to transform them into “enterprising” citizens of the West.

The technology of the self that Foucault refers to in relation to neoliberal governmentality is further explained by Pun Ngai (2005) in her study of the “dagongmei”, the transformation of rural women migrant workers into “industrial bodies” (p. 14) under the post-socialist conditions of state and capitalist forces in China. Through her ethnographic work, Pun (2005), similar to Ong, explores how under neoliberal conditions, women workers are individualized and disciplined within transnational factories to develop into “productive, profit-minded … individualistic, competitive… and most important of all achievement oriented” (p. 80) capitalist subjects. Thus, through external surveillance and control women are taught self-disciplining so that they are able to transform into productive urban industrial workers.

Furthermore, Pun (2005) points out that the reason that workers themselves participate in such a self-regulation is because of a heightening sense of “lack” that is created among these marginalized rural labour forces. She explains that this lack centers around their desire to be counted as a modern subject of consumption and is created by the conjoining of the state and
global consumer capitalist interests in post-socialist China, “that need[s] willing labour” (Pun, 2005, p. 111). Since their past lives and identities are made to see as deficient and incomplete, workers end up conforming to such self-subjectivization. They do so because they want to overcome their “lack”, and want to successfully integrate “into the collective will of the hegemonic construct” (Pun, 2005, p. 114) so that they are not discriminated against. Pun explains this phenomenon by stating that the “[rural and migrant] women workers [in transnational factories] had to recourse to such self-subjectivization in order to establish their new identity; to cut the umbilical cord of [their]… past life… to create a base for building up new self” (Pun, 2005, p. 117). Determined to “live up to the hegemonic mode of life” (Pun, 2005, p. 131), the women workers therefore, willingly changed their “habitus, disposition, accent, and identity” (Pun, 2005, p. 131). This is because the creation of this “lack” is done in such a way that the workers, too, become willing agents anxious to overcome their deficiencies. Hence, “[b]ecoming dagongmei is a dual process of displacement and replacement that produces anxiety, uncertainty, and pain for individuals in their daily struggles, and drives them towards a self-technologizing project, helping to accomplish a hegemonic construct” (Pun, 2005, p. 132). To conclude, through “technologies of the self” worker-subjects are regulated and disciplined into believing that they are the masters of their own destiny, and they need to work on themselves “to avoid what they have come to consider undesirable and achieve what they have come to think will make them happy” (Rose, 1992, p. 160).

This concept of the enterprising self in the neoliberal economy might seem to be a neutral concept moulding and preparing individuals to acquire certain qualities needed to be successful in a rapidly shifting society driven by market forces. Yet, scholars draw attention to the process of regulation and hegemonic domination underlying the concept that governs individuals to be
compliant. Discussing the enterprising theory in relation to the post-Fordist labour market, many studies (du Gay 1996; Fenwick, 2001; Garrick & Usher, 2000) indicate how the ethos of enterprising selves tends to dominate worker-subjectivity and promotes compliance to the culture of the enterprising principles. They point out how this particular ethos that shape individuals to become active and self-regulated empowered selves “works through infiltrating regulation into the very interior of the experience of subjects” (Garrick & Usher, 2000, para.10). Workers are thus subtly compelled to change their subjectivity and to embark on a process of self-management to fit the enterprising culture of the labour market, its uncertainties and its opportunities. In fact, this compliance is created through a “seduction through ‘empowerment’” so that “issues of power and ‘discipline’ (in the sense both of control of bodies and of bodies of knowledge) no longer seem so visible and relevant although it would be a mistake to assume from this that they have disappeared or are irrelevant” (Garrick & Usher, 2000, para. 15).

Examining the Discourse of the “Enterprising Self” in Light of the Race, Gender and Class Relations in Canada

What follows from the above discussion is how, in the name of creating empowered and enterprising individuals, various programs, policies and/or practices, often end up governing individuals to accept certain normative discourses about the neoliberal values of productivity, competitiveness and self-regulation. In this section I will demonstrate that under the neoliberal regime, while all citizens are encouraged to pursue enterprising qualities, in the case of immigrants of colour such qualities become synonymous with the process of “whitening” particularly in the West. This whitening is justified based on the fact that the cultural, educational or work values of the immigrants of colour are not necessarily of the same standard as that of the West, so that they need to go through certain remedial processes to be able to rise
up to the normative (read: white) standard. They are thus pushed into various training and workshops based on the argument that once they successfully go through such (re)training and (re)learning they would be able to access the social, cultural and economic facilities of the host country.

Critiquing the ideological dimensions of neoliberalism, several scholars, therefore, point out how the process of neoliberal subject making, particularly in the first world countries has a racial and cultural undertone so that the process of making an enterprising self, especially in the West, becomes coterminous with the process of “whitening” (Ong, 2003, p. 739). This process of whitening is justified based on a discourse of “deficiency” or “lack” existing within the immigrants of colour.

Clarifying this process of whitening, Ong (2003) points out that in countries like the USA, where “human capital, self-discipline and consumer powers are associated with whiteness” (p. 739), these become important attributes for judging others, especially when it comes to non-white immigrants” (p. 739). When compared to such normative, white attributes, the qualities of the non-white groups are perceived as deficient in various aspects such as language, education, or culture. They are then maneuvered towards a variety of training and educational services that have been put in place to inculcate in them qualities of “whiteness”. Therefore, what really happens in the name of making enterprising citizens is an imposition of dominant values based on an Eurocentric hegemony. Through various techniques, non-white immigrants are trained to smoothen their transition into the white society, techniques that aim to improve their language, accent, social education, skills and bodily deportments – all in the name of acculturation and for becoming the subject most malleable to the authority of the state. It is through these techniques that the immigrants are taught “self-discipline and entrepreneurship of American success” (Ong,
They also presumably guarantee immigrant’s integration into the white society and adherence to “white authority” (Ong, 1996, p. 746), socially, culturally, morally and economically.

In the Canadian context, a number of scholars, especially in the field of Adult Education (e.g. Billett, 2007; Devos, 2007), have also contributed to the understanding of how neoliberal subjects are being produced through training and learning. In particular, many of the educators have focused specifically on the training programs through which immigrants are regulated to conform to the Eurocentric values and customs. Yan Guo (2009) is an important researcher in this regard. Examining the ways in which English as a Second Language (ESL) program prepares immigrant professionals for employment in the Canadian labour market, she identifies how a racialized neoliberal discourse by its insistence on immigrant’s accent reduction, changing of names and adaptation of Canadian values and culture pushes them towards assimilation to the normative culture and behaviors of the state. Immigrants undertaking the course internalize many of these values too as they insist on their “heavy accent” or “keen interest to be able to speak English like a “native speaker” (Guo, 2009, p. 45). According to Guo (2009), such interest to change accent or learn idealized English emanates from the immigrant’s inability to find a job and the belief fostered in them that fluency in English is one the main requirements for being employed. It is because of this kind of belief that the women in his study were “willing to change their own accents in order to fit into the Canadian workplace” (Guo, 2009, p. 45). Thus, the governing of the individuals becomes evident through the “policies and practices of the organizations… [that directly control] the use of the immigrant’s native language” (Guo, 2009, p. 49).
Apart from the language training, scholars also focus on how immigrants are made to adopt Canadian values and customs as part of their training. Girard and Bauder (2007) drawing on Bourdieu’s notion of habitus, draws attention to how there exists certain “habitus” in the form of dominant norms and that immigrants are required to “conform to the existing norms and conventions” (p. 39). Based on their study of immigrant engineers, they reveal how immigrants perceived to be lacking in qualities essential for the socio-economic and cultural integration in Canada are trained to help them internalize the dominant norms and habitus of the society. This learning can consist of professional development as well as “soft skills” like “teamwork, leadership, communication and presentation skills… dress code” (Girard & Bauder, 2007, p. 46) or language skills, as practiced by the dominant culture of the Canadian society. Additionally, focusing on those areas such as resumé writing, job search skills or spoken English, Wong, Duff and Early (2001) suggest how this kind of learning is to prepare immigrants’ acquisition of “cultural scripts and schemata, an understanding of what to say and also whom to say it to, how to go about saying it effectively, and in whose presence” (p. 16).

This emphasis on training/learning to acquire particular cultural norms and behavior have been pointed out by scholars as reinforcing existing power inequalities based on race, gender and class. For example, Zahida Ali (2004), examining the existing LINC³ curriculum, draws attention to how the curriculum provides no opportunity to the learners to challenge the hegemonic cultural system they are subjected to. The evaluation method is solely based on the extent to which immigrants internalize the “stereotyped facts put forward by the dominant culture [and] not for contributing their [immigrant’s] own perspective to the course” (Ali, 2004, p. 92). It thus ignores the fact that many women, especially immigrant women of colour, are already proficient

³ The Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program provides free basic French and English language courses to adult permanent residents. To access such programs newcomers are assessed for their language training needs.
in English and need “much more than merely learning the structure of English in artificial contexts” (Ali, 2004, p. 94). Guo (2009) has also pointed to the de-recognition of immigrants’ language and culture that occurs within “monolingually oriented programs” (Ali, 2004, p. 41) and has attributed this to the process of “otherization” of racialized immigrants whose “heavy accent” is often identified as a communication problem that needs to be rectified in order for them to be employed (Anderson, 2005). ‘Repairing’ racialized immigrant’s accent and language skills are seen as imperative for increasing their presentability in front of potential employers (Creese & Kambere, 2002; Guo, 2009). The need to reduce, correct or normalize immigrant of colour’s accent also reveals a colonial mentality, an internalization of perception of the superiority of the native accent (Cook, 1999; Guo, 2009).

These programs and policies thus have a “tutelary power” that instills within immigrants “the urgency to act” (Cruikshank, 1996, p. 234), to “act upon their own subjectivity, to be governors of their selves” (Cruikshank, 1996, p. 235). The “embracing of the[se] dominant habitus” (Girard & Bauder, 2007, p. 49) is insidiously presented as one of the main criteria for getting admitted to the higher echelons of the labour market, and hardly any attention is given to the socio-cultural experiences the women bring to the class (Ali, 2004). In fact, as Ng and Shan (2010) point out through their critique of lifelong learning, the ideological practices of learning and training is so deeply entrenched that most immigrants accept these programs without question, thinking of them as imperative for finding jobs. In fact, it is these ideological practices that act as mechanism of control to produce workers suitable for neoliberal economy. In their study of Chinese immigrant women, Ng and Shan found that most of the women chose to go for training or upgrading through various courses in order to “optimize” their chances in the labour market (Ng & Shan, 2010, p. 175). Unfortunately, regardless of their training, most found
themselves in jobs unrelated to their field and in sectors that were deeply gendered and racialized.

The various racialized and gendered barriers hinder their entry to the labour market no matter how much training or learning they have gone through after immigration. Interestingly, the narrative of an enterprising self paper over the cracks that exist within the social body in terms of disparities regarding race, class, gender, sexuality, etc. to present a harmonious and smoothly functioning milieu composed of self-interested individuals seeking to maximize their potential for development in an even playing field.

Examining the Racial and Gendered Trajectories of Non-White Immigrants in Canada: A Case Study of the South Asians Immigrants

The logic behind such “whitening” processes can be best explained in the context of the deeply embedded racism and how non-white immigrants are being racialized\(^4\) in many Western countries. For instance, as a white settler society, Canada has historically preferred people from European background, whose contribution to the development of the nation has been immensely recognized (Razack, 2000; Thobani, 1999). While stories glorifying the European settlers’ contribution to Canada’s development abound, an uncanny silence surrounds the colonial project that created the national space, based on the dispossession of Aboriginal peoples and the appropriation of their lands and resources to build the settler society (Dua, Razack, & Warner, 2005). Lawrence and Dua (2005) argue that any allusion to the history of racism and

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\(^4\) In this thesis my usage of the term racialization is informed by Mirchandani et al.’s. (in press) definition of racialization. They argue that it is a process based on classification, representation or signification that various groups use to make distinctions between them and the “others” (see also Mirchandani and Chan, 2007). This particular concept makes us aware of the fact that racial differences are never fixed, but can change over time. An example can be cited from the very history of Canadian immigration. In the early nineteenth century, Irish people were seen as “different” from the dominant English population, along with non-white groups (Mclean & Barber, 2004). However, at present, Irish are considered to be part of the normative, “white” population in Canada (Mclean & Barber, 2004).
racialization in Canada must acknowledge the on-going socio-economic and cultural exploitation of indigenous peoples, which preceded the racial discrimination experienced by immigrants of colour. I join Lawrence and Dua (2005) in acknowledging that Canada’s history of racism did not begin with discrimination against non-white migrants, and therefore those people of colour who have been migrating to Canada since its inception should also be considered “settlers on stolen lands” (p. 132). Although my intention in this thesis is to trace the history of South Asians’ migration to Canada and their concurrent racialization, this narrative must be situated in the complex and multi-layered relationship that links histories of racism, colonialism and migration in Canada.

As far as Canada’s history of racism towards non-white groups is concerned, it goes a long way back, to the very inception of the Canadian nation, when it was imagined as implicitly white, with Eurocentric hegemony dominating every sphere of the nation. To maintain an overtly white character, Canadian immigration policy always tried to control the flow of immigrants from the so called “third world” countries, by using race, ethnicity, nationality and colour to determine the admission of immigrants to Canada (Basran & Zong, 1998; Dua, 2000; Thobani, 1999). Thus, where as people from U.K., USA and other parts of Europe were welcomed, non-white immigrants were discouraged in order to maintain a primarily white settler society (Basran & Zong, 1998; Bolaria & Li, 1985). According to Nandita Sharma (2006), this distinction between “preferred” and “non-preferred” immigrants has served to reinforce a racialized membership in the Canadian nation where “[w]hiteness works as a ruling identity… [and] becomes a privilege because it is positioned higher on the value scale of racialization than is non-whiteness” (p. 56).
The migration history of non-white groups like the South Asians reveals the above discussed discriminatory policies adopted towards people of colour in Canada. Despite being viewed as unsuitable for Canadian citizenship, Asians were primarily allowed to enter Canada only to compensate its demand for cheap labour to help develop its capitalist economy. Since a steady supply of workers was needed, Asians were allowed to come in as “temporary workers” to assist in agricultural, industrial and construction projects (Dua, 2000).

Commonly referred to as the “Hindoo”, Indian men (predominantly Punjabis) started coming to Canada as early as 1900 to work as manual labourers (Nayar, 2004). These men were mainly ex-employees of British army and poor peasants recruited to work in the Canadian steamship companies, railways, orchards and the lumber industry (Kurian, 1991). Due to the unregulated immigration system at the time, the number of East Indians arriving in Canada started increasing between 1904 and 1908 (Nayar, 2004). Yet, at the same time, anti-Asian sentiments were also developing, especially in British Colombia that led to a series of riots in places like Vancouver in 1907. State policies expressed their support for these anti-Asian sentiments by formulating the policy of “continuous journey” from the country of citizenship in 1908. This policy was made mandatory to limit the migration of Asians, especially the Indians, who were brought in only to fill up “certain gaps in the labour force which could not be filled otherwise” (Law Union of Canada, 1981, p. 235, as cited in Dua, 1999, p. 14).

The racialized project of Canadian nation building was also overtly gendered, evident in the way it banned the migration of the wives of the South Asian men settled in Canada so that it is estimated that between 1908 and 1912, only six women could enter Canada as compared to twenty men (Ralston, 1999). This is in context of the fact that wives of European men as well as single European women were not only allowed but often encouraged to come and settle down in
Canada (Dua, 2000). In exploring the reasons behind the restrictions imposed on South Asian women, Enakshi Dua (2000, 2007) presents a nuanced analysis of how the racialized and gendered discourses of Canadian nation lead to a simultaneous exclusion as well as inclusion of South Asian migrant women. In this regard, Dua (2000) refers to a famous public debate, “The Hindu Woman’s Question” that took place between 1910 and 1915 amongst various members of the Canadian society on the question of whether or not to allow the wives of South Asian men to migrate to Canada. The majority of the participants who took part in the debate were against the idea of allowing the entry of South Asian women on two grounds. First, in their endeavour to maintain the whiteness of the country, majority of the citizens felt that allowing South Asian women to Canada would not only bring in more men of colour but would also provide those already working in Canada to become permanent residents. Thus, several ministers and speakers like Frank Andrews openly expressed their discontent against the migration of South Asian women to Canada:

Let the wives in, and in a few years no one could tell the results. Either Japan or China, if emigration was unrestricted, would flood the country [and would lead to] a gigantic problem such as the United States has to face in their Southern States (Victoria Daily Colonist, 10 February, 1912 as cited in Dua, 2000, p. 111).

Second, the presence of South Asian women was perceived as a threat to the maintenance of the racial purity of the nation (Dua, 2000; Ralston, 1999). Held as primarily responsible for the maintenance of socio-cultural traditions, South Asian women were assumed to be the creators of communities “that would imperil the nation-building project” (Dua, 2000, p. 111). In contrast to the white women valued as “reproducers of the nation”, South Asian women were taken as “bearers of South Asian social mores” (Dua, 2000, p. 112) that were inimical to the interests of the “white man’s country”. Their children too were seen as inassimilable and different from the
“white” Canadians (Dua, 2000), constituting a “mongrel race” that could potentially endanger the Canadian state (Dua, 2007, p. 454).

Not everyone was opposed to the idea of the South Asian wives coming in and there was a small group of feminists and church members who were quite vocal against the imposition of the discriminatory restrictions. Yet, Dua (2000) draws our attention to the fact that despite their apparent support, this group in fact “shared a common world view with those who opposed the entry of South Asian women” (p. 112). Despite arguing that South Asian women be allowed to come in “on the grounds of morality and fairness” (Dua, 2000, p. 112), these members ended up further racializing and gendering the women. This is because, according to Dua (2000), their support for the wives of South Asian men arose out of the fear that sexual relationships might develop between South Asian men and white women. Driven by the trepidation of mixed race and miscegenation, these members felt that the presence of South Asian women at least would pose a barrier between South Asian men and white women. Allowing the wives to migrate was thus thought of as a strategy to curb mixed race sexuality and dangers of intermarriage (Dua, 2000, 2007). Indeed, ample evidence exist as to how through newspapers and other means warning was regularly issued by the Canadian state officials about the criminal propensity of Asian men as well as the dangers of mixed race relationships (Dua, 2007).

Moreover, none of the pro-side supporters actually argued for the migration of single South Asian women. Rather, they were concerned with the fact that the men be allowed to bring in their wives and families. Dua suggests that this argument also had a hidden agenda. This agenda was tied to the maintenance of a heterosexual and patriarchal familial relation. Along with the racialization of the nation, a central concern of the Canadians was also to regulate the “familial and gender relations such that heterosexual, nuclear, and patriarchal relations were
imposed” (Dua, 2000, p. 113). The presence of single South Asian men threatened such imposition of patriarchal relations so that in order to “maintain the gender politics of nation-building” (Dua, 2000, p. 113) the presence of South Asian women became imperative. It was in 1919 that South Asian women were finally allowed to arrive in Canada only after an agreement was made with the Indian government (Leah, 1999). It is difficult to find information on the employment opportunities of South Asian women in those early years probably because of the negation of their economic or social contribution to the nation. Limited evidence suggests that South Asian women, similar to other non-white immigrant women like the Chinese and the Japanese, combined their unpaid house work with some sort of paid-work outside home (Leah, 1999). Most of their work was in the lower levels, such as in the farms, garment factories or as industrial workers (Dua, 1999). Between 1914 and 1947, the number of East Indians in Canada generally remained quite low, although there were often protests by Sikh groups to bring changes in the immigration policies (Nayar, 2004).

Thus there existed overt restrictions based on racial and gender categories as to who could come in and permanently settle down in Canada. Based on Eurocentric ideals (Ng, 1989), the Canadian state, defined the non-white groups as “outsiders” and “inferior,” so that even when these people were allowed to come in as immigrants, they eventually remained “inassimilable” labouring bodies, bodies that may be used to aggrandize the (capitalist) development of the state, yet could be disposed of or deemed “undesirable” at the discretion of the Canadian nation and its normalized population group.

It was in the 1950s, in the wake of the independence of India in 1947, that changes were made in the Immigration laws that permitted limited family immigration from non-European countries. It was during this time, that the South Asian population also started slowly growing in
Canada (Walton-Roberts, 2003). There were two main reasons for such easing up of discriminatory rules. First, during this time migration from European countries started decreasing, so that Canada had to open its doors to non-European people by removing all restrictions against them (Galabuzi, 2004). Second, it was in the 1960s when a need for the economic growth of the country led to further redefinition of who should be allowed to come in as migrants. Canada’s need for white-collar professionals opened the door to more educated South Asians, immigrating to Canada. Thus, according to Ralston, during this time “[e]conomic necessity overruled racist ideology to replace an immigration policy based on national origins with one which would be universally applied to meet Canada’s need for particular skills” (1999, p. 34).

This need for immigrants to vitalize Canada’s economic and social development was further evident in 1962 and 1967. In 1962, new immigration regulations started to emphasize people’s education, merits and skills as important qualities for allowing them to migrate to Canada (Kurian, 1991). Finally, in 1967 in order to remove all existing racial biases, the Point System was introduced to select immigrants based on their education and work experience rather than their national origin. Since the 1960s because of these very policy changes, more urban, well educated and skilled South Asian women and men started coming to Canada and have since then maintained a high rate of labour force participation (Walton-Roberts, 2003). The largest number of South Asians is estimated to arrive in the 1970s, especially after the adoption of the state policy of Multiculturalism in 1971 (Nayar, 2004). The Point System was further revised in 1978, when two other important categories, “designated occupation” and “designated area” was added to the criteria for selecting skilled immigrants that led to an increased migration of more skilled and educated South Asian women to Canada (Ralston, 1999).
From the 1990s onwards, along with the heightening of de-regulation and flexible work arrangements, there was also an increase in migration of immigrants from the South so that Canada started becoming more and more multicultural. Immigrants of colour who were coming in around this time, were more skilled and educated, than they used to be previously. For example, between 1991 and 2006, more highly educated immigrants with university degrees, have come to Canada and are more likely to be from South Asia or South East Asia (Galarneau & Morissette, 2008). Women arriving from these countries have been equally qualified (Lindsay, 2005).

Despite all the changes in the immigration policies and easing up of the entry of skilled professionals, the historical forms of racial stratification continued to exist, affecting the immigrants of colour (Galabuzi, 2004) in different ways. Scholars argue that neoliberalism has, in fact, led to the deepening of the racial segmentation of the labour market and has intensified social exclusion (Galabuzi, 2004). One of the greatest examples of this racial segregation is the disproportionate number of non-white immigrants, who cluster in certain sectors of the economy despite being highly educated. As a number of studies indicate (Galabuzi, 2004; Mirchandani et al., 2010; Vosko, 2006; Cranford & Vosko, 2006), the adoption of neoliberal principles has led to various contingent or precarious forms of work. The lack of stable employment has increased the competition amongst workers to access the decent jobs. Within such competitive environments, it is the immigrants of colour, especially women, who bear the brunt of racialization. They are subjected to various discriminatory practices.

While in the early years, women of colour could only work as domestics or labourers, in the present neoliberal world, even when they are selected on the basis of their work and skills, they continue to end up in casual and temporary sectors (Galabuzi, 2004). While demands for
labour bring in highly skilled professional immigrants, when it comes to labour market incorporation, racial segregation continues to play a central role in determining who gets to work where (Galabuzi, 2004). Regardless of all their previous qualifications, they are still considered to be lacking in such areas as Canadian work experience, Canadian education, or proficiency in English—thereby preventing their entry into the mainstream labour market. Thus there exist various labour market barriers that disqualify the foreign certification and education of immigrants of colour (Man, 2004c).

A growing literature reveals these barriers that immigrants of colour have to deal with while trying to enter the labour market. For example, their past experience and training are routinely discounted and undervalued by employer’s demand for Canadian work experience or education. According to Slade (2008b), the demand for Canadian experience serves two purposes. It helps to regulate immigrants’ access to the Canadian labour market and also “produce[s]” them as “deficient workers, lacking adequate skills for the labour market” (p. 3). The need for Canadian work experience thus “acts as a marker of difference in a system of classification whereby immigrants, because of their obvious lack of experience in the Canadian work environments are deemed inferior to other workers” (Slade, 2008b, p. 3). Because of not possessing Canadian experience, immigrants of colour are often pushed out of their professions and continue with their low-level jobs, exhausting the many years of training and education they have brought with them to Canada (Galabuzi, 2004).

Employers also discriminate by imposing "pre-judicial assumptions about [immigrants of colour’s]…abilities" (Galabuzi, 2004, p. 187) during hiring processes. According to Galabuzi (2004), those who belong to the dominant groups in Canada "maintain… privilege by constructing racial categories and assigning negative values to immutable attributes such as skin
colour and cultural background, using this to evaluate the suitability of minority candidates for employment, compensation and workplace mobility” (p. 187). The effects of these subtle barriers on the non-white immigrant’s labour market outcome become evident when we see how they disproportionately cluster at the lower rungs of the job sector, the various precarious forms of work. According to a report by Timothy Owen on labour market trends of immigrants in Canada, in 2001 thirty-seven percent men from South Asia, and forty-eight percent from South Asia had a university degree but were working in jobs requiring only a high school education. The corresponding numbers for all women in Canada were fifty-five percent and sixty-one percent (Owen, n.d.). South Asian women thus, continue to experience the phenomenon of ghettoization and segmentation, which achieve both a divided work force and a cheap, captive labour pool. Despite possessing university education, and several years of professional work experiences, South Asian immigrant women have had a difficult time translating those skills into opportunities in the new country. What remains accessible, on the other hand, are low end, part-time jobs that are not only beneath the qualifications of many of them, but also reinforces their stereotypical portrayal (suitable for laborious, low-end job, and cheap labour) in terms of their labour market incorporation. According to scholars, this devaluation and marginalization that South Asian immigrant women experience in Canada reveals the mediation of cultural imperialism, racism, and gender oppressions (Aggarwal, 1987; Das Gupta, 1996; Dhruvarajan, 1992; Khosla, 1983) that often force them to accept jobs not commensurate with their qualifications and abilities. This happens along with the continued pervasiveness of negative stereotypes of women of colour in many workplaces, marking them as low-skilled, cheap labour pool suitable only for the most basic of menial tasks. Thus, while Canada continues to import migrants to add to its pool of skilled workers, at the end of the day, most of the non-white
immigrants end up remaining skilled, underclass and under-utilized workers, serving the lower rungs of the Canadian labour market.

Summing up these processes affecting immigrants of colour, Galabuzi (2004) contends that “[i]ncreased immigration, persistent devaluation of racialized human capital, social marginalization, and racial polarization in the labour market have made racialized groups into a reserve army of labour that bears a racial dividend for capital” (p. 198). Despite being accepted into the Canadian state, a hidden discourse of racialization continues to mark them as “not-quite-Canadians” (Roberts & Mahtani, 2010, p. 252). What is more distinctively unique about the way immigrants are racialized in the neoliberal present, is that the very process of racialization is reshaped by giving it a “market orientation” (Roberts & Mahtani, 2010, p. 253). Since in the discourse of the enterprising self, it is the individual abilities and initiatives that are considered instrumental for the success of individuals, the racial and gendered factors are not taken into consideration or rendered non-existent. Therefore, when non-white immigrant women are unable to enter proper jobs, it is perceived as their individual failure to become entrepreneurial in accessing the labour market. Thus Roberts and Mahtani (2010) argue that along with reinforcing race, neoliberalism also modifies it by insisting that race does in no way play any role in the society. Despite the discriminatory attitudes towards the immigrants of colour and their credentials, the process itself remains hidden and hard to recognize as racism. According to Roberts and Mahtani (2010), what neoliberalism does is to “effectively mask racism through its value-laden moral project: camouflaging practices anchored in an apparent meritocracy making possible a utopic vision of society that is non-racialized” (p. 253). Theo Goldberg (2009) similarly critiques the “raceless” quality of the neoliberal era, in which race is considered non-existent, and yet functions as the foundation upon which neoliberalism operates. Although
neoliberal ideas stress race-neutral individual qualities, merits and abilities, Goldberg (2009) observes that racism persists, but has merely been relegated to the sphere of private expression and choice. Due to its legal mandate of equality with respect to its citizens, the modern state can no longer practice racial discrimination openly. Discriminatory practices would compromise the very legitimacy of the state and place its role as the “defender of both freedom and equality” in question (Goldberg, 2009, p. 335). However, this does not mean that the state “purges racism from its domain. Rather, the state is restructured to support the privatizing of race and the protection of racially driven exclusions in the private sphere where they are set off-limits to state intervention” (Goldberg, 2009, p. 337). It is perhaps no wonder that “the more robustly neoliberal the state, accordingly, the more likely race would be rendered largely immune from state intervention so long as having no government force behind it” (Goldberg, 2009, p.334).

Racism continues to circulate powerfully in the neoliberal era, reordering existing modes of inclusion and exclusion which, having been relegated to the realm of private choice becomes difficult to pinpoint.

It is therefore important to keep in mind that the discourse of empowerment or agency associated with the idea of the enterprising self, does not take into account race, gender, class or cultural inequalities. As Silver, Shields, Wilson, and Scholtz (2005) point out, neoliberal ideology glosses over all these structural inequalities that might hinder individuals from getting employed, harping on the fact that once controlled and regulated, individuals can “act on his or her own behalf to achieve optimal outcomes” (Ong & Zhang, 2008, p. 3). The idea of an empowered and agentic self that runs through the discourse of the enterprising self actually rests on modes of subtle domination and discrimination inducing individuals into internalizing certain discourses of success and economic productivity irrespective of the actual structures of
domination. What is most problematic in all this is that the subject who fails to prosper in such a scenario, is made to feel guilty by her/his own sense of shortcoming, rather than being able to question the structural causes of failure.

In elucidating the multiple correctional processes of regulating and disciplining the “immigrant” body and mind, questions then arise as to whether there are possibilities of challenging these practices or is it that they are so deeply ingrained that individuals have no other recourse but to fall victim to it? I would argue through my data analysis that, given the subtle and insidious nature of these hegemonic regulatory processes, any form of struggle against these forces cannot simply be conceptualized in terms of overt action or complete resistance, but needs to be thought of as a process of “negotiation” between domination and contestation.

This concept of negotiation as agency emerges out of Foucault’s now classic observation that no power relation can ever be totalitarian or all encompassing, but “implies at least in potentia, a strategy of struggle” (Foucault, 1991, p. 225). While Foucault does not really explicate “how subjects resist the schemes of control, or how their tactics and outcomes are culturally creative, and frequently surprising” (Ong, 2003, p. 17), in this thesis, I will conceptualize this struggle against dominant relations and hegemonic discourses as a form of negotiation producing “processes of ongoing adjustment […] and conflict” (Ong, 2003, p. 15). The reason that I view agency as constitutive of the dual processes of domination and contestation is based on the observation that in the present era of neoliberal market economy, the “microphysics of power” has become so diffused that we need subtle resistance strategies “rooted in everyday politics” (Pun, 2005, p. 195). Living in what Deleuze (1992) defines as a society of control, where individuals are no longer coercively disciplined within the confines of discrete institutions, Hardt (1995) argues that the deployment of power is aimed towards constant
modulations of “normalized subjects and thus exerting hegemony through consent in a way that is perhaps more subtle but no less authoritarian than the exertion of dictatorship through coercion” (p. 31). This consensual hegemonic process can educate or train citizens in such a way so as to create within them “desires that are in line with the State” or corporate entities (Hardt, 1995, p. 32). Individuals, therefore, when they conform to the hegemonic discourses, do so not out of repression but out of consensus or even through desire, infused within them by various governmental tactics and strategies. Thus the present forms of control have become so normalized and part of the commonsense, that any subversion to such forces cannot be thought of in terms of distinct categories, but will blend into the dual processes of consent and contest.

My argument finds support in Comaroff (1985), who also points out that the subtleties of present day domination “denies simple dichotomization in terms of resistance and compliance” (pp. 261-262). Therefore, we find scholars like Pun (2005) arguing for a new theorization of resistance and worker-subject that “should go beyond conventional dichotomies of individual and collective actions, personal and social resistance, and nonpolitical and political confronting behavior” (p. 194). It is this particular understanding of agency that will form the central focus of analysis for this thesis. Based on this analysis I will demonstrate how South Asian immigrant women, while internalizing neoliberal discourses of the enterprising self, also end up contesting those very discourses, contestations that emanate from their own racial, gendered, class positions. Despite being highly educated and well trained to face the imperatives of a neoliberal economy, many of these women still find themselves stuck to the lower echelons of the labour market running from home, low-income, small businesses that serve a typically ethnic clientele. While patriarchal ideologies at home often exclude them from working outside, the racialized labour market further devalues their skills and education by refusing to accept them or pushing
them into jobs that are way below their qualifications. Yet, along with all this, the pressure to remain productive, competitive and responsible presents them with a dilemma. How do women negotiate such contradictory forces? By using the concept of negotiation, I will demonstrate how women continually conform to or subvert the various ideologies. In defining their agency, any utopian definition of pure resistance or monolithic theory of domination cannot be adequate as “apparent resistance is riven with ironies and contradictions, just as coping or consent may have unexpectedly subversive effects” (Kondo, 1990, p. 224).

In the next chapter I will discuss my methodology for capturing the complexities of South Asian immigrant women entrepreneurs within ethnic enclaves. I will describe my research design, as well as the methodology of feminist interpretive inquiry as an appropriate approach for not only studying the lived experiences of South Asian immigrant women entrepreneurs but also emphasizing the necessity of including their own voices and meaning making in the research process.
Chapter Three:  
Methodology:  
A Feminist Interpretive Inquiry  

Introduction  

Selecting an appropriate methodology for this research was as much an academic as a philosophical concern for me. Over the years, I have studied several research methodologies to identify the one that will be best suited for my study. I wanted to draw on a methodology that was post-positivist and qualitative. This is because post-positivist qualitative methodologies tend to focus on not a single “objective world” but on “multiple subjectively derived realities” (Lee, 1999, p. 6) that are embedded in real contexts (Lee, 1999). In addition, these kinds of frameworks can effectively put forward the subjective experiences of individuals without being caught in issues of objectivity or value free research. Interpretive Inquiry coupled with a feminist framework is best suited for this purpose.  

Interpretive inquiry, an important tool for gaining in depth understanding of lived experiences and thoughts, feelings and motivations of the individual, was appropriate for this study as this particular framework is “not just concerned with describing the way things are, but also with gaining insights into how things got to be the way they are, how people feel about the way things are, what they believe, what meanings they attach to various activities…” (Gay, 1996, p. 13). Similarly, my particular interest in this thesis was to understand how South Asian immigrant women themselves gave meaning to their family lives and work as home-based entrepreneurs situated within their own ethnic enclaves. This focus was important as most of the studies on the enclave economy have ignored the perspectives and views of women, especially immigrant women of colour on their own work and lives after immigration. Moreover, feminist
interpretive inquiry ingrained in both feminist and interpretive inquiry do not merely recognize
the lived experiences and interpretations of the individual but situates at its centre the gendered
dimensions of those lived experiences (Jansen & Davis, 1998). Feminist researchers look at
gender as “a basic organizing principle which profoundly shapes/mediates the concrete
conditions of our lives” (Lather, 1988, p. 571). Along with gender, the emphasis is also on race, class, location and the interaction or interplay of these social forces in the lives of women. In my research as well, race, gender and class relations are at the centre of inquiry as they explain the rise of a segregated labour market in Canada as well as the devaluation and exclusion that professional and highly educated South Asian immigrant women experience in the Canadian labour market.

**Defining Feminist Interpretive Framework**

Feminist Interpretive Inquiry is based on a non-positivistic understanding of the subjective interpretations of women’s lived experiences (Denzin, 1989; Jansen & Davis, 1998). Developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, this research framework is considered to be a breakaway from all kinds of positivist research that used to follow a logical-positivist model, offering generalized findings from a dominant cultural perspective (Jansen & Davis, 1998; Schwandt, 2000). Contending that human sciences are inherently and fundamentally different from natural sciences, interpretivists took the human interpretation as its starting point in order to understand the social world (Prasad, 2005). The researcher using this framework thus tries to understand what meaning the individuals derive of their own actions and from their “own point of view” (Bernstein, 1976, p. 138), rather than imposing the researcher’s own perspectives and interpretations in an authoritative manner. Thus social interpretation and meaning making constitute the very basis of interpretive inquiry, and this interpretation is held to
be very much subjective and not based on any “idea of fixed external reality” (Prasad, 2005, p. 14). Furthermore, it is also argued by scholars that these social interpretations and meaning making are influenced by temporal and cultural locations (Angen, 2000; Gadamer, 1994) which makes understanding and interpretation of human experience very much contextualized as well (Moss, 1996; Schwandt, 2000).

One of the most important characteristics of this framework is its emphasis on the “everyday life-world or lebenswelt [emphasis original]” (Prasad, 2005, p. 14) of the people and understanding that world from the perspectives of the individuals themselves (Prasad, 2005). Interpretive inquiry attempts to render understandable the lived experiences (Angen, 2000) that are the world of actual experiences, constituting and constitutive of the everyday life and from the perspective of the subjects involved (Denzin, 1989). Interpretive researchers such as John Thompson (1990) thus states that,

the socio-historical world is not just an object domain which is there to be observed; it is also a subject domain which is made up, in part, of subjects who, in the routine course of their everyday lives, are constantly involved in understanding themselves and others, and in interpreting the actions, utterances and events which take place around them (p. 275).

On a similar note, Schwandt (1998), in outlining the principles of interpretive inquiry, has argued that one of the tenets of interpretive inquiry is to “share the goal of understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it” (p. 221). Hultgren (1989) too summarizes interpretive inquiry as a method that is used to explore, understand and reveal the lived experiences, while Noland (2000) states that interpretive research “focuses on the lived experiences of the people, looking at their everyday lives and the individual meanings they make from mundane experiences” (p. 52). According to Guba and Lincoln (1998), this focus on individual understandings of reality is important in order to build and share
a broader picture of the particular situation, as shaped by the ideology of culture, society, race, ethnicity or gender. Feminists too have embraced the prominence of lived experiences in order to include women’s own stories and understanding of their experiences (Jansen & Davis, 1998) into the research process. Their emphasis on women’s interpretation and perspectives is to prevent their marginalization and to include their voices in the inquiry itself.

In this study, I emphasize the lived experiences of the South Asian immigrant women and how they interpret their experiences from their own perspectives. My main objective in this thesis is to study the process by which South Asian immigrant women become home-based entrepreneurs within ethnic enclaves in Toronto. In particular, I want to examine how these women actively negotiate various ideological constraints and barriers in order to lead economically productive and socially meaningful life in Canada. To achieve my purpose, I concentrate on the lived experiences and voices of these women’s struggle and negotiation as well as develop a critical inquiry of how their lives and work are mediated by such factors as racism, sexism, classism, and status as immigrants.

This valorization of South Asian immigrant women’s lived experience is also important in this thesis to define the process of “negotiation” that these women often undertake with race, class and gender barriers to establish themselves within their own families as well as in the Canadian labour market. The concept of negotiation that describes the way the respondents chart a new productive space for themselves within their enclaves, in the absence of any meaningful work in the formal labour market, cannot be described as any outright defiance, collective action or organized resistance. Rather, the concept is based on how women resort to multiple, various, and situational practices of conformity and opposition that often can blend into each other. This conceptualization of negotiation develops out of the women’s lived experiences and everyday
realities that point out the limitations of thinking about these women in any clear cut categories of domination or opposition. Often, as women interviewees shared their everyday practices and struggles as women of colour in the Canadian society, what became apparent was how they would try to subvert power structures in various subtle and individuated ways that often go unrecognized.

This particular way of looking at women’s everyday negotiation as based on a dual process of domination and opposition makes an important contribution to the understanding of the agency of immigrant women of colour in the neoliberal era. This is because it highlights how capitalist disciplining and regulation of women workers are evident in the multiple ways that neoliberalism controls women, especially from the third world. At the same time, the concept of negotiation does not preclude the fact that these women workers are also individuals who “think about, struggle against, and react to their own conditions and who can also interpret their own situations” (Wolf, 1992, p. 9). Thus agency, when seen as situated between accommodation and subversion, draws attention to the fact that although neoliberal ideologies can be hard for the women workers to evade, they do not merely remain a collective of homogeneous, voiceless, passive, victims completely vulnerable to the exigencies of neo-liberal market forces (Benería & Roldán, 1987; Freeman, 2000). For instance, if we look at Pun’s (2005) study of Chinese women workers in multinational factories, we would see that women often found it very difficult to escape the disciplining and controlling of their subjective selves. Nevertheless, through various overt and covert subversive acts, they proved themselves as more than mere puppets in the hand of neoliberal market forces and patriarchal ideologies. As Pun (2005) contends, “… although powerless they have been tactical agents in negotiating their own lives and in manipulating those exploitative factors for their own ends in the daily struggles” (p. 61). Conceptualizing women’s
agency in terms of action and inaction, constraint and contestation then oppose stereotypification of third world women as docile victims of capitalism (Sen, 1985, 1990), as women’s agency can be comprised of “passivity, accommodation, and withdrawal as much as defiance and resistance” (Wolf, 1992, p. 24). Without including the lived experiences and voices of my research participants this particular way of looking at agency as negotiation would have remained incomplete. I thus chose the feminist interpretive inquiry framework in order to bring to the forefront the lived experiences of the South Asian immigrant women home-based entrepreneurs and to highlight their own interpretations and meaning making about why they chose to be home-based entrepreneurs, what factors and issues lead to that decision, how they felt about their own work and what were their own understanding of their work and position in the Canadian labour market.

There is one caveat to mention. In choosing interpretive inquiry, I am aware that this methodological framework maintains that there cannot be one valid interpretation or mono logic representation. Any single interpretation is always open to “different forms [of] understanding” or “can be read in a multitude of ways” (Packer, 1989, p. 113). However, what I intend to do in my research is not just to describe the experiences of the women but to present a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of the women from their own perspectives and their own interpretation, for as Packer (1989) notes,

[t]he best we can do is grant that a better interpretation is one that uncovers more of the perspectives from which an interaction can be viewed…. It [sic] always possible that a little more work will uncover a hitherto unsuspected perspective on things. In this way interpretive inquiry resembles the rest of life (p. 113).
I thus hope to open up a dialogue in which participants will constantly and critically remain engaged rather than just “acquiescing to the more assertive voice [of the researcher] or the more comfortable decision [taken by the researcher]” (Moss, 1996, p. 26).

Study Design

Choosing the Locale

Choosing a study sample is one of the most important areas in qualitative research (Marshall, 1996). Accordingly, the first major decision I had to take was to develop my sampling strategy. My first task was to decide where I would geographically locate my sample. I chose to conduct my interviews in the city of Toronto, Ontario and its suburban areas. The city of Toronto is considered to be a very multicultural city with a large part of its population made up to visible minority immigrants (Marger & Hoffman, 1992). South Asian immigrants constitute a significant and concentrated part of the population in Toronto, and it is estimated that in 2006 the South Asians in Toronto “accounted for over one-half (54.2%) of all South Asians in Canada” thereby representing “31.5% of all visible minorities in Toronto, and 13.5% of Toronto's total population” (Chui, Tran & Maheux, 2008, p. 30).

My next task was to identify South Asian women who ran small businesses from home. I decided to specifically concentrate on those women who did either sewing or catering from home based on my previous experience in research projects. I already had a sense of the kind of work many South Asian women did from home. Sewing and catering seemed to be the two most

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5 According to the 2006 Census, South Asians constitute the largest immigrant community in Canada (Chui, Tran & Maheux, 2008) and comprise of predominantly middle-class professionals or women with high education (Jeea, 2000).

6 I have worked as a research assistant for two SSHRC funded projects with Dr. Roxana Ng (Changing Work, Changing Lives: Mapping the Canadian Garment Industry) and Dr. Kiran Mirchandani (Skilled in Vulnerability: Work-related Learning in the Racialized Culture of Contingency) at OISE/UT that studied immigrant women of colour working in contingent sectors like garment factory, call centre and supermarket in Toronto.
common types of businesses done by South Asian women in Toronto followed by the home-based day care and beauty parlour. Once I decided on who to interview, I started to identify those localities in and around Toronto where there was a huge concentration of South Asians and where I would be able to find my potential interviewees.

Being a South Asian myself and residing in Toronto for the past ten years, I was aware of the predominant areas where I could find my potential respondents. Also, while working in the SSHRC funded projects, I developed a very good knowledge of the residence and working patterns of immigrant South Asians, especially South Asian women which was immensely helpful in selecting the locales to search for my potential interviewees.

In Toronto, I started with the Bloor-Sherbourne area (with a high concentration of Indian Tamils, Sri Lankan Tamils and Sinhalese) where I found my first couple of contacts who had immigrated to Canada from Sri Lanka. My next few respondents were residents of Victoria Park and Danforth Avenue (unofficially known as Little Bangladesh) in Scarborough. These were women, mainly from Bangladesh. The rest of the research participants resided in areas like Steeles Avenue in Brampton (mainly Indians), Lawrence and Ellesmere in Markham (mainly Indians), Thorncliffe (mainly Pakistanis) in East York and around Derry and Airport in Malton (Indians). These areas not only had a high concentration of South Asian immigrant residents but also consisted of thriving businesses owned or operated by South Asians, as well as places of worship, South Asian restaurants, strip malls and grocery stores.

The areas identified above can be defined as South Asian enclaves. An enclave can be defined as an area consisting of “immigrant groups who concentrate in a specific spatial location and organize a variety of enterprises serving their own ethnic markets and/or general population” (Portes, 1981, pp. 290-291). Ethnic enclaves are often theorized as different from such models as
“ethnic economy” where both the self-employed owner and the employees have to be co-ethnic, (Bonacich & Modell, 1980; Modell, 1977), “ethnic niche” (Waldinger, 1996) which is based on the observation that immigrant concentration can occur on the basis of public-sector employment and not necessarily entrepreneurship (Heisler, 2000) or “ethnic hegemony” (Jiobu, 1988) that moves away from such criteria as location, immigration or ethnic customers and refers to a more “general market process” (Hewitt, 2000, p. 203) where an ethnic group has “achieve[d] sufficient power in those markets to attain average or better economic returns” (Hewitt, 2000, p. 203).

Conceptualized as different from the above models in some areas or the other, ethnic enclaves are generally assumed to possess two basic characteristics: concentration of co-ethnic residences; and enterprises whose owners and employees will mostly (not always) belong to the same co-ethnic groups (Portes & Bach, 1985; Light, Sabagh, & Bozorgmehr, 1994). Enclaves are not new in Canada. Evidence suggests that ethnic enclaves in cities such as Toronto (China Town or Little Italy) existed since the early twentieth century. However, ethnic enclaves have caught the attention of scholars in light of the disadvantages that immigrants, particularly immigrants of colour experience in the host country and within its labour market. Enclaves have been seen as spaces where immigrants could dodge the negative impacts of immigration and easily get absorbed in economic activities, in case of lack of opportunities in the outside labour market (Murdie & Teixeira, 2000).

After Chinese and Italian, South Asians constitute an important group to form ethnic enclaves located in and around the Toronto metropolitan area (Qadeer & Kumar, 2006). Qadeer and Kumar (2006) calculated that quite a few Census Tracts (CT) in Mississauga and Brampton, and northern Etobicoke, have secondary concentrations of South Asians and the presence of various institutions like churches, temples, mosques, restaurants and other business and cultural
organizations make them successful South Asian enclaves. Besides that, a cluster of apartment buildings in areas like Flamingdon Park and Thorncliff Park in East York or St. James town in Toronto, although small, are well known examples of primary South Asian enclaves (Qadeer & Kumar, 2006). In fact, Toronto’s suburbs have seen an increase in South Asian enclaves with various strip malls that can be seen primarily in and around Brampton and Mississauga areas (Qadeer & Kumar, 2006).

Details of the Participants

Twenty-five South Asian women (see Appendix A for a brief profile of each participant) were included in the sample, who were running small businesses from home. Out of the twenty-five, seven women were from Bangladesh (Shabana, Jyoti, Rita, Neeta, Nabila, Shaoli and Rumona), seven from Sri Lanka (Malathi, Thaya, Laxmi, Mala, Leela, Sheila, and Jennifer), followed by six from India (Tina, Priya, Sabitha, Shashi, Leena and Mita) and five from Pakistan (Rehana, Shazia, Zarine, Ghazala, Saadiya).

All the women had immigrated to Canada after marriage with their spouses between 2000 and 2005. Amongst all the interviewees, only Jennifer, Rita, Sheila, Thaya and Shaoli (six interviewees) were sponsored by their husbands after marriage and immigrated to Canada under “family class”. Under family class, spouses, common-law partners and dependent children can be sponsored by permanent residents or citizens living in Canada. One of the main criteria for the sponsorship is that the sponsor must sign an agreement to financially support the spouse/partner for three years after immigration.

The rest of the women came under “economic class”. Under economic class, skilled workers are selected based on their education, work experience, knowledge of English and/or
French, and other criteria that would help them to become economically established in Canada.

Only Priya, Saadiya and Leena, were principle applicants, while the rest were co-applicants. They were all above thirty, ranging between thirty and forty, except for Zarine, who was above forty.

Only eleven of the respondents (Rehana, Shabana, Shashi, Jennifer, Sabitha, Mala, Ghazala, Zarine, Thaya, Neeta and Rumona) had children between two to five years of age except for Zarine, who had a fourteen-year-old son and a twelve-year-old daughter. Table 1 shows information about the women’s country of origin, age, number of children and year of immigration to Canada.

Table 1
Socio-Demographic Information of Immigrant South Asian Women in Toronto

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Age of children</th>
<th>Year of immigration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mita</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leena</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehana</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5 and 3</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shabana</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3 and 5</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shashi</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5 and 1.5</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.5 and 2</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheila</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabitha</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jyoti</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Names</td>
<td>Country of origin</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>Age of children</td>
<td>Year of immigration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leela</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaoli</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mala</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4 and 2</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shazia</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rita</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghazala</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.5 and 3</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laxmi</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zarine</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14, 12 and 5</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neeta</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priya</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nabila</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thaya</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.5, 2 and 1</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tina</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saadiya</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rumona</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malathi</td>
<td>Srilanka</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As far as educational qualifications were concerned, all the women except Thaya had at least a graduate degree either in Arts, Commerce or Science while Shashi, Sabitha, Jyoti and
Saadiya had also done their Masters. Rehana had a B.A. and a B.Ed. Jyoti had a diploma in fashion designing while Saadiya had professional certification as a data entry operator.

With regard to women’s previous work experience, the majority of the participants had experience in office/administration related work. Mita worked in an administrative position for five years while Shabana was a secretary in an office for three years. Sheila was a public relation officer in an agro-based company in Sri Lanka for five years; Shaoli was a supervisor in a garment export company for two years, while Rita was an officer in an NGO in Bangladesh for five years. Neeta, too, had worked in an NGO in Bangladesh for three years; Ghazala worked in an office for two years when in Pakistan, while Malathi, Laxmi, and Rumona had a couple of years experience in administrative/secretarial positions.

A few of the respondents also had teaching experience. Leena taught in a kindergarten in India for seven years. Rehana was a grade two teacher in a school for three years, while Jennifer was a Montessori teacher for five years. Three other interviewees had experience in banking and finance related fields. Shashi had six years of experience as a financial analyst in an insurance company in India; Sabitha had worked as a teller in a bank for two years while Zarine had worked as a secretary in a bank for seven years.

Four of the respondents were from the IT sector. Mala worked in an IT firm as a data entry operator for five years. Shazia had been with a reputed IT company in Pakistan for two years; Nabila was a computer data analyst in an agency in Bangladesh for two years while Saadiya worked as a data entry operator in an advertising agency in Pakistan for three years.

Other sectors included telecom where Leela had worked for four years, fashion designing as Jyoti had been a fashion designer for a year, and sales as Tina had been a store manager for two years, and Thaya had a job as a sales representative for a year. Among all the interviewees,
only Priya had worked in a state government job for three years while in India. Except for Thaya, all other participants thus had more than one year of professional work experience.

These women were thus highly educated, professional women as they possessed university degrees and extensive experience in managerial and supervisory positions as well as administrative and IT fields. The different areas where these women worked before immigration are considered non-regulated sectors in Canada so that they could look for jobs, as soon as they arrived without having to go through any compulsory certification or reevaluation of their education and degrees. The term “non-regulated profession” refers to jobs that do not legally require certification, registration or licensing. For members of some non-regulated professions, certification/registration with a professional body is available on a voluntary basis (The Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials [CICIC], 2002). In Canada, it is estimated that around eighty to eighty-five percent workers are employed in non-regulated professions; the major occupations of this type are in the fields of banking, management, business administration, social services, information technology (IT), retail, and manufacturing (Canadian Access for International Professionals and Skilled Trades [C.A.I.P.S], 2008). Only Rehana who had been a grade two teacher was getting her certificates reevaluated at the time of the interview as teaching falls under regulated occupations in Canada. Table 2 offers a brief summary of the previous education and professional backgrounds of the participants.
Table 2

Demographic Information of Immigrant South Asian Women in Toronto

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>Education level</th>
<th>Previous job</th>
<th>Current business in Canada</th>
<th>Other paid employment in Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mita</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>B.A. Graduate</td>
<td>Office administration</td>
<td>Sewing and catering</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leena</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Kindergarten teacher</td>
<td>Catering</td>
<td>Part-time cashier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehana</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Graduate, B.Ed</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Sewing</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shabana</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>B.A. Graduate</td>
<td>Administration secretary</td>
<td>Sewing and home-based beautician</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shashi</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Masters in Commerce</td>
<td>Financial analyst in Insurance company</td>
<td>Catering</td>
<td>Part-time cashier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>B.A. Graduate</td>
<td>Montessori teacher</td>
<td>Home day care and sewing</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheila</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>Graduate, Political Science</td>
<td>Public Relation officer in agro-based company</td>
<td>Sewing and day care</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabitha</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Bank employee</td>
<td>Catering</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jyoti</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>Masters in Commerce</td>
<td>Fashion designer</td>
<td>Sewing</td>
<td>Part-time cashier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Diploma in Fashion Designing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leela</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Telecom employee</td>
<td>Sewing</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaoli</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Assistant supervisor</td>
<td>Sewing and catering</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Names</td>
<td>Country of origin</td>
<td>Education level</td>
<td>Previous job</td>
<td>Current business in Canada</td>
<td>Other paid employment in Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mala</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Data entry operator</td>
<td>Catering</td>
<td>Part-time packer in a food manufacturin g company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shazia</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Computer data entry operator</td>
<td>Sewing</td>
<td>Part-time cashier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rita</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Office assistant in an NGO</td>
<td>Sewing and home day care</td>
<td>Part-time call center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghazala</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Office work</td>
<td>Sewing</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laxmi</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>B.Com</td>
<td>Administrative assistant</td>
<td>Sewing and catering</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zarine</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Bank Secretary</td>
<td>Sewing</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neeta</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Officer in NGO</td>
<td>Catering</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priya</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>State-government employee</td>
<td>Sewing and catering</td>
<td>Part-time sewer in a garment factory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nabila</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>B.Sc</td>
<td>Data entry operator</td>
<td>Sewing</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thaya</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Sales representative in store</td>
<td>Sewing</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tina</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Store manager</td>
<td>Garment seller and sewing</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saadiya</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Masters in social science</td>
<td>Assistant editor in ad agency</td>
<td>Catering and event planner</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Names, Country of origin, Education level, Previous job, Current business in Canada, Other paid employment in Canada

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>Education level</th>
<th>Previous job</th>
<th>Current business in Canada</th>
<th>Other paid employment in Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rumona</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Beauty parlour and day care</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malathi</td>
<td>Srilanka</td>
<td>Science graduate</td>
<td>Office employee</td>
<td>Sewing and garment seller</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The kind of home businesses that these women were engaged in during the interview can be primarily divided into two categories. For example, ten women set up garment businesses where they sewed and sold ready-made garments, ethnic clothes and dresses, household linens as well as baby clothes that they have either stitched themselves or brought from their home countries. Six women (Leena, Shashi, Sabitha, Mala, Neeta, and Saadiya) had been catering for the South Asian community. Amongst the rest, four women (Mita, Rehana, Laxmi, Nabila) did both sewing and catering, one woman (Shabana) combined sewing and beauty therapy, three other women (Jennifer, Rita and Sheila) also ran home day-care along with their sewing business while Rumona was the only woman interviewed who did neither sewing nor catering but had a beauty salon and day-care at home. While running their small businesses from home a few women also mentioned doing part-time, paid-work outside home to supplement their income. Leena, Shashi, Jyoti and Shazia worked as part-time cashiers in retail stores. Mala worked as a packer in a food manufacturing company. Priya was a part-time sewer in a garment factory while Rita was a temporary telemarketer in a call centre.

In terms of work hours, a majority of the women reported working around 15-20 hours a week and those who had another part-time job worked almost 30-35 hours. However, the hours varied depending on the workload and business orders received each week.
**Sampling and Data Collection**

Scholars argue that in order to recruit potential interviewees, the researcher may have to follow many trails starting with friends and colleagues to contacts provided by the interviewees themselves (Rapley, 2004). My recruitment of interviewees was quite similar to that. The dual processes of recruitment and interviews started in the summer of 2007 and continued until October, 2008. Due to the invisible nature of this home-based work, random sampling was not possible. Since most of these small home-based businesses are often unregistered and hardly appear in statistics, it is very difficult to get complete information of home-based small businesses in Toronto on records. Furthermore, given the nature of the business that many of these women were doing (largely informal and from home), it was difficult to reach out to the potential interviewees without having contacts in the community itself. Therefore, my initial step was to approach people from the community that I personally knew to spread around the word about my research and to see if there were women interested in talking to me. Subsequently, “snowball sampling” was used.

Snowball sampling “identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich, that is, good examples for study, good interview subjects” (Patton, 1990, p. 182). This sampling has also been recommended as an appropriate method for establishing contacts with difficult-to-find populations (Benería & Roldán, 1987; Bernard, 1994). Benería and Roldán, for example, used this method to develop rapport with the "hidden" female industrial home workers in Mexico City. To find my initial contacts, I went and spoke to several South Asian organizations located in Greater Toronto Area. I distributed research flyers (Appendix B) and handed out information letters (Appendix C) to my friends in the community. I also approached a few South Asian grocery stores as well as several apartments located in the
areas I mentioned in the section on ‘Choosing the locale’, to put up the flyers. However, the response to the flyer was very low (only one woman contacted me) so that the initial five interviewees were recruited mainly through friends in the community who knew each other well. Subsequently, most of the contacts were introduced to me by the interviewees. Snowballing worked out well as the women interviewees were comfortable in referring their friends and acquaintance once they knew that the interview was not time consuming or uncomfortable for them.

While this method of sampling made it easier to get a fairly good number of interviewees, it was also, to some extent, limiting my sample to the same country as most of the women who introduced each other tended to be from the same country living in close proximity to each other. Initially, I continued interviewing women from the same country. This was the reason that my first few interviewees were all from Sri Lanka. However, my intention was to interview South Asian women from other countries as well, like India, Bangladesh or Pakistan to find out whether women from these countries also pursued similar businesses or not. I wanted to get a variety of responses to get a clearer understanding of how women dealt with any barriers they experienced after immigration.

Therefore, after I finished interviewing a few Sri Lankan women, I started looking into other South Asian communities to recruit more interviewees. I called up a few women who had placed advertisements about their sewing business in a couple of Bangladeshi newspapers. Initially, they spoke to me on the phone thinking that I was one of their customers. But once I told them that I was a researcher who wanted to interview them, a couple of women just hung up on me, while another woman told me that she was not comfortable in giving an interview. One woman just refused to acknowledge that she sewed from home. Given the above situations, it
was very difficult to get respondents to agree to an interview. Therefore, I had to depend on my contacts in the community to get the respondents.

My subsequent months were spent in following up with my friends in Greater Toronto Area (GTA) to see if they knew anyone who met my research criteria. I revisited the grocery stores to see if they got any response from the flyers I had put up. In addition, I visited some of the South Asian garment stores on Gerrard Street, Steeles Avenue, Derry Road, Dixie Road and Tuxedo Street at Markham to find out if they knew any woman who sold or sewed dresses from home. Moreover, a friend of mine suggested a few flea markets around GTA where on Sundays many South Asians display their products for sale. I also visited a number of small restaurants and sweet shops to find out information about women caterers. Finally, I came to know about a few women caterers from friends in the community who on various occasions and ceremonies have hired such catering services.

To start with, I got a couple of calls, one from a woman in Brampton and the other from Malton. I had met them at a flea market where they sold Indian clothes sewed at home. Both women were very enthusiastic when I told them about my research and asked me to come over to their place for the interview. I got another contact from one of my friend’s mother who knew a home-based sewer. Subsequently, I got a fair number of respondents, located in and around Toronto, who provided me with an extensive array of information and stories. The interviews were “information rich cases” (Patton, 2002, p. 242) providing a nuance description of the lives, work and struggles of the women entrepreneurs as well as their thoughts, feelings, learning and agency as they went about setting their enterprises.

Together with a snowball sampling, “criteria sampling” was also used. This was because home-based entrepreneurs can differ. They can be self-employed entrepreneurs or salaried
employees. Therefore, to maintain uniformity in the employment conditions of the interviewees, two criteria were set up. First, only those women were selected who were home-based business owners and had set up the business on their own. Although, as mentioned before, a few of these women were also employed in part-time jobs outside their home enterprises, I still decided to include them in the research as their experiences provided insights to the kind of networking they could achieve while working outside home within the larger mainstream community. Also, for those women who were working outside, the issue of race and gender were more prominent and experiential, a part of their everyday struggle and negotiation. Second, all women had to be an immigrant, born and raised in South Asia, who arrived either with their husbands or on their own and had to be living in Canada for at least a year or more at the time of the interview.

**Choosing to Interview**

Post-positivist qualitative researchers favor interviewing as they believe that this method is adequate to capture individual’s point of view and perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In fact, face-to-face interviews are said to be particularly enabling for insights into subjectivity, voice and lived experiences (Rapley, 2004). Jansen and Davis (1998) point out that feminist interpretive research almost always includes interviewing. Perhaps the reason behind this is that for feminists, "representation of women's experience" is "the beginning and often the end of the production of knowledge claims" (Gottfried, 1996, p. 5). Therefore, feminist researchers like Anderson and Jack (1991) argue that an interview is often favoured, as it is a way of giving expression to women's experiences as well as their perspectives. For my research as well I decided to interview the women. The reason I chose to do interviews was because I felt that interviewing would give me an opportunity to have closer contacts with my informants and to document their life and career trajectories since immigration. I agree with Reinharz (1992) that
the process of interviewing, using a feminist approach provided me with a direct access to the ideas, thoughts and feelings of my informants. Additionally, I could bring to the surface the voices of South Asian immigrant women entrepreneurs, whose work and experiences have remained largely hidden in the gamut of entrepreneurship literature (Rapley, 2004). The method of an interview gave these women the opportunity to voice their own thoughts, feelings, and emotions, something that has been hardly recognized or acknowledged in the literature on the immigrant entrepreneurship or enclave economy.

The interviews were done in person, mainly in English and lasted from 1 to 2.5 hours. While the South Asian women I spoke to have different mother tongues, such as Hindi, Bengali, Tamil, Sinhalese, Punjabi, Gujarati, Urdu, it was not an inconvenience to do the interviews as most of them were fluent in English. Since I can speak Hindi, Urdu and Bengali, I asked the interviewees to shift to their mother tongue whenever they felt like it. As such it was not at all difficult for me to communicate with women from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India. The women who spoke Sinhalese and Tamil were fluent in English. Only in case of Thaya, an interpreter was used as she was not at all fluent in English and could only speak in Tamil—a language, I am not proficient in. Although it is argued that in translation certain emotions and feelings embedded within the responses might get lost to the researcher, yet I decided to have this woman take part in the research and share her views as much as possible. This was because this woman was one of the most successful home-based entrepreneurs running a good business with a fairly large clientele. I also took care to select an interpreter who was not only a good friend of mine but also a community worker and a professional translator, very much dedicated towards her work and work ethics. I made her sign a non-disclosure form to maintain confidentiality of the research process.
All the interviews were conducted at respondent’s home. In very few cases, the husbands were present in the room when the interview was being conducted. None of the husbands interfered during the interview except for Priya whose husband showed enthusiasm for what his wife was doing and spoke at great length after the interview about the future prospects of home-based businesses in Canada. All interviews were voluntary and the participants were asked to sign an informed consent form (Appendix D) in order to ensure that none of them was forced to be part of the research. I also made sure that they understood that they can choose not to reply to any question that would seem uncomfortable to them. Interviewees also had to fill out a demographic form (Appendix E) filling in their name, address, education, age, marital status and other information. However, confidentiality was ensured by making it very clear to them that only my supervisor, and I would have access to the interviews and that at no point would their real name, address or other information be used without their consent. The interviewees were paid a small honorarium as well.

**Structure of the Interviews**

This study relied mainly on semi-structured (open-ended) face-to-face interviews based on a set of questions I had prepared. Semi-structured interviews are known to provide the “principal means by which…to achieve the active involvement of … [the] respondents in the construction of data about their lives” (Graham, 1984, p. 112). Moreover, semi-structured, open-ended interviews are more flexible (Fontana & Frey, 2000) as they enable the participant to narrate personal experiences and organize information in a variety of ways not necessarily dictated by linear or temporal logic. This approach to interviewing allows for the depth, complexity and contradictory experiences of women to emerge, which structured interviews or questionnaire might hinder. Also, similar to what Foley and Valenzuela (2005) had done in their
research on the Chicano movement, I used a conversational or dialogic form of an interview that encouraged the women to participate wholeheartedly. Conversation is also consistent with the principles of feminist interpretive inquiry (Reinharz, 1992). My conversation with the women was very informal, and at times we often shared personal information about ourselves that helped to ease the atmosphere further. Indeed, one of the main tenets of feminist research is to reject any strict separation between the researcher and the respondents. One of the ways this is done is by allowing “the respondents to ‘talk back’ to the investigator” (Cook & Fonow, 1990, p. 76).

Feminist researchers such as Ann Oakley (1981), in her study of motherhood, emphasized this process as interactional, where answering the questions asked by the interviewees makes the interaction more personalized and equal. While doing my interviews, I was also asked several questions by the women with regard to my work, education, family lives or academic experience. Often they would ask me whether I was married or not, had children and how supportive my husband was of my work. A couple of times, women shared intimate details with me with regard to how controlling their husbands could be at times. Our open conversation was very generative, granting me new understanding of these women’s lives at home, within enclaves, their positions in the Canadian labour market, the impact of immigration on their personal and economic lives as well as their work as business owners and what that phenomenon meant to them, and their family members. My focus throughout was to understand these experiences and phenomenon as part of their lived experience and not just trying to get my questions answered (Reinharz, 1992).

Some of the basic questions were asked to all the women especially relating to their demographic information. Subsequently, more in-depth discussions were carried out where required issues relevant to the study were probed further. In my interviews with immigrant women, I focused on three broad areas. The first area related to their previous work experiences
and education, their process of immigration and arrival in Canada. The second set of questions probed their career paths upon arrival. Interviewees were asked to describe in detail their job searching processes, including application and interviews as well as training and workshops that they might have attended in Canada to facilitate their entry into the labour market. Relatedly, women were also asked to reflect on the kind of barriers they experienced in the Canadian labour market vis-à-vis their own racial and gendered positions in the country. The third area broadly related to their home-based businesses, with in-depth probing of how women themselves made sense of their work and what value they placed on this particular form of work.

All interviews were tape-recorded except for Malathi, Rumona and Rita, where extensive notes were taken by me as the women did not feel comfortable with the recording. Tape recording interviews have also been lauded by scholars as the best possible ways to get actual details of conversations without depending on memories (Silverman, 2000). It is also regarded as more useful than field notes, as it records the pauses or the overlaps and can be played over again and again to improve transcriptions and analysis (Silverman, 2000). I found taping very useful as it helped me to maintain eye contact with each woman and listen to their stories more attentively and intimately, without remaining busy taking detailed notes during the interviews. However, I always ensured I received permission for recording from the women and explained to them issues of confidentiality and anonymity. None of the women were interested in receiving a copy of the transcript. However, a number of them were eager to get a copy of my thesis as they felt that learning about other women facing similar situations would give them some relief that they were not alone in their struggle and would also help them to learn about what strategies other women were undertaking in order to negotiate with the labour market barriers.
After each interview, I would write a short two-page summary of the interview and any significant comment or observation that came up during the process. I then transcribed each interview verbatim and translated any words or phrases that the women might have mentioned in their mother tongue. To maintain anonymity, I used pseudonyms in the transcripts and on the labels of the tapes so that none of the interviewees could be identified. Only I and my supervisor had access to the interview transcripts, where similar pseudonyms were used to protect the privacy of the interviewees. Throughout the thesis, I have provided a detailed description of the interviewees and their perspectives in line with qualitative researchers who believe that rich descriptions of the social world are valuable (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). However, I took extra care not to use any information that can potentially identify any of the interviewees.

**Data Analysis:**

**Phases of the Interpretive Process**

There were several phases involved in interpreting the data. First, after transcribing the tapes, I read and re-read the transcripts trying to understand the conversations and the analysis that the women had presented with regard to their life and work in Canada. While reading the transcripts I looked for prominent themes and patterns that emerged from the conversations, themes like motivation for immigration, training/learning, job searching experiences or managing family responsibilities. I also wrote detailed notes in the margins of the transcripts, highlighting significant issues and experiences pertaining to the themes. After I finished reading the transcripts and identified all the themes, I realized I needed help with the management of my data. I used NU*DIST 6 (N6), a qualitative data analysis software, to manage my data set. I am aware of the fact that for interpretive research, computer aided software may not be the best tool for analysis and might not clearly express the depth of each interview. Yet, I decided to continue
with N6 to help me organize the data set for easier retrieval. I also had previous experience working with this software, and it was useful for clearer ordering and access to the themes when necessary. So from the transcripts I pulled out quotes and comments made by the interviewees in relation to each theme that I had identified earlier and entered them into N6. Once I finished entering the quotes, I tried to get an idea of the commonality or the dissimilarity that existed between women’s experiences. For example, while going through women’s job searching experiences, I noticed that subtle differences existed between women, as to how they accessed information about job opportunities upon immigration. Women who were sponsored by their husbands mentioned getting advice from their spouses about where to go and who to talk to when they started applying for work. On the contrary, women who arrived in Canada with their husbands spoke at length about how difficult it was for them to learn about job opportunities. Their experiences were important in highlighting how a lack exists in the support/settlement system for newly arrived immigrants in Canada that often hinders their integration into the labour market.

Next, I started to write the participant’s account as extracted from the themes. At this stage I tried to make sense of what kind of response women had to each theme and whether all the quotes supporting a particular theme had any kind of commonality or differences between them. For instance, with regard to the theme of what motivated women to immigrate to Canada, I noticed that majority of the women referred to “better life” or “better work opportunities” as reasons for their migration. On the other hand, while probing the theme of gendered division of labour within the household, I noted that among the twenty-five participants, fifteen women responded that they would do most of the work, while remaining ten talked about sharing the work with their husbands. It was at this stage that women’s voices seemed to come alive through
the quotes. It was as if they were engaged in a conversation each other and not just me. Rehana and Jennifer reflected on the lengthy process of certification involved in working as a teacher in Canada. Shashi, Sheila, Malathi, and Shazia shared stories about how they would sit for hours in workshops listening to the trainers talk about Canadian work culture and job interviewing processes. Jennifer and Nabila commented on the inadequate knowledge of most of the job counselors in successfully orienting immigrants to their preferred fields. The quotes were thus immensely powerful in tracing the processes of how well educated immigrant women of colour are channelized into precarious job sectors and how women themselves dealt with such precariousness. Thus, I used quotes extensively to establish women’s own point of view with regard to what they think of their own action (Bernstein, 1976) in their own words as much as possible.

In the final phase, my task was to add “what was needed to in order for the stories to be in the context of the women speaking them and to create some flow and focus for their stories to merge” (Borbridge, 2000, p. 92). Thus, chapters four and five in this thesis include the voices of the women participants, and their descriptions of how/why they came to Canada, their previous educational backgrounds, their job searching experiences after arrival, the various training that they went through and finally their efforts in setting up their home-based businesses. While describing the details, women would often analyze their situations and their various efforts to remain economically active vis-à-vis the exclusions they went through. These analyses by the participants also form an important part of the data chapter. My task of connecting all these experiences and analysis to the literature “felt like a natural extension of our conversations” (Borbridge, 2000, p. 92) and gave more credibility, insights and understanding to the body of
literature existing on immigrant entrepreneurship, enclave economy and the gendered and racialized labour market in Canada.
Chapter Four:  
Tracing the Process of Becoming a Migrant:  
South Asian Immigrant Women Negotiating  
(Re)Training and Labour Market Incorporation

It was 6th March 2001 when Sheila arrived in Toronto with her husband from Sri Lanka. Sheila’s husband was employed in a medical clinic in Toronto and sponsored her after their marriage. Sheila had a Bachelor degree in Political Science and was working in an agro-based company as a public relation officer in Sri Lanka. A smart, well spoken, educated woman, Sheila had been with the company for five years before leaving the job to come to Canada. Excited, she dreamt of furthering her career and getting a better-paid opportunity after immigration. However, when I interviewed her in 2007, she was running two small businesses, one of sewing baby clothes, curtains and cushion covers and the other of running a small day care, both from her home. Utterly frustrated in her efforts to find a well-paying corporate job, she had taken up her home-based business initiative as a desperate resort to increase her family earnings. She was still applying for jobs through various placement agencies but was never even called for an interview, except for once, where she was not hired. In this chapter I track the dynamics through which women like Sheila, well-educated and professionally qualified, end up working in small, low-end informal businesses. To explore these dynamics, I will begin by looking at South Asian women participants, their arrival and job search experiences in Canada and the various structural impediments they had to negotiate in their efforts to establish themselves in the mainstream labour market. In particular, I will focus on the training and the workshops that the participants attended, where their bodily deportments and habits were worked upon and presumably “corrected” in order to facilitate their entry into the labour market. I will argue that despite going
through such correctional processes, South Asian immigrant women remained critical of such processes that aimed at regulating their behavior and values. By believing in their own abilities and resourcefulness, these women not only challenged the implicit idea of women of colour lacking in the proper knowledge and codes necessary for a professional Canadian worker that remained associated with such correctional processes but also commented on an adverse Canadian labour-market system that acutely devalued and de-professionalized immigrants of colour. Their critique would help to understand how a lack or inadequacy exists, not with the South Asian immigrant women, but due to the racialized and gendered practices of the Canadian labour market.

Choosing the “Productive” Immigrant:

*Tracing Elements of Neoliberal Policies Within Immigration System*

The whole application process took us… one year… I think… and then we had to wait for four years after submitting the application, when we finally heard from the consulate. I remember we had to put in details of our education, work experience, language tests to get the required number of points to become eligible. Although I was the principal applicant, me and also my husband had to put all our qualification details. We went and got our educational certificates, letters from our past employers… my god… the amount of documents and information that we had to put in was huge. But we were determined to come here, we wanted a good life. So when we finally got accepted we were so happy.

The above quote is from one my interviewees, Leena, who came to Canada in 2002 with her husband. A former kindergarten teacher in India, Leena during the interview shared with me the documentation that is involved in the application process for Canadian immigration. According to her, the process was not merely handing in of a bunch of papers, but involved
matching their qualifications with the NOC\textsuperscript{7} list, putting in the details of their work experiences, education, and then waiting for four long years when finally they heard about their application. Education, work experience and language skills are some of the important determinants for getting selected for Canadian immigration, and the amount of documentation that Leena and her husband had to hand in makes clear the rigorous and time consuming selection process that exists for choosing some of the “best and brightest” immigrants considered suitable for settling down in Canada.

Canada has an active immigration programme that invites individuals to apply to enter the country and contribute her/his skills, education, and experience to the social, cultural and economic growth of the national life. Immigrants are thus considered “assets” to this nation and only those who are held to be substantially qualified to enter Canada are inducted into the migration process (Hiebert, 2002). This selection of “qualified” immigrants is based on certain criteria like education, work experience, age, English/French language proficiency, arranged employment in Canada and adaptability so that only those are chosen who can enrich Canada not only demographically but also economically by contributing to its labour market and maintaining its status as a globally competitive knowledge economy. No wonder, the other interviewees also had to experience rigorous screening like Leena in terms of their application for immigration. Despite not being the principal applicant in most cases\textsuperscript{8} participants (including those sponsored by their husbands) still had to submit their educational and work related certificates as these were vital for the successful acceptance of their application. A minimum waiting period of four to five

\textsuperscript{7} National Occupational Classification (NOC) is a “nationally accepted reference on occupations in Canada” (HRSDC, \url{http://www5.hrsdc.gc.ca/NOC/English/NOC/2006/AboutNOC.aspx}) to understand the jobs available in Canada’s labour market and to find out their eligibility to those job requirements.

\textsuperscript{8} Amongst the women interviewed only Saadiya, Neeta and Leena applied as principal applicants while in the rest of the cases the women were co-applicants. Their spouses were the principal applicants.
years was reported by most interviewees except for those who immigrated under the “family class”.

The majority of the participants who immigrated under “economic class” also referred to the points that they were allotted to assess their suitability for immigration. Principal applicants were required to have a minimum score of sixty-seven out of hundred to be eligible for immigration. As I discussed in Chapter two, the introduction of this Point System in 1967 was to bring in skilled and educated individuals who can make Canada not only socially and culturally vibrant, but more importantly, economically productive (Arat-Koc, 1999; Reitz, 2004). Since then, particularly in recent years, with Canada’s adoption of neoliberal ideology and the principles of the knowledge economy (Forstorp, 2008), what has really occurred is a “commodification of immigrants” (Arat-Koc, 1999, p. 35) so that immigrants are selected mainly according to their ability to contribute to the state economy (Girard & Bauder, 2007). Scholars have attributed this commodification of immigrants to Canada’s adoption of a “neoliberal macro ideology” (Mckeen & Porter, 2003), guiding its state, immigration and labour market policies. This neoliberal macro ideology has resulted in a culture of productivity that continually stresses the importance of immigrants bringing in their education and experience to enhance the economic development of the country. This preference for highly skilled and educated individuals is, therefore, based on the very assumption that as soon as they arrive in Canada, they will be able to make themselves employed and start contributing to Canada’s economy (Bauder, 2008; Mitchell, Lightman, & Herd, 2007), thereby reducing their burden on the state and welfare schemes.

The migration of skilled and professional individuals to Western countries has also been facilitated by economic globalization and the expansion of the neoliberal free market that has
created new opportunities especially for the skilled and well-educated immigrants (Li, 2003a). Countries like Canada, Australia, or the USA is thoroughly dependent on immigrants for their economic and demographic prosperity. Immigrants are attracted to these developed nations because of the "material affluence and economic prosperity of these regions, and because of the resulting occupational opportunities and financial rewards for individuals” (Li, 2003a, p. 3). Women's decision to migrate to Canada was also to a great extent led by their desire to establish themselves and build a better future for themselves and their families in a western country with advanced economic opportunities. While those who were sponsored by their husbands after marriage did not have much choice in deciding whether to come to Canada or not as this was a decision which was foisted on them, women who came primarily motivated by economic considerations alone did mention discussing the issue of migration with their spouses and extended families before taking a decision. While the majority of the women mentioned that migration was a mutual decision taken by both the partners, a few like Zarine mentioned how reluctant she was initially to leave her job and come to Canada. Later she, too, agreed to come swayed by her hopes for a better future as well as because of spousal obligations.

During the interviews, most of the respondents also expressed how happy and excited they were to be in what they felt was a “land of opportunity”. Repeatedly, through the course of the various interviews, women reiterated how they thought of immigration as an opportunity to enhance their career, earn copiously and ensure a secure future for themselves and their children. Neeta, who worked in a NGO in Bangladesh before coming to Canada in 2004, described how the very thought of immigrating to Canada brought happiness not only to her but also to her whole family:
Coming to Canada was the dream come true. We were all very happy including my family back in Bangladesh. For the entire family it was like a dream come true.

Neeta had planned to work in a community or non-governmental organization after migration as she was confident that her five years of experience working with women’s issues in Bangladesh would be useful in getting her desired job. Many other women also mentioned such reasons as “better opportunities”, “better future”, “good life” as dominant reasons for migration. Overall, a majority of the women expressed their happiness for being able to come to Canada. As Shazia, a computer data entry operator from Pakistan explained:

We had a very high expectation about Canada. I was very happy that I was coming to abroad, you know people back home think a lot about foreign life.

Thus an enmeshment of desires and expectations pervaded the initial stage of women’s migration to Canada, and their decision to look for a job was also out of such a desire to be settled in the labour market as soon as possible. Although the majority of the women were not principal applicants, being highly educated and having worked before, they were very keen on entering the labour market as quickly as possible.

The keenness of these women to work after immigration corresponds to the research findings of other scholars such as Das Gupta (1994) and Jamal (1998), who have indicated a strong tendency on the part of most South Asian immigrant women to work upon migration. Prompted by their eagerness to develop their careers as well as contribute to the fast depleting reserved money, the respondents in my research thus wanted to start earning as early as possible. Their intense fervour to find gainful employment was also driven by the zeal to be self-sufficient and earning members of the Canadian society. Laxmi had been working in an administrative
position in Sri Lanka and did not want to depend on her husband after immigration. Similar to Laxmi, Sabitha, who had been working as a teller in a bank in India also did not want to remain without work:

After settling down in Toronto, my first intention was to find a job. I have worked for so many years and never had to depend on any one for money. I wanted to support myself here too.

Coupled with their zeal and enthusiasm was also their confidence in themselves and their capacities to be successful in the Canadian economy. They believed that since they have been chosen to migrate because of their educational and work experiences, this would ensure “proper” employment in Canada. Neeta, for instance, spoke about the high hopes, she and her husband had about making a successful career in Canada:

We thought as soon as we land in Canada there would be jobs waiting for us as we heard that there is a severe skill shortage in Canada and probably that was the reason that government of Canada is hiring people or inviting people here through the immigration process.

Jyoti, who was a fashion designer and a Master degree holder in Commerce from Bangladesh, similarly hoped that with her education and experience if she had been able to immigrate to Canada, she should be able to access jobs in her field as well:

Basically, I am a Master degree holder in commerce but by profession, I am a fashion designer. I did a number of professional courses in fashion designing in Bangladesh and India. Before coming to Canada, I was working as a fashion designer for a big garment export house in Bangladesh. So… after immigration I started looking for a job in the fashion industry.
As my interviews progressed, a common theme that seemed to emerge out of our conversation was the kind of confidence these women had on their previous qualifications. While the desire of the women to immigrate to Canada may have been elicited by global capitalism and Canada’s proactive immigration system, as far as the abilities of the women were concerned, none of the interviewees looked upon themselves as deficient or lacking in any way that might hinder their prospects of becoming successful members of the mainstream Canadian society and its economy. Having more than three years of working experience, and sometimes more, the women were eager to utilize their past skills and training upon immigration.

This belief that women had in their abilities sets them apart from the migrant workers in Pun’s (2005) study. There, we saw that one of the reasons that women wanted to migrate to the city was to refashion themselves as the “dagongmei”. Driven by a strong desire to overcome the rural-urban divide, poverty and patriarchal control, women would almost “escape” from their villages to the city in order to improve their lives (Pun, 2005, p. 158). Perceiving themselves to be lacking as “modern gendered subjects” (Pun, 2005, p. 158), women would thus willingly try to dissociate themselves from their past lives and identity as rural peasants, change their attitude, language, lifestyle, dreams, desires and consequently, be determined to conform to the hegemonic mould of the neoliberal worker-subject- the dagongmei. As I have pointed out earlier, these desires to belong to the hegemonic norms coupled with a deeply embedded sense of lack within their own selves played an important role in inducing these women workers to various self-regulating and disciplining practices. The participants in my study, however, did not exhibit any such inherent feeling of lack or deficiency on their part. Being from middle-class, well-to-do families, with good education and fluency in English, they spoke at length about their high qualifications, job experiences and many years of training and skills that they were willing to
invest in Canada to get employment in their desired areas. In fact, women interviewees felt that Canadian economy would immensely benefit from the skill sets they had brought into the country – a consideration that all of them unambiguously remarked on as to why they were chosen as immigrants in the first place.

“Finding a Job Is a Full-Time Job”:
Navigating the Job Searching System

Despite being eager to get employed, many women had to deal with the initial hurdle of understanding how to access information about job openings. Not everyone had a similar problem though. For example, Jennifer’s husband was already living in Toronto before she got married to him. So were Rita and Thaya’s husbands. Thus, they were initially advised by their spouses about where to look for jobs and who to make contact with. When Jennifer arrived in Canada, she already knew that she might have to get her Montessori training re-evaluated to be able to teach in a school. So after applying to a couple of schools, when she did not hear from them, she went and met an employment counselor to find out about the recertification process.

But not every respondent had such a source of information. Rumona, for instance, had secretarial experience for two years and wanted to look for a similar position in an office or a bank in Toronto. Saadiya was interested in IT. She had worked as a data entry operator for three years in Pakistan and wanted to look for a similar or better opportunity. Although they were handed various pamphlets or information booklets by a number of community organizations and government centers serving immigrants, women still felt that they were at a loss when it came to actually searching for a job, figuring out where to go, how to look for it and who to talk to. Their first impulse was to look for job postings in newspapers. Consequently, a majority of the participants mentioned visiting the human resource offices to learn about job opportunities.
There they found initial guidance about how to apply for jobs and were even directed to many job postings. They were advised to check the postings regularly and to keep themselves updated about the opportunities. It was through these offices that the participants like Shashi or Shazia learned about the need to approach recruiters to get placement in their own fields. Many were advised to go meet employment counselors in community organizations. For example, Jyoti wanted to learn about opportunities existing in Toronto's fashion industry, and she was advised by the human resource staff to talk to employment counselors in non-governmental agencies to get assistance in her field. Therefore, women’s initial job search efforts were mainly targeted towards finding recruiters, employment counselors and going through different job postings in the newspapers and human resource offices. Yet, there were barriers.

The first barrier related to finding out potential recruiters. Women interviewees drew attention to the fact that while they were advised to go and meet the job recruiters from various organizations, they were never told how to contact them or where to find them. They complained about how most of the organizations never considered the fact that they were new to the country and needed more concrete guidance than what they were being told to do by the community organizations. Rita was one such sufferer. When told that she would have to get help from placement agencies to market her resumé in the Canadian labour market, Rita was at a loss. Hardly knowing anyone, she just kept searching on her own when finally after a couple of months of arrival in Canada, a friend from the community gave her the name of one placement agency. While describing her situation to me, Rita strongly critiqued the Canadian settlement system that often does not consider certain factors that might apparently seem to be trivial. She explained that:
You see when they tell us to go there or do that, they do not understand that we are new here. We hardly know the roads even, let alone knowing recruiters or employers. We do not just need directions we need concrete contacts.

Rita's comment reveals an important flaw that exists within the Canadian system and its settlement programs that are presumably put in place to assist immigrants with their labour market integration. This flaw is in relation to the kind of services being delivered by the different community organizations serving the labour market needs and settlement issues of immigrants and has been discussed in some of the studies as well. According to studies (Campana & Topkara-Sarsu, 2006; George & Chaze, 2009), the settlement needs of recent immigrants have changed from before so that today their primary aim is labour market integration. But the existing job search procedures along with the necessity to create network and understand the expectations of the employers are so complicated that often immigrants feel confused and lost in comprehending how the “system” works. In light of such situation, scholars contend that what immigrants really need are specialized services and concrete information, rather than just simple referrals or few advices (Campana & Topkara-Sarsu, 2006; George & Chaze, 2009). As the newcomer’s first point of contact, settlement organizations need to be able to provide them with more definitive information of work opportunities, employer’s information and support leading to jobs.

The second barrier that women spoke about was that of accessing the computer and online information. A few like Mala, Shazia, or Laxmi, had worked before with computers so that accessing information on the Internet was not that difficult for them. But for most women, having to depend on the Internet for their everyday information was a constraint, especially when
it came to looking for available jobs. The situation that Priya described was later reaffirmed by many other women:

See, I know how to use the computer, but this dependency that is here, where for every single information you have to go to websites, I found that very frustrating and difficult initially. For everything people would tell me to visit websites, and then I would have to rush to the Internet café or public library to access computer. …it was bit frustrating in the beginning, but then I knew in Canada, I will have to learn it, and I was confident that I will be able to do it.

In another instance, Sabitha and her husband, both did not have much knowledge about computers, and could not afford to buy a computer right after immigration. However, once they realized that in Canada most of the job applications are done online, they started using the computer more and more to get well acquainted with all the programs. While at times Sabitha’s husband would go out in the afternoon to various placement agencies, Sabitha would rush to the library and work on the Internet for hours trying to figure out how to access the job market in Toronto. However, the only reason she could be so flexible was because she had no children at that time:

That time we were new here and I didn’t have any children either. So I used to sit for hours trying to find out information about the jobs available.

In fact, Sabitha was the one who could find out information about some recruiting agencies in Toronto and the first job that her husband had as an office assistant was through one such agency that she found on the Internet. Pointing out how most of the community organizations refer women to the various websites to look for jobs, Sabitha added:

The resource centers were useful in giving you the initial information but then to go to the job postings they said we have to go online and visit the job sites. Even
job applications are done online, résumé everything, so we had to get used to the net, otherwise it was becoming very difficult. We also bought a computer finally as it saved us time to go out to the library every time we needed any information.

This difficulty in accessing online information has been criticized by scholars who argue that rather than directing immigrants to abstract online information, a more personalized and responsive service need to be provided on an one-to-one basis (Campana & Topkara-Sarsu, 2006). Additionally, since with globalization, information and communication technologies have become important means for immigrants to access on-line information about employment and other settlement services, scholars (Caidi, Longford, Allard, & Dechief, 2007) argue that orientation to such tools are necessary so that immigrants can access online services more easily and utilize the tools effectively to gain information and build social network. As the informants in my study point out, such orientation need to be based on day-to-day requirements as well as the skills and awareness, the immigrants are bringing to the country. Without such responsive services, these online communication tools can lead to the socio-economic exclusion of the newcomers (Caidi, Longford, Allard, & Dechief, 2007).

Despite all the different barriers that women pointed out, what stands out most is how they were proactive in coping with these barriers- learning to use the computer, surfing the Internet for hours, or going out to meet recruiters, even when they still had to take care of the household work in many cases. An important finding emerges from the preceding discussions. We can see how much of the responsibilities around job search and other labour market activities increasingly depended on the immigrants themselves. Although certain information was provided in facilitating women’s knowledge about the Canadian system and the labour market, much still rested on the individual, especially those tasks that apparently seemed to be mundane
yet assumed significant importance if women were to get access to employment. For instance, it would have been very difficult for Rita to find out information about recruiting agencies if her friend did not help her out. Rita was proactive in creating friendship within her own community that proved to be useful when she had to find information about the agency. George and Chaze’s (2009) argument about how settlement programs tend to put the onus on the immigrant’s resourcefulness and motivation for navigating the Canadian system becomes apparent here. In their study, South Asian immigrant women actively created their own ethnic network and contacts to search for jobs in the absence of specific information that they required from the organizations. Similarly, in my study, it was the eagerness of the South Asian women to learn, along with the motivation to settle down and belief in their abilities, that guided them to go through so much of learning and self-help in a country that was new to them. Thus, Tina’s comment that “finding a job is a full-time job by itself in Canada” made sense in light of these endeavors that women undertook to understand and adjust to the new circumstances in their lives. These proactive attempts emanated largely from their eagerness to become self-reliant and self-responsible individuals dovetailing with the neoliberal discourses of responsibility and individualism that encourage citizens “to take charge of their own lives…in order to develop and thrive” (Belkhodja, 2008, p. 28).

Mirchandani et al. (2008) indicate that the tendency to download the liability for learning and training (lifelong learning) on the workers themselves is typical of the post-Fordist knowledge economy where the rhetoric of lifelong learning is nothing but a mechanism for “downloading of responsibilities for learning and training from employers to individual workers” (p. 183). In their study, well qualified immigrant women of colour often engaged in self-initiated learning to remain self-reliant, adaptable and employable workers. Scholars (e.g. Larner, 2000;
Vosko, 2008), however, raise doubt about the actual effects of such training/learning on individual’s employment prospective and view the rhetoric of continuous/lifelong learning “as a technology of governance- or a means of socializing workers to take individual responsibility for their learning” (Vosko, 2008, p. 159). This view resonates with the finding of my study. Later in the chapter I will show that despite women’s participation in formalized training to improve their life-chances in the knowledge economy, none of them were in reality able to enter full-time permanent jobs in their own areas of expertise.

**Confronting the Canadian Labour Market**

Perhaps the interviewees’ first introduction to the notion that their past skills and education might be perceived as inadequate and deficient by the Canadian system was when they started applying for jobs and would go out to meet counselors and recruiters. They started wondering why they were not getting any response from the employers or the recruiters and whether there was something wrong with their application or job searching procedures. All but three respondents pointed out how, even after applying for several positions, they were not asked to come for an interview. Shazia, who had computer data-entry experience, reported applying to as many as fifty jobs with no one ever calling her so far. When I was talking to her, she showed me her resumé and a folder she had maintained about all the places she applied to for work. She even went and met some recruiters who promised to get back to her, as soon as they have openings. They took her typing test, made her write an aptitude test and one organization even charged her $20 just to register with their database. When I interviewed her, she was still waiting for an opening, as none of the agencies that she went to ever contacted her with opportunities. In fact, when she herself called up one of the agencies to inquire about the status of her job
application, she was rudely told not to call but that the company would call if they have any position available for her. A similar situation was faced by Neeta:

I tried looking for jobs in my own field first but forget about jobs, I never got an interview call also. I applied to all possible places many a times but never got a reply.

Jyoti, who was trying for a job as a designer, also pointed out that “after coming to Canada, I did apply for jobs related to my field but never got any positive reply”. Only three women were able to reach the interview stage. Malathi, a science graduate from Sri Lanka with experience in office administration, was one of them. However, during the job interview when she mentioned having no experience or education in Canada, the recruiter advised her to get “Canadian work experience” to be able to optimize her chances of getting hired. Lack of “Canadian education” was also pointed out to many by the recruiters and employment counselors as the reason for not getting any proper job opportunities. Despite having university education and professional degrees, none of the women thus managed to secure employment that was commensurate with their education and work experience. Women participants, consequently, expressed their anguish towards the existing Canadian system that did not recognize their previous experience, rendered them jobless and pushed them towards re-training and re-learning. Mita, a university graduate from India with experience in administrative work, expressed her despair at the situation she was in:

I have worked for 5 years in India and when I came here I used to apply for various administrative jobs. But so far nothing. A couple of places called me for interview but never hired me. Later a friend told me that unless I do some course here on administration nobody will hire me. I need to specialize because I am an
immigrant. Can you imagine? I was so shocked that all my education gone down the drain.

Leena, was a kindergarten teacher in India for seven years and after immigration could not find a job either. Her experience was no different from Mita’s:

I have been applying to so many schools but haven’t heard from them yet. I would probably need to get certification and all to work here as a teacher. …My several years of teaching experience are not good enough for employers here.

Leena reminisced how frustrated she was to find out that her seven years of teaching experience was not adequate enough for the Canadian system. She was visibly angry while talking to me about the certification process that exists for the internationally trained teachers even to teach in a kindergarten in Canada. She mentioned that with her experience, she should have no difficulty adopting the Canadian teaching system. Yet, in her words, “nobody is willing to give me that opportunity either”. The above mentioned experiences, where women were identified as lacking in Canadian work experience, thus reflects the “discriminatory bias” towards foreign credentials (Sadiq, 2005, p. 63) existing in Canada. As Slade (2008b) explains, this requirement for the Canadian work experience represents a Catch-22 situation for immigrants, where, unless they are hired by employers they have no way of acquiring such experience in Canada. My interviewees were in a similar situation where hardly any employer would hire them, yet they were expected to acquire Canadian work experience. It is interesting to note here that this requirement for Canadian work experience did not exist for early immigrants and went through several shifts in meaning since its emergence. According to scholars (Jackson, 2001; Reitz, 2005), often racial attitudes remain intertwined with this kind of discriminatory bias that further hinder the possibilities of the immigrants of colour getting hired. But then, according to Slade (2008b),
since the rise of Canada as a neoliberal state, the meaning of Canadian work experience has come to refer to “an individual deficit” rather than a “discriminatory employer practice” (p. 44). It is now used to mark immigrants as “deficient workers” (Slade, 2008b, p. 44) rather than employers being biased and prejudiced. This was evident in the case of my respondents, too, where their unemployment was seen, by the counselors and job trainers, as a result of their lack of Canadian work experience or education rather than the shortcomings of the state or the labour market policies.

While the need for Canadian work experience is usually described by immigrants as one of the most important barriers preventing their entry to the mainstream labour market (Owen, 2007), South Asian immigrant women in my study pointed out other concerns as well. Saadiya had a Master degree in Social Science from Pakistan and worked in an advertising agency as an assistant editor for three years before immigration. She wanted to work in a community organization and had applied to several such places for positions like counselors or administrative supervisors. On one occasion, she was interviewed over the phone by the employer who told her that she was over qualified to work as a community worker and should try for better paid positions. Saadiya was disappointed with the ironical situation she was in where, on the one hand, potential employers did not recognize her education and on the other, did not want to hire her on the basis of being overqualified. The irony of the situation lied in the fact that despite having all the required skills, education and language abilities to be able to work in Canada, when it came to actually finding an appropriate job, the various processes of decertification and lack of recognition of foreign credentials, education and skills served to deskill the immigrants (Sharma, 2006; Stasiulis & Bakan, 2005). As there are no uniform or consistent system to evaluate and assess immigrants’ past skills and education, the devaluation
process remains largely ambiguous and hazy with no definitive answers as to why their previous education of many years are totally negated or underestimated. It is important to note that some initiatives are being taken to reduce the difficulties of evaluation and credentialism faced by professional immigrants in Canada. Prior learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) is one such initiative that reviews, evaluates and acknowledges the previous education and skills obtained by immigrants through nonformal and informal training and workshops (Davis & Wihak, 2006). Rather than merely focusing on formal education, this service tries to build a bridge between immigrant's abilities and employment requirements. While many racialized immigrants can benefit from such programs (Livingstone, Raykov, & Turner, 2005), my respondents did not seem to be aware of such initiatives. Further promotion of such programs is therefore imperative so that immigrants can benefit from them, else, ambiguities in assessment and evaluation processes, would continue to exist and be affected by certain preconceived prejudices specifically held against women of colour. It would also open up spaces for continuing racial and gender discriminations as often employment opportunities remain at the discretion of the employer who can be influenced by such discriminatory considerations alone (Bevelander, 2000; Guo & Andersson, 2005-2006).

Thus, Zarine who has been a secretary in a bank in Pakistan and has never got an opportunity to work in Canada stoically commented:

It is so hard that you study so much and based on that you get your immigration. But when you come here it’s not recognized. Here even people who have done grade 12 are working in offices because they are white. Not many people are highly educated here but still they have good jobs. They have knowledge of English and may have done some small courses that is it. But not same for us South Asians.
Zarine’s comment that educational qualifications from certain countries are under recognized in Canada resonates with what Shibao Guo (2005) describes as the racialization of knowledge so that education and work experience from certain countries is considered to be of lesser value than their Canadian equivalents. In a similar vein, Khan (2007) building on Weber’s theoretical concept of “closure” as a form of social inequality suggests that the systemic barriers existing in the labour market, lead to closure by restricting the “access, privileges and opportunities” (p. 64) of the immigrants and upholding the interests of the dominant class. It is part of the systemic forms of discrimination or racism based on the assumed ethnic inferiority of certain foreign-born women and the assumed inferior quality of educational systems in their country of origin, thereby perpetuating exploitation and disadvantage for the immigrants (Khan, 2007). Guo and Andersson (2005) further add to the above discussions by pointing out that the process of devaluation of immigrants of colour rests on a “deficit model of difference” (p. 16) that perceives the education, values and culture of non-white immigrants as “different” and therefore, “deficient”. Similar to Khan, they argue that racism plays a definitive role in such devaluation as it is the immigrants of colour who are particularly seen as incompatible with the “traditional cultural and social fabric of Canada” (p. 16). Yet, the process itself remains subtle and hard to pinpoint. None of the interviewees, for example, could cite any overt example of racial discrimination as they were looking for jobs. They were praised for their high education, asked to send in resumés or in some cases even called for an interview. Yet, at the same time they were aware of its presence. Just as Zarine raised the issue of how many white citizens are able to get into office jobs despite being not as educated as the immigrants of colour, Malathi explored the reason as to why employers never called her for an interview, “may be it’s my name or the country I come from”. The issue of race constantly came up as women explored the reasons for
their unemployment or under-employment. The dominant feeling among them was that the Canadian labour market was intensely racialized and excluded members who are not popularly perceived as “desirable” in terms of appearance or skin colour. For example, many women, while discussing the various kinds of difficulties they were experiencing in the labour market, indicated their race as one of the primary reasons for not getting hired. Laxmi, who was from Sri Lanka and was doing home-based sewing as a means of sustenance, explained the issue when I asked her whether race has anything to do with job barriers:

You see you don’t see it openly… only when you notice certain things. When they see us, they assume we don’t know anything. How would we deal with their office culture, they undervalue us.

Laxmi’s comment about how women’s physical attributes can influence their hiring can be linked back to Roxana Ng’s (1998, 1988a) analysis of the term “immigrant woman”. According to Ng, the term “immigrant woman” itself presupposes a labour market relation that “conjures up an image of a woman who does not speak English or who speaks English with an accent; who is from the Third World or a member of a visible minority group; and who has a certain type of job (e.g. a sewing machine operator or a cleaning lady)” (1988b, p. 15). In the labour market, the category of “immigrant women” therefore reinforces their class position so that they are seen as cheap and docile labour force, ready to work under exploitative conditions (Guo, 2005; see also Gannage, 1999; Ng, 1996). Thus, most often, the hiring of non-white immigrant women is done based on the patriarchal and racist assumptions that these women will work for less, are content with dead-end jobs, and are physically most suitable to these kinds of routinized work (Espiritu, 1997). Non-white immigrant women are thus co-opted by the state in terms of their racialized bodies, which is treated as an indicator of their abilities to provide a pre-
assigned form of labour uncomplainingly because of their very nature, as it were. As Himani Bannerji rightly contends, “[t]hese,[non-white immigrant women] then, are the people-
straddling the line between surplus exploitation and unemployment- [and] who stand
permanently on the threshold of Canadian citizenship” (2000, p. 77).

Furthermore, the subtle way that racism works in Canada can be taken as an example of
what Goldberg (2009) defines as “racelessness”. This is because under the rubric of neoliberal
principles, the inability of the immigrants of colour to get into proper employment is never seen
as occurring because of the devaluation and discrimination meted out towards non-white
immigrants. By putting forward the hegemonic principles of equal opportunity, self-
responsibility and individual efforts, neoliberalism effectively cloaks the existing racial and
gendered relations and puts the onus for success on the individual itself. By such logic, the
failure of the South Asian women to enter the mainstream labour market is presented as their
personal lack of ability or deficiency that has nothing to do with their racial, gender or national
origins. They are then channeled towards a continuous and ineffectual regime of training and
learning in order to overcome their abilities rather than examining the actual structural barriers
that exist.

In order to be employed South Asian immigrant women, were also encouraged by the
counselors to upgrade their education or volunteer to gain Canadian work experience. Jennifer,
despite having a MA in child psychology, was enrolled in Early Childhood Education (ECE),
whereas Saadiya, who had a Master degree in social work and a computer data operating
certificate, was taking short, part-time courses in computers hoping to get through some
“respectable office job”. Many women were also encouraged to volunteer so that Jennifer
volunteered in a childcare centre, Hena at YMCA, whereas Saadiya volunteered with a South
Asian community organization to gain experience in community work. Yet, even these attempts were not helpful in gaining them a job in their own field. This comes as no surprise as scholars have pointed out, how often volunteering experience is not even counted by the Canadian employers because of their short term and informal nature (Ksienski, 2004; Slade, 2008b).

Moreover, none of them were eager to seek state help or welfare. They were active agents, looking for jobs, searching for labour market information, and putting out their resumé. Yet, the systemic barriers continually deprived them of opportunities. For months and years, they kept applying to jobs and remained unsuccessful in acquiring any. The only jobs that were readily available to them were those of cashiers, call centre agents or factory workers that neither asked for any Canadian experience, nor utilized their previous education. A few did take them up for survival that reiterates what other researchers have found out about how educated women of colour, in the absence of proper opportunities, are often forced to work in female-dominated, low-paid, contingent kind of work, as garment sewers, call centre workers or supermarket cashiers (Das Gupta, 2006; Mirchandani et al., 2008, 2010; Ng, 2002).

However, their negotiation with these processes was evident in how they were trying to make sense of the various limitations and restrictions of the system, navigating their ways through it in order to remain productive. Despite facing several constraints in entering the labour market, the women, rather than accepting those hurdles as arising out of their own inability or inefficiency, were active in trying to make sense of the reasons behind their disadvantages in the new country. Shazia for instance mentioned:

Yes of course something is wrong somewhere. Why would so many of our men despite being doctors and engineers drive a cab? In our building there’s many who do that. Even my own husband a MBA, now running a grocery store. I would say all this is because of our colour.
When probed what she meant by “our colour,” Shazia mentioned that in Canada, South Asian women often experience discrimination because of being non-white. She herself was called a “Paki” and verbally abused once near downtown Toronto right after 9/11 while returning home with her children. In the above quote, Shazia also commented on how many professional South Asian men undergo devaluation of their former credentials and are forced to work in low-end sectors after immigration. This is in fact a common experience of many professional men of colour who immigrate to Canada (Guo, 2005). However, there are differences between how immigrant women and men of colour experience non-recognition of their prior learning and work experiences. While both women and men of colour are likely to be in low-income jobs, women dominate the most precarious sectors of all (Cranford, Vosko & Zukewich, 2003). For example, while many of the South Asian men could at least transition into relatively secure, permanent kind of jobs or businesses, women remained the more casual workers, both in terms of wage work and self-employment. This is corroborated by Vosko (2006, 2008) and other scholars (Galabuzi, 2004; Sassen, 2000), who point out how women of colour occupy the lowest levels of precarious work and are the most disadvantaged of all.

It was to overcome this kind of disadvantage and unemployment that perhaps many of these women went for training and job search workshops with the assumption that these processes might make their integration into the Canadian labour market much easier.

**Producing Conformity:**

*Gearing of Immigrants Towards Acceptance of Hegemonic Cultural Values Through (Re)Training and (Re)Learning*

As I have discussed before, there exists several training and learning programs that aim to prepare immigrants to overcome any perceived “lack” that might hinder their labour market
integration. Often these programs are guided by the assumption that immigrant’s unemployment or underemployment is due to some inherent problem with the individual herself/himself rather than the training modules, state apparatus or the labour market. Thus, training is set in place to help immigrants become more productive and self-reliant individuals.

Following Foucault, we can determine how these programs implicitly govern, correct or redress individuals into becoming neoliberal enterprising subjects (Foucault, 1991; see also Ong, 2003). As discussed earlier, this governing or correction is mainly carried out in relation to individual’s habits, attitude, customs, or way of thinking in order to develop within her/him an efficient, productive and competitive worker-subjectivity (Foucault, 1991; Rose, 1992). A similar process of “governing” was evident in the case of the South Asian women.

First, many of the interviewees pointed out how they were consistently exposed to the discourse of Canada representing a land of equal opportunities for everyone. Rumona probably was the first person to draw my attention to this myth. She was looking for secretarial positions in offices and banks. She had applied to certain positions as administrative assistant since many of those job descriptions exactly matched her previous position in Bangladesh. She knew typing, had a good knowledge of computers and was fluent in English. However, unable to get any opportunity, she decided to find out some avenues to distribute her résumé to potential employers. With that goal in mind, she attended several workshops trying to pick up tips and advice on how to market her résumé. One such workshop had invited guest speakers to come and talk about Canadian work ethics. These speakers, themselves immigrants, while sharing their life stories underscored how Canada was a land of opportunities for everyone. According to Rumona:
Those speakers were really good. I was new then and they shared their life stories that were similar to mine. [When asked what did those speakers say about Canada] they said how there are many opportunities in Canada, everyone can work here or study and get a good life. There is no discrimination here; one just has to be sincere and hard working to be successful.

Reflecting on the guest speakers, Rumona mentioned, how when she looks back to what those speakers said about Canada, “it all seems like a big lie” given all the barriers and discrimination she had to go through.

Saadiya’s introduction to such optimistic messages was through an agency that she went to for information regarding applications for a Social Insurance Number. It was there that one of the agency members, while welcoming her to Canada, told her not to worry about her career as in Canada everyone gets a fair chance to work if one has good qualifications and a drive to be successful. Another experience was shared by Ghazala. While attending a session on job search and interview techniques, Ghazala mentioned, how the counselor conducting the sessions made it clear at the very beginning that there were ample opportunities available for all in Canada and that immigrants should keep a positive set of mind when looking for jobs. Ghazala described what the counselor had told them that day:

He kept telling us to have a positive attitude. He said unless you do that it will reflect in your interview. He then assured us that many jobs are available for the newly arrived and that we should just learn the means of accessing them. The workshop was supposed to teach us that.

Ghazala tirelessly attended the sessions, made changes in her resumé, and earnestly followed all the advice she received in the workshop. After meeting a potential employer or recruiter, she would send out a thank-you mail, update her resumé regularly, attend job fairs, exchange cards
with recruiters, try to network with counselors and even bought high heels, trousers and suits to wear to the interviews. In Pakistan, she never had to wear western clothes to her office and wore only her traditional dresses. However, in Canada she was ready to change her dress code to find a place in the labour market. It was in 2001 that Ghazala took that first workshop and many more in the following years. When I met her in 2007, she was running a sewing business from home and had no job in her own field. Ghazala, however, did not perceive of her unemployment as a result of her own deficiency or shortcoming. She critiqued the presence of various labour market barriers that does not recognize her previous education. She was all the more frustrated with the fact that despite following the suggestions given by the service providers, she still remained unemployed. Experiences like Ghazala’s raise serious questions about the usefulness and validity of the training programs that are supposedly for the benefit of the immigrants. Do they genuinely assist immigrants, particularly immigrants of colour in accessing the labour market, or are they simply there to maintain the status quo and help produce “like-minded”, “like-looking” clones (Essed, 2005) of the white society?.

Furthermore, the women interviewees drew attention to the idea of Canada as a land of opportunity where anyone can be successful with sincerity, hard work, and the drive to perform. The importance of the reiterative force behind such a construction of Canada reveals some of the governing practices adopted by agencies and the state to instill within immigrants the importance of being self-sufficient and self-responsible without depending on the state for sustenance. In such a scenario, the good state is assumed to have already performed its duties by being the repository of the immigrant’s faith and by providing a prefabricated conception of Canada as a land where, for enterprising citizen-subjects, sincere work and equal opportunity is rewarded. Such discourses then play a vital role in inducing immigrants to “pursue a range of self-
managing goals” in their daily lives to optimize their chances of becoming an enterprising self (Ong & Zhang, 2008, p. 7). Such self-managing goals are manifested through regulatory discourses of remaining sincere, hard-working or keeping an optimistic attitude that also serves the purpose of shifting people away from any reliance on state welfare to reliance on the self. Increasingly, immigrants are therefore "obliged to exercise diligence ... talents, and social skills to navigate" (Ong & Zhang, 2008, p. 8) the Canadian labour market for their own “wealth” and “personal advantage” (Ong & Zhang, 2008, p. 8). Such statements thus not only project for immigrant women ideals they can aspire to, but also provide significant templates to imbibe values (like self-reliance, independence, and economic enterprise) that are considered worthy of emulation.

Second, concomitant to the regulation of South Asian immigrant women through a discursive perpetuation of optimism and self-sufficiency, a simultaneous process of socialization into Canadian norms and values was also evident that aimed at preparing the participants for getting accepted into the labour market. Canada is a country where the white national subject is “exalted” as a “stable, conscious … enduring” (Thobani, 2007, p. 7) and superior being, so that the ideals that constitute an “enterprising self” are embodied by this essentially white “national” figure. Thus, when immigrants of colour are taught to emulate the ideals of a Canadian culture, the notion of “Canadian” represents a,

construction, a set of representations, embodying certain types of political and cultural communities and their operations. These communities were themselves constructed in agreement with certain ideas regarding skin colour, history, language (English/French) and other cultural signifiers, all of which may be subsumed under the ideological category “white” (Bannerji, 2000, p. 64).

Bannerji (2000) further adds that the category “Canadian” is meant for people who have “white skin” and “European North American (not Mexican) background” (p. 64). She argues that
more than language, religion or culture, it is the body and colour of skin that decides who belongs to the “we” or “self” and represent the “authentic” Canadian subject (Bannerji, 2000, p. 42). However, mapped into this privileging of bodies as the signifier of identity, are also cultural and linguistic indices, where the ability to speak English and/or French serves as additional markers of Canadian identity.

Against this ideological category of “white” stands the “immigrant” -- a codified word for people of colour who come from a different racial and cultural background, who do not speak fluent English (Li, 2003a) and whose knowledge and experiences are deemed inferior compared to the cultural and social fabric of what constitutes the “traditional” Canada (Guo, 2005). Therefore, immigrants, predominantly signifying non-English speaking women/men of colour, not born in Canada are interpellated by the larger, white community as the “non-Canadians”, as “outsiders”, as “newcomers,” and assigned certain roles and niche in Canadian society. They are seen as “different” and “outsider” and marked “as being devoid of [the preferred] qualities, thereby keeping them excluded from the constitution of the national figure” (Thobani, 2007, p. 14).

South Asian immigrant women, similar to other non-white immigrant women are also held as fundamentally different from Canadians (read: white) in language, culture, customs or values and bear the brunt of this “otherization”. In order to be included in the “insider zone”, they are expected to efface any difference that exists between them and the dominant subjects (Thobani, 2007, p. 20; see also Li, 2003b) and to have “abandoned their cultural distinctiveness” (Li, 2003a, p. 43). Thus, unlike, "European immigrants who are deemed to integrate more easily into Canadian society because of their cultural proximity to native-born Canadians" (Li, 2003a, p. 49), South Asian immigrant women along with other immigrant women of colour are to be
socialized to conform to Euro/American ideals. This socialization was most evident when women described their experiences in the various job search workshops, résumé clinics and job information sessions where, in the pretext of preparing immigrants for Canadian employers, a normative white “Canadianness” was imposed. Shashi (a junior level school teacher from India), Shaoli (a science graduate from Bangladesh) and Malathi (a Bachelor in Science from Sri Lanka) had similar stories to share. Unable to find decent jobs for themselves, these women approached various community organizations in order to seek advice and get assistance with their job search. In the various training and information they received, rather than emphasizing South Asian women’s present skills, customs or values, agencies consistently pointed out the need to be “Canadian” in order to be employed successfully. As part of this Canadianness, most agencies emphasized bodily deportments and presentability as the key to preparing oneself for the job market. Malathi described such training sessions in detail:

I have been to at least 4 to 5 organizations that help immigrants enter the Canadian job market. These are all renowned organizations and for the first couple of months I was just pushed from one workshop to the other listening to people how to be confident, well spoken, and smart to get a proper job. I won’t say I didn’t learn anything. For example, in one of the workshops we were told to dress up professionally, brush our teeth before an interview, learn to do small talks, not to sit crosslegged…

Laxmi shared a similar experience:

In the job search workshop they taught us how to sit straight, look into the eye and talk clearly without accent. They told us that often many people are shy to talk and if we want to get a job in Canada we have to very outspoken and talk about our skills.
In the above two examples, an assumption of the inferiority of “other” culture, their way of speaking or presenting themselves becomes evident as service providers continue to tutor professional, educated immigrants the basics of “carrying oneself” in the Canadian society, hardly taking into consideration the fact that most of these immigrants are highly educated and have worked before for many years before coming to Canada. Moreover, in situations where immigrants are asked to “speak up” without an accent, the presence of systemic racism becomes apparent. According to Guo (2009), colonial practice informs such attitude where non-native accent is seen as “deficient” and marker of incompetency. White, Canadian accent is therefore taken to be the standardized norm, marker of confidence and capacity, and if immigrants of colour are to express the same kind of confidence, they have to follow the Canadian accent.

Others pointed out how they were told to wear western clothes such as suit or pants to the interview, not to wear too much jewelry and also to speak up as clearly as possible during the interview. While apparently these practices appear to be neutral and aimed merely at preparing immigrants for the requirements of the Canadian labour market, in reality, they indicate the whitening that I have described before in relation to the re-making of immigrants. Crucial to this re-making is the way in which the apparent lack of these women – for instance, their assumed inferior notion of hygiene, inadequate professional etiquette, deportment etc.-- are made hyper-visible to the women themselves during the training. This identification of lack is a vital node in the entire process of assimilation whereby the immigrant subjects can be worked on, their “shortcomings” exteriorized and demonstrated in order to be rectified, and then finally a proper set of qualities adhering to the normative principles of Canadianness prescribed for adoption. For example, the emphasis on western clothes or language abilities aptly demonstrates how western norms and language are given a dominant place, rather than the immigrant’s own culture,
language or experience. While prescribing the normative rules for getting in the Canadian labour market, this training hardly seems to consider that for many women, looking directly into the eye, wearing suits, or shaking hands might be practices that they might be reluctant to pursue.

These practices that are apparently aimed towards improving the "self image" and self-esteem provide an insight into the "tutelary power" of organizations in transforming the individual subject into the normative Canadian citizen-subject through social acculturation. What is being done ostensibly in the name of professionalization is a continuous process of discipline that treats these immigrant women as problem bodies that must first imbibe proper deportment, bodily gestures, and habits of interaction to produce the correct affects of “Canadianness”. This production of Canadianess is the “whitening” that I have discussed before in relations to how immigrants of colour are being trained to become “white” enterprising selves. The acculturation process that immigrants of colour go through as part of the labour market training, then, becomes nothing other than an introduction to white ideals. What is emphasized as the ideal of a professional Canadian worker self is in the last instance often a reproduction of certain normative ideals of whitened Canadian citizen-subjects. Thus, despite the repeated enunciations about Canada’s multiculturalism, when it comes to the formal processes of acculturation, the state can devise no other form of ideal than that of a pre-existing racial and gendered white citizen-subjectivity for its immigrants of colour. No doubt done in the interests of the women to enhance their repertoire of professional skills, the language employed is still one of lack, where it is no longer just the lack of educational accreditations, but also of bodily signs, practices and habits that can potentially inhibit their participation in the national imaginary. Professionalization learned in the workshops then tell a related story of devaluation, where women of colour need to upgrade themselves not only in specific academic or technical skills but also achieve a more
overarching impact where the quotidian life must be altered in order to find access to the labour market. Governing becomes evident here in the way these women are regulated to think and act like Canadians and made to believe in the superiority of the Canadian way of doing things.

While women did go through such remedial processes, as they were eager to enter the labour market, they were unhappy and frustrated about the techniques that were taught to them. This frustration emanated when even after adopting such bodily deportments, they were still not hired. Many women mentioned buying expensive suits and trousers to present themselves in a proper manner to the employer. Tina mentioned how, as per suggestion by one of the trainers, she would relentlessly listen to Canadian news and other programs to improve her accent and presentation abilities. Nabila, Priya, Neeta and many others would work on their presentation skills, body language and attend mock interview sessions to prepare themselves for the labour market. Since the resumés they had from their home countries were considered inadequate for the Canadian system, a majority of the women substantially corrected these, highlighting their past skills, education and updating them regularly for each job that they would apply to.

Women at the same time also expressed how often they would feel insulted at the kind of information they were given to in the workshops. For example, Malathi, with her science degree and two years of experience in a multinational company, felt inferiorized when told to brush her teeth before an interview. Although she laughed about the ludicrousness of the whole procedure, I could see a faint glean of tears in her eyes. I still remember how she described her feelings of the workshop:

That day when I came out of the workshop I was not in my right mind. I kept thinking about the advice- brush your teeth. I was thinking am I that inferior and backward that I wouldn’t know whether to brush or not? I knew that day our decision to come here was wrong. I regret it, really regret it…
It is important to note that despite attending the various training sessions and going through “whitening” processes, women were also, at the same time, active in analyzing the effectiveness of these training in getting them proper labour market opportunities. They clearly expressed their dissatisfaction and anguish towards the training practices that are preoccupied with eradicating the deficiencies of the immigrants of colour and hardly take any cognition of the knowledge and learning they bring to the country. For example, Malathi, who had previously shared with me her experiences in soft skill training, felt frustrated at the thought that rather than her education and skills, it was the bodily deportments that were taken to be more important and endlessly emphasized:

What was frustrating for me to know was that more than my skills what counts are how I present myself. I was so depressed to hear that.

Women also mentioned that often when organizations reiterated to the immigrants the necessity to network or connect to people in order to get employed, they overlooked the fact that newcomers did not necessarily have provisions to make such networks and needed to be more concretely guided by the organizations. Shashi, who has been to several organizations to learn job searching techniques, pointed out:

The moment you go to these organizations they ask you to attend workshops… sometimes they are useful but mostly not. In one of the workshops the lady kept emphasizing how important it is here to build networks and connections and how to be proactive and not to feel shy to ask people about job openings. While listening to her I was thinking in my mind you are from here, I am not, I just came… how do I build networks, where do I start? Teach me that, give me a contact if you can. That will be useful, not just telling us what to do.
While the ability to network can be taken as part of the self-responsibility discourse associated with the notion of an enterprising self, many women critiqued the process thereby expressing their awareness of how such discourses seem to assume that all women would be naturally capable of doing so. Moreover, women’s insistence on “getting concrete contacts” seemed to differ from the discourse of social network often emphasized as crucial for getting employed. What women seemed to need more was concrete references and direct referral to potential employers who would be genuinely interested in hiring the women. It is important to remember here that networking is often done amongst those who are close to the “normative (preferred) image”, who mirror the “Self” (Essed, 2005, p. 229), so that those deemed different might not be readily accepted into normative networking groups.

Moreover, women pointed out the lack of professionalism and genuine interest in dealing with immigrant’s situation on the part of the organizations. Jennifer was trying to find out information about Montessori teaching opportunities in Canada. She went to a counselor and described her experience to me:

I went to the [X] organization and after listening to my experiences and education, the case manager gave me an appointment with their employment counselor. I went and met him and he was just so unprofessional. Even though I explained him my education and experience and other details, he hardly had any suggestion to give me other than telling me that I need to go see some other organizations for volunteering opportunities as that’s what I need to do first to get a job. He hardly had any idea about how I can use my degree in child psychology and my teaching experiences. The only thing he told me was that my resumé was boring and they need to take a look at it and make some changes. For more than two months they were holding on to my resumé. Moreover every week the case manager would call me to find out whether I found their organization useful or not. I was so frustrated with the whole process, that I called and left a message that their organization is
just a rip off and they are only there to get money from the government by showing that they are helping immigrants when actually they are not.

Jennifer’s frustration was shared by Saadiya, who was a commerce graduate from Pakistan:

Most of the employment counselors themselves are under qualified to help us. I spoke to a few from various organizations and they either told me to attend resumé workshops or find volunteering opportunities. Funny thing is that the resumé that was approved by one counselor was disapproved by the other. So really I was confused. You attend these resumé clinic and job search workshops, have free coffee, cookie and really get some very basic information. Other than a few tips about how to dress up or talk, they have nothing concrete to offer to professional women like us. We really need to do everything on our own.

As we can see from the above discussions, Jennifer and Saadiya clearly explicated the inability of many employment counselors to successfully guide immigrants to meet their labour market needs. Women’s acute criticism of the training processes is important for two reasons. First, they reveal the inadequacies that exist with many government and non-government programs and settlement frameworks that have been put in place for the immigrants’ labour market integration. Second, they render incomplete the various regulatory processes that are aimed towards the making of an enterprising self in the image of a normative white Canadian through a self-governing process. While scholars like Pun and Ong through their studies demonstrate how neoliberal capitalism manipulates social differences in order to implant certain lacks and desires that drive individuals towards self-governing processes by acting "upon their own subjectivity, to be governors of their selves" (Cruikshank, 1996, p. 235), in the case of South Asian immigrant women, I argue, the formulation of that lack remains incomplete. Despite being driven by desire to be self-sufficient and productive, South Asian immigrant women also
demonstrated a confidence and belief in their abilities that prevented them from accepting any hegemonic discourse of “whitening”. Their implicit critic of such processes of whitening and their understanding of how racialization bars women of colour from getting appropriate jobs thwart the process of disciplining of these women by the tutelary forces of the Canadian labour market and its settlement services. South Asian women thus remained active agents, negotiating the various processes of job search, training and labour market barriers without being subsumed by any overt hegemonic processes of Eurocentric conformity. While still remaining hard-working, productive and achievement-oriented, they questioned the system that robbed them of their prior value and landed them in a situation where it was expected from them to be continuously and fruitlessly upgrading themselves without guaranteeing a job and forcing many women to take survival jobs or reel in utter poverty.

In the next Chapter, I will discuss South Asian women’s entry into home-based businesses situated within enclaves that constitute their proactive response to the marginalization and exclusion experienced in the mainstream Canadian society and its labour market. I will highlight how in the process of setting up and running the businesses, women reorganize their gendered positions within the household, cultivate their social and ethnic ties and strive to remain “active workers”. I argue that these negotiation skills represent women’s “enterprising selves” where despite not completely adhering to the ideals of a white normative society, they redefine notion of productivity and success to create new ideals of enterprising agents.
Chapter Five:
Negotiating “Home” and “Enclave”:
Tracing the Processes of South Asian Women’s Entry
Into Home-Based Enclave Entrepreneurship

In the previous chapter, I discussed how the neoliberal Canadian state and its agenda of an “enterprising self” has become a dominant element in influencing its immigration and settlement policies and practices. Concomitantly, I demonstrated how South Asian women, similar to other immigrant women of colour, are being encouraged to (re)train and (re)learn to fit the ideals of the enterprising self. These training and learning inculcate within these immigrants the urgency to remain productive, self-responsible and competitive individuals so that they can create their opportunities and be successful without falling back on state help or state welfare. I further argued that in Canada, this ideal of the enterprising self intersects with a racialized and gendered discourse that undermines the abilities and opportunities of South Asian women.

Despite being chosen for their high education and work experiences, once they arrived in Canada, most of their skills and education were devalued, and they were perceived as lacking in education, values, customs, training as per Canadian standard. They were then directed towards a regime of training and education that, while preparing them for the Canadian labour market, also socialized them into a process of Euro/American conformity. These women were expected to adopt Canadian norms, values, and deportments to be able to successfully integrate into the Canadian society and its economy. As was quite obvious in the previous chapter, none of those efforts rendered the women any opportunity to get a job that matched their previous experience or education. The training that they got in terms of how to sit, how to engage in small talk, how to shake hands, open a conversation, what to wear to the interview - were meant to inculcate in
them the qualities of an Eurocentric Canadianness and facilitate their smooth entry to the labour market. Ironically, none of them were able to get into their own areas of work and suffered from downward socio-economic mobility. It was under situation like this, where they were unable to get into proper jobs and eager to sustain themselves economically that my research participants took up entrepreneurship in order to survive in Canada. Their businesses were situated within what can be defined as ethnic enclaves, primarily serving their own communities. South Asian women’s enclave entrepreneurship needs to be studied in the broader context of immigrant entrepreneurship that is often theorized as immigrant’s response to the labour market barriers in the host country (Chaganti & Greene, 2002; Feagin & Imani, 1994; Kloosterman & Rath, 2003; Parker, 2004). Within this literature, immigrants are generally seen as enterprising workers, who, undaunted by the labour market barriers, can take advantage of the protected labour market and ethnic clientele provided by an enclave to build their businesses and remain active workers. This is also seen as a preferred alternative to immigrants remaining tied to the lower level jobs in the secondary labour market that can hardly provide them with economic security. The various small and medium sized businesses within enclaves are often seen as instrumental in assisting immigrants achieve security and success in a relatively shorter period of time (Marger & Hoffman, 1992). It is also suggested by scholars that subsequently with government assistance, enclave entrepreneurs do start to cater to the larger non-ethnic clientele, thereby participating in the mainstream labour market as well (Marger & Hoffman, 1992). Therefore, enclave entrepreneurship is taken as an important medium for the gradual integration of immigrants of colour to the host country. It is assumed that despite the initial hurdles in the host country, immigrants will eventually achieve both social and economic mobility by being part of their enclave economy. Within this largely positive image that exists around enclave entrepreneurship,
issues of women’s upward mobility or success are hardly emphasized. There is very less knowledge about how women of colour residing within enclaves, cope with the various barriers in the host country. Do they benefit from enclave entrepreneurship in the way men do? In this chapter, by focusing on South Asian immigrant women working as home-based entrepreneurs within ethnic enclaves, I will highlight the various ways women deal with racial and gender barriers and create their own network of friendships and ties to help them survive the precariousness and exclusions they experience in their everyday lives in Canada.

*Enclave Entrepreneurship and Neoliberal Enterprising Self: Tracing the Relation vis-à-vis Immigrants’ Socio-Economic Mobility Within Enclaves*

In the Canadian neo-liberal economy when individuals are expected to choose their own path to development and economic growth and pursue “self-defined goals” (Kabeer, 1994, p. 14), starting a business as an entrepreneur is seen as an important initiative by immigrants for “penetrating” a totally foreign country, where often economic choices and opportunities for them are severely constrained by the dominant groups of the host country (Kupferberg, 2003). The idyllic portrayal of the neo-liberal “enterprising self” can perhaps be best examined in the context of immigrant entrepreneurship, that is often promoted as a form of work that entails empowerment and agency for individuals willing to be flexible, risk taking and determined to achieve success and size. Indeed, the emerging image of an entrepreneur is that of a self-made individual, daring and decided, driven by a sense of power and independence, characterized by such words as innovation, risk-taking, opportunity recognition, and economic growth (Boyd, 1999). These values associated with entrepreneurship are in sync with the “dominant western enterprise development models emphasizing competitive edge in a globalized market to attract
investors and secure wealth” (Fenwick, 2002a, p. 718). Within this context, the agency of the individual is defined in terms of an empowered and autonomous individual, who can successfully establish the business against all odds. Entrepreneurship thus evokes an image of empowerment where women and men are seen as developing their capabilities to improve their sense of individuality and confidence. Concurrently, this empowerment is seen as leading to their autonomy and agency that they can exercise to live a better life.

Closely tied to the neoliberal ideals of “pulling oneself up by one's bootstrap” and a “can do attitude”, entrepreneurship has also been cited by many scholars, policy makers as well as immigrants themselves as an important avenue for becoming productive and self-dependent in the face of constraints in the mainstream labour market. An array of literature has probed the link between immigrant’s socio-economic constraints in the new country vis-à-vis their decision to start a business of their own (Clark & Drinkwater, 2000; Light, 1984; Pio, 2007a & b). Within the literature on immigrant entrepreneurship, much emphasis has been given on enclave economy, which is assumed to open up opportunities for immigrants that are not easily available in the host country. Particularly, in view of the racialized and gendered labour market barriers and the resulting effect of ghettoization in low level jobs that many immigrants of colour experience, many scholars have highlighted “enclave economy” as a vehicle for immigrants’ upward mobility, success and subsequent assimilation in the face of mainstream discrimination and lack of opportunities for minority immigrants (Bach, Bach & Triplett, 1981; Portes 1981; Portes & Bach, 1980, 1985; Portes, Clark, & Bach, 1977; Portes & Manning, 1986; Portes, Parker, & Cobas, 1980; Portes & Stepick, 1985; Wilson & Martin, 1982).

Within the enclave economy, entrepreneurship has received the most attention. Initially, self-employed or entrepreneurs were paid scant attention. As self-employment started growing in
North America and was increasingly being adopted by immigrants as well as ethnic minority groups, scholars could no longer ignore it’s presence within enclave economy (Light, Sabagh, Bozorgmehr, & Der-Martirosian, 1995). Within the literature on enclave entrepreneurship, there is much focus on how immigrants can become self-sufficient and economically productive by being innovative and risk-takers. They are often portrayed as enterprising subjects, who, undeterred by mainstream labour market hurdles and racism can still take charge of their own lives and overcome all the constraints through their business endeavours. This positive portrayal of immigrant entrepreneurs also suggests how in the face of constrained opportunities, they do not just fall back on the state or enter into substandard employment. By becoming entrepreneurs, they prove themselves to be autonomous, responsible, choice making subjects, capable of utilizing their skills, networks and capital to be economically successful. The two themes thus reverberate in this literature on enclave entrepreneurship: self-sufficiency and economic productivity.

An extensive literature that exists on “enclave entrepreneurship” traces how, in the absence of opportunities in the mainstream labour market, immigrants can create their own prospect based on their individual and social resources. Putting forward the thesis of “blocked mobility” as one the major reasons for immigrants in starting a business of their own (Aldrich, Cater, Jones, & McEvoy, 1981; Feagin & Imani, 1994), scholars argue that enclave enterprises can facilitate the process of immigrants’ “adaptation” in the host country (Gold, 1988; Light, 1984; Waldinger, 1986; Zhou, 1992). They note the positive and desirable outcome of such an initiative and the ability of the immigrants to stand on their own feet (Ho, Bedford, & Goodwin, 1999; Trlin, Henderson, & North, 2004) by being able to create opportunities for themselves. Correspondingly, these scholars who see entrepreneurship as part of the “ethnic succession”
model argue that it can lead to socio-economic mobility (Gold, 1988; Kupferberg, 2003; Light, 1984; Waldinger, 1986; Zhou, 1992), faster adaptation, and production of “a significant number of high earners” (Portes & Zhou, 1996, p. 228) amongst the immigrants. Although many studies cast doubt on the above positions by demonstrating that most of the small businesses that immigrants undertake are low status with few opportunities for profits, highly competitive, labour intensive and involve high rates of failures (Fernandez & Kim, 1998; Phizacklea & Ram, 1995; Waldinger, Aldrich, & Ward, 1990), there is no denying that enclave entrepreneurship is generally represented as a positive space where immigrants can avoid the negative impacts of immigration and easily get absorbed in economic activities, in case of lack of opportunities in the outside labour market (Murdie & Teixeira, 2000).

Studies that looked specifically at entrepreneurship vis-à-vis the enclave economy also pointed to the economic mobility that most enclave entrepreneurs can enjoy by taking the risk of starting a business and showing the initiative to grab opportunities in the enclave market. In fact, most of the literature that emphasize enclave entrepreneurship as a facilitator for immigrants’ subsequent adaptation into the mainstream society often does so more in terms of economic rather than the socio-cultural integration. This tie into the neoliberal discourse of wealth production and productivity as key to citizen’s success in the labour market. Portes and Jensen (1989), for example, examined the impact of ethnic enclaves on five hundred Cuban immigrants in South Florida. Their conclusion was that immigrants can economically benefit from enclave economy, particularly enclave entrepreneurship. Model (1985), too, was of the opinion that ethnic enclaves lead to economic growth, greater stability and status for enclave employment whereas in another comparative study focusing on the social mobility of Mexicans and Cubans in the USA, Portes and Bach (1985) argued that enclaves tend to provide economic advancement to
ethnic minority groups (e.g., Cuban immigrant men in Miami) so that their earnings could be comparable to those that are employed in the primary labour market. More recently, Luk and Phan (2005), studying Chinatown, accept that enclaves do have scopes for opportunities and economic developments. Consequently, such economic success is also seen as leading to self-sufficient entrepreneurs. Moreover, this literature also accentuates the fact that those immigrants who are unable to benefit out of an enclave economy and lack proactive efforts, fail to make their mark in the economy. Portes and Bach (1985), studying Mexican immigrant men, pointed out that since Mexican immigrants lacked an effective enclave economy, they failed to advance as much as the Cubans (who had very successful enclaves), and were forced to take up low wage jobs in the open economy. Portes and Stepick (1985) found corresponding results as well. They examined the labour market situations of two groups of immigrants to USA: 1980 Cuban and Haitian refugees. Their research indicated that enclave employment and residence, together with gender, marital status and kin networks proved favorable to Cubans (particularly Cuban entrepreneurs) rather than Haitians who, lacking an enclave option ended up mostly in the secondary economy. Enclave entrepreneurship then seem to portray classic examples of enterprising citizens, who amidst labour market insecurity and barriers can create their own success through their ingenuity, hard work, and zeal. Those unable to do so, the “unenterprising” ones, tend to end up in the precariousness of the secondary labour market.

Women Entrepreneurs and Enclave Economy:
Probing the Absence of Immigrant Women of Colour
Within Enclave Entrepreneurship

While an enclave economy is usually depicted as a panacea for immigrants’ especially immigrant of colours’ unemployment or underemployment, what is interesting is how this
literature is marked by an absence of the discussion of immigrant women of colour within enclave entrepreneurship. Moreover, since entrepreneurship within enclaves is seen as one of the most viable options for immigrant men to evade labour market barriers and racial discrimination in the primary labour market, there is very little literature on what women tend to do as part of being within an enclave economy. My participants fill an important gap in revealing not only the kind of work that many women might be doing within enclaves, but also in highlighting the fact that women also try different ways to remain active and productive workers when they experience structural and racial barriers in the host country. Different from the traditional small and medium-sized businesses (e.g., grocery store, restaurants) usually run by men within enclaves, South Asian women’s home-operated businesses present a different dynamic where, being excluded from the white-collar job market, they not only for the first time utilized the skills “they have learned in carrying out their domestic, maternal and family responsibilities” (Dallalifar, 1994, p. 549) for economic purposes, but also reconfigured the home space, traditionally held as a space of leisure, freedom, privacy (Crow & Allan, 1990; Dart, 2006) and ideologically held as distinct from the work space or that of the public sphere (Dart, 2006; Prügl & Boris, 1996). Moreover, their businesses were small, low-income, with no benefits, and in most cases unaccounted for. These kind of businesses are technically defined as own-account or solo self-employment; that is, where there are no paid employees (Cranford et al., 2003; Vosko & Zukewich, 2006), and are considered to be “in a[n even] more precarious position than self-employed employers” (Cranford et al., 2003, p. 10).

In the following sections, I will discuss three important ways South Asian women negotiate neoliberal ideologies associated with economic productivity and success. First, despite being in a precarious form of work, they demonstrate their love and passion for their work,
challenging the notion of a body less, abstract, highly individualized competitive entrepreneur. Second, by reconfiguring gender ideologies within home they remained immersed within the familial rather than becoming individualized, autonomous worker-subject. Third, by cultivating ethnic ties with other community members, they fostered collaborative relationships and reinvigorated “relational values” (Fenwick, 2002a).

*Love for Their Work*

While discussing with my respondents the various factors that motivated them to continue with their small businesses, one of the common responses that I received from the majority of the women was about how stitching or cooking was more a passion or a hobby that they had never planned to practice as a form of business. Priya had come to Canada with the hope of being able to work in some offices in administrative/financial position. That was what she did in India for many years before immigration. However, similar to so many of my other interviewees, after repeated attempts sending out a resumé, meeting recruiters, visiting placement agencies, she was unable to get into the kind of work she desired. It was then that one of her friends suggested that she could think of doing something from home as many women in the community did that.

At first, a bit hesitant, Priya did not know what she could do from home. She had neither money nor experience to start a big business. It was then that her husband suggested that she could think of catering. Priya knew that in her building, there were many South Asian families where both the wife and the husband worked and a few of them she knew always complained about all the cooking and cleaning they had to do on their own. She decided to take a chance and put up a flyer in her building. She purposefully kept her charges affordable so that the families would be interested. Priya thought she was lucky because within a couple of days, she got a
response from a member of her building who inquired if she could supply only *chappatis*\(^9\) for them. Priya readily agreed not only because she got her first client, but generally within her family, she had a reputation for “rolling out really soft and tasty *chappatis*”. This was something she had learned from her mother and was excited that her very first customer asked her for what she was really good at. Since then, as part of her business, Priya made around three hundred *chapattis* every weekend, and supplied them to various friends and families. Apart from that, she also delivered home-cooked food to a few families regularly. Another of my interviewee, Shabana, also knew stitching from before, but decided to utilize this skill from home only when she felt the absence of any other “proper” employment:

> I love stitching. That’s my passion so I thought why not do something from home. I mean I have friends who do that. And if I can’t go out and work what do I do? This is my work now.

There were many others like Shabana, who really enjoyed sewing or cooking from before, but had never thought of earning out of it. Shashi was a financial analyst before and at the time of the interview ran a catering business from her home in Brampton. While she had never dreamt of pursuing catering in Canada and always wanted to be in her own field, unemployment forced her to start this business. She had learned cooking only as a little girl but never had to cook while in India. It was after coming to Canada that she started cooking again and eventually took it up as a business. She had a number of clients, mostly young single men and a few families who regularly picked up food from her on the weekends. Moreover, she also cooked for small functions and get-together within the community and sometimes used to help her friend who ran a small sweet shop in Malton.

\(^9\) Wheat bread
Since all these women had been professionals before, I was quite interested to understand how they perceived their transition from being a white-collar professional to being a home-based entrepreneur. Being from highly educated, middle-class families, how did they view their present work at home? One of the first comments that women made was about how the unemployment they were experiencing after immigration led them to the decision to utilize their past “feminized” skills for economic survival. In fact, one of the major reasons women decided to go for home-based work was financial. As I have pointed out in Chapter four, having worked before, women wanted to remain self-reliant without having to depend on their spouses for economic survival. Therefore, when they were unable to get into any kind of professional work they decided to start with their home-based work. As Priya mentioned:

When my friend suggested that I can do some business from home, I thought let me try, at least I do not have to depend on my husband, also there is no investment.

Zarine also pointed out a similar reason:

A woman has many needs and you cannot always depend on your husband, then there’s children, their birthdays and other expenses, I had to find some work. So, started sewing and selling ready-made garments.

Thus financial independence was an important factor for prompting women to start their businesses. But then, there was still the fact that cooking or sewing was something that none of the women had to do on a regular basis when they were in their home countries. So, how did they negotiate this change in their lives? While women like Shabana, Jyoti or Priya did mention how much they loved to cook or stitch, at the same time they also pointed out how there was often a sense of despair and frustration that remained associated with the fact that they were not
able to enter their own professions. Often, they would compare their previous status with their present work and family lives. Priya said to me:

I often thought, oh God, look at me, I used to be in an office and now I am cooking to earn a living.

It was not that women devalued the work itself, as many loved to cook for their friends and family members or would do occasional sewing for themselves. What the women felt depressed about was the monotony of the work along with the isolation they experienced in doing their home-based work. Associated with this was also financial instability. Thus, there was the added pressure of having to do cooking or sewing for pay, something quite different from before when they would just do it for their own family members and sometimes friends. The survival of their businesses also required a lot of preparation. Women mentioned spending many hours practicing or remembering the stitching skills they have learned before or sitting down to get innovative recipes from the recipe books or the Internet. It was work that was also physically exhausting and tiring. These businesses, although done from home, required a lot of time, patience and energy. As shared by some of the interviewees, catering for twenty people usually required at least two days of prior preparation and then cooking for one whole day and sometimes more. There was the additional work of cleaning the big utensils required for such big catering services. Women, who supplied food regularly to various families, had to do such work almost every day.

Others who did sewing had similar stories to share. Thaya mentioned to me that stitching a whole lehenga\textsuperscript{10} required at least three days of continuous sewing, and if clients wanted additional embroidery, that required another extra day or two. I remember visiting Thaya on a

\textsuperscript{10} A kind of petticoat with intricate designs.
Monday afternoon, when she was extremely busy with her sewing. It was just before Diwali\textsuperscript{11} and Thaya had to stitch fifteen \textit{lehengas} for a group of girls who were to perform in a community hall. She did most of her stitching in the living room (a common practice among most of my interviewees), where we sat down for the interview. As she spoke to me, I noticed how fast she was in stitching the buttons. The \textit{lehengas} she had stitched were extremely intricate and artistic. She mentioned having hardly any sleep for the past week as she had several orders to handle. Often sewing while cooking or doing laundry while preparing meals for catering, women had to do a lot of balancing, feeling overwhelmed at times.

As I discussed before, often when women like Sheila or Priya had to cater to small parties, they not only had to deal with a large amount of cooking, but also washing and cleaning. Priya mentioned how every weekend, once she was done with her \textit{chappatis}, she would be too tired to do any of her other house work.

However, during our conversations what was most important to note was the way women described their home-based work. Despite all the desperation and frustration, they had started to love and enjoy their work. Priya, for instance, pointed out to me that:

> Although I never had to do so much cooking before, I have started liking it now. I think one of the main reasons is the appreciation you get from people. That makes a difference.

Jyoti who worked as a fashion designer also referred to how much she enjoyed her work and really loved it when people praised her for the work:

> In my building there are few young girls and they always come to me whenever they need new clothes to be stitched. Every time I come up with new styles and

\textsuperscript{11} South Asian festival, often described as the Festival of Lights. People on this occasion buy new clothes and share food, sweets and gifts with each other.
they love it. I also enjoy when I see them wearing the clothes I have stitched. That’s my reward.

Jennifer, one of my participants, in fact decided to start her home-based day care as she had always worked with children as a Montessori teacher and loved to be with them. Once she found out that she may have to take courses in Canada, to be able to teach again and that the process might take long, she was very frustrated. She did try out her best and applied to few schools and day-care, but was not hired as she lacked experience working with children in Canada. Eager to start an alternative way of earning, she thought of starting a home day-care. She knew that there were many children in the building and was optimistic of getting some responses. Unfortunately, even after putting up flyers and keeping her charges quite low, she did not get any response. She then decided to enroll in Early Childhood Education to further her career prospects. It was there that she met another woman from Sri Lanka, who was working part-time in an office and was desperately looking for an affordable day-care for her three children. When Jennifer told her about her interest, the woman readily agreed. Since then, Jennifer was running her small day care at home. At the time of the interview she had ten kids in her day-care. There were some who came in the morning, while a few came in the evening as their parents worked at night. Jennifer shared her work experience with me:

I love my work now. I always wanted to work with children and my day care gave me that opportunity.

Appreciation from clients and family members thus seemed to play an important role in how women came to view their home-based work. They mentioned that their work not only gave them a sense of satisfaction when clients praised their cooking or stitching, but also instilled in them a sense of responsibility and urge to do their work more professionally. Women mentioned
utilizing some of the skills they learned as part of the training in the community organizations. For example, Ghazala mentioned always carrying her business card so that whenever she got an opportunity she handed it out to prospective clients. Sheila, who was a public-relation officer before, pointed out how she printed small postcards advertising her day-care and sewing business to make her work more visible in the community. Women also described how they would often greet their clients or dress up professionally in suits or skirts when managing a catering event or organizing an exhibition. According to Ghazala:

If we are doing this work, we should do it well. Without loving our work we won’t be able to make it successful.

Ghazala was one of the few women who had decided to take up garment business as her profession, and at the time of the interview she was busy setting up her own store where she wanted to sell her home-stitched items as well as garments brought from Pakistan. Through these efforts that women put forward to initiate a business, something that none of them had done before, what comes across as part of their agentic self is the very creativity and innovativeness that they demonstrated by being able to market skills that they learned as part of their growing up. At the same time, in using such language of love, enjoyment and passion women, actively negotiate the neoliberal ideology of “bodiless, abstract versions of knowledge and work, and models of enterprise that distance the owner-manager from the business activity” (Fenwick, 2002a, p. 711). While not necessarily successful or productive in the neoliberal sense, the women underscored their own definition of productivity and success that remained entwined with love and enjoyment, rather than for mere financial stability.

The bulk of the literature on enclave entrepreneurship that construct women’s business endeavours within enclaves as too small, informal, unproductive, fails to recognize this kind of
resourcefulness at work behind such an endeavour. Scholars (Perez, 1986; Zhou, 1992), who suggest that the enclave economy creates mere economic sustenance for these women, who otherwise would have earned nothing in the formal labour market, in fact only highlight one aspect of their reason to work, completely dismissing the factors of innovativeness, creativity, and ingenuity that go hand-in-hand with interest to earn by utilizing enclave entrepreneurship. Therefore, I argue that, unless we acknowledge that women’s creativity, originality and passion play an important role behind these business efforts, we will lose sight of the agency that remains embedded within their initiatives to determine an opportunity for themselves within the precariousness and uncertainty they experienced in their everyday lives (Neilson & Rossiter, 2005) in Canada. These small, informal and home-based businesses were not similar to what most male entrepreneurs tend to do within enclaves. Yet, for many women who have looked upon their work as an important avenue to create prospects for themselves in an adverse market, these small-scale enterprises represent a way of responding to the exclusion and marginalization that they are experiencing in the labour market. South Asian women’s agency in the form of negotiation can be further determined in two other aspects closely related to their performance of home-based work: their active negotiation with gender roles along with ethnic ties and kinship network.

Re-Configuring Gender Ideologies and Division of Labour Within “Home”

An important feature of the businesses run by the South Asian women was that they were located within their homes. Previous research (e.g. Dallalfar, 1989) on home-based business within enclaves has shown how the location of the home businesses leads to the invisibility of the endeavours undertaken by women within enclaves. Based on an ideology of public/private dichotomy, home has been traditionally associated with “love”, “freedom”, “security”, “duty”
(Crow & Allan, 1990; Prügl & Boris, 1996) so that waged work from home has become a problematic category for women. Just as women’s house-work within the home has been rendered invisible by patriarchal ideology, similarly, home-based paid-work done by women has been largely unrecognized. Seen merely as an extension of domestic work, both house-work and paid-work from home “have belonged to a larger gendered structuring of employment in which occupations, as well as the processes and places of labour, become designated either male or female” (Prügl & Boris, 1996, p. 7). However, in the post-industrial era, with the dovetailing of work and home (Mason, Carter, & Tagg, 2008), home “itself is being reconfigured as a place that’s not a respite from work, but the central location for it” (Pink, 2001, p. 41). According to Prügl (1996), in a neoliberal economy, the decreasing employment opportunities in the formal sector of the labour market have led to the rise of various informal employment strategies, home-based work being one of them. However, work within the home has generally suffered from devaluation, especially when performed by women because of its close association with house-work and the gendered division of labour (Prügl & Boris, 1996). Thus, often they are hardly considered important enough to be valued as “work” or “entrepreneurial initiative”. Race, too, has an important implication so that it is mainly immigrant women of colour who tend to work from home and has a more pejorative connotation than those done by white professional women or men (Ng, 1996; Phizacklea & Wolkowitz, 1995).

The existing literature on enclave economy primarily defines women’s role within home in terms of their victimization as gendered subjects. This literature highlights the fact that the reason women are unable to look for jobs in the mainstream labour market of the host country and remain tied to informal, shadow economy of the enclaves is because of the patriarchal assumptions that bind women solely to family responsibilities and motherhood (Light, 2007).
These scholars suggest that since women have the primary responsibility to take care of the household, they lose out on opportunities, fail to expand their businesses, lose interest to work outside the home and suffer from lower participation in the labour market (Kupferberg, 2003; Zhou & Logan, 1989; Zhou, 1992). They are often seen as either lacking human capital skills or their education/ training truncated by motherhood and family responsibilities (Light, 2007). These barriers, coupled with larger institutional hurdles, are seen as impeding women’s success as entrepreneurs within enclaves and forcing them to choose less desirable jobs in the labour market.

Thus we find a number of studies around women working as part of family businesses (Boyd, 1989; Fernandez-Kelly & Garcia, 1990; Perez, 1986) within enclaves, providing free labour and suffering from the disadvantages incurred from enclave employment. The general “expectation” that women should first fulfill their familial obligations thus seems to be an important consideration for women working within enclave economy (Zhou & Logan, 1989), who thus suffer from truncation of their mobility, lack of education, training and deficiency in human capital (Light, 2007). Gender ideology is said to propel such decisions as existing gender discrimination within enclaves relegate domestic role to women and high paid jobs to men (Zhou & Logan, 1989).

The emphasis on gender ideologies impacting women’s role as business owners has some parallel in the cultural theory of entrepreneurship that has its roots in Weber’s (1985) theory of the Protestant ethic and capitalism. This theory tends to blame minority women’s low success in entrepreneurial activities on their “cultural deficiency” that does not encourage women for business ownership, and bind them to norms and values that are inimical to success as entrepreneurs (Smith-Hunter & Boyd, 2004). Thus, along with gender ideology, cultural
deficiency and women’s lack of education and training are taken to be some of the important reasons why immigrant women of colour have not been able to come up as successful entrepreneurs and suffer from lack of opportunities for advancement (Gilbertson, 1995).

In contrary to the above findings, my interviews with the South Asian women demonstrated that women, upon immigration, were willing to be part of the labour market and in most cases did not think of their family responsibilities or gendered division of labour as the major explanation for their unemployment. It is important to remember here that these women have worked outside the home before in their own countries, as well as handled household responsibilities before. My findings contradict the findings by some of the researches (e.g. Kupferberg, 2003), who suggest that women’s lack of participation in the formal labour market is based on their family commitments. I argue that while women do play an important role in maintaining domestic work, they also negotiate their gender roles and responsibilities that has to be given due recognition. In this, I agree with scholars like Khattab (2002) and Pio (2007a & b), who argue that, focusing on women’s gender roles within the household as the primary reason for their victimization and marginalization from the labour market does not pay enough attention to how other processes, such as lack of opportunities and racial discrimination systemically exclude women of colour from entering the labour market despite their high educational levels (Gilmore & Petit, 2008; Iredale, 2001). If immigrant women of colour end up working within informal enclave economies, it is primarily their “disadvantaged reception” (Portes & Borocz, 1989) in the destination country that forces them to become either ghetto service providers or low paid, precarious workers (Vosko, Macdonald, & Campbell, 2009; Vosko, 2006). Moreover, even when gender ideologies do affect women’s participation in the labour market, women actually negotiate such gender barriers, trying to refashion their position within the household.
Such refashioning of women’s gender roles was evident in the many responses I had from the participants about how much significance they put to their efforts in trying to hold and support the family sphere together. This is not to deny that women were not critical of gender hierarchies within the families, and strongly felt that they needed to be addressed. In fact, one of the issues that they consistently spoke about, particularly in relation to home-based work and their domestic responsibilities, was that of the gendered division of household labour. Since most of these women spent a considerable amount of time within the home, often they had to bear the dual responsibility of maintaining their home businesses vis-à-vis performing all the household tasks and childcare. Many women worked exceptionally long days. They usually got up early in the morning and worked throughout the day preparing meals, cleaning the house, or sending kids to the school. Women who also had paid work outside not only worked long hours, but had to put more efforts in managing their responsibilities. Mala not only had her catering business to look after, but she also worked in a factory as a part-time packer. Since she had to work thrice a week, in an evening shift, Mala mentioned how difficult it was for her to sometimes manage all her cooking, cleaning along with her business demands:

Sometimes I feel I do not even have time to breathe, especially the days that I also go out for work. The only good thing is that my husband comes back before I leave so that he can take care of the children. I just rush all day, preparing meals for the kids, little bit of cleaning and then simply go out for work. I try to do most of the cooking on Sunday but you know if you have kids at home, they want food, they want to go out and all that… I just don’t have time. It’s so hard, I feel so stuck sometimes…I cannot explain.

Balancing and juggling thus came up again and again in women’s conversations as they tried to describe their work and home lives. Amongst all this balancing and juggling, women
seemed to put a lot of emphasis on their house work. Indeed, some of the houses that I visited were exceptionally neat, well-decorated and well-maintained. Although many of the women lived in rented apartments, it was quite evident that they took great care of their household. Women like Jennifer, Saadiya, Saoli mentioned cleaning their houses every day-- a practice they were used to since childhood. Being from middle-class, affluent families, women generally did not have to do a lot of house work. Since they also had full-time jobs, a lot of the cooking and cleaning used to be only on weekends and that too when women had friends and families come over for dinners or parties. It was only after arrival to Canada that they mentioned undergoing adjustments in terms of the amount of house work they had to do in Canada. For example, Shaoli explained to me that when in Bangladesh, she would never have to clean the rooms or do the dishes. She had to do that only after coming here. Moreover, whereas prior to migration, these middle-class South Asian women could have availed of domestic help, upon migration most of them experienced financial instability, and were forced to fulfill not only their domestic responsibilities but also almost single-handedly carried out all childcare duties as well. The contradictory class position that these women experienced after coming to Canada has been analyzed by scholars like Mirchandani (2002), who have reasoned that immigrant women’s class position does not remain static and “many are often middle-class on some dimensions and simultaneously working-class on others” (p. 29). This contradictory class position that Mirchandani refers to was evident in how women would often try to preserve their middle-class respectability in the face of the socio-economic deterioration they were experiencing after immigration. As far as South Asians are concerned, this notion of middle-class respectability has a history and can be traced back to the emergence of the English educated, genteel and cultured “gentle-man” in the colonial period, whose “gender ideology was primarily respectability” (Ray,
Corollary to the gentle-man was the “gentle-woman”, “protected, culturally refined, and responsible for the inner life of the family” (Ray, 2000, p. 696). Her virtues consisted of modesty, shame and respectability. While it will be reductive to think of the notion of middle class as homogenized and static, some of the traits of the older forms of class identity were still visible in case of the participants. For instance, women’s emphasis on their education, culture, or immaculate maintenance of the household can be linked to their anxious attempt to hold on to some of their values in the face of their rapidly waning economic status. Absence of a secured job and professional demeanour also led to such anxiousness, along with the loss of support and help that hindered women’s progress in many ways. Zarine described the situation explicitly:

Then when I came to Canada, I had a small son and then I didn’t have to do house work in Pakistan but here I had to do that so that was hard for me. Initially my husband was also grumpy all the time that this is not happening, that is not happening so… I was stressed for a long time after my baby was born. In Pakistan we had relatives to look after the baby. Even relatives here are busy with their jobs. Our mothers will be there but here together with happiness you have lot of responsibilities, you have to look after your son also and you don’t have experience either about the child. Lots of tension. In Pakistan after you come back home you can rest for 1 or 2 months but here right after you come back from the hospital you have to prepare food, do grocery, clean home.

Although at times their husbands would pitch in, the majority of family responsibilities belonged to the women. Yet, at the same time, these families were no replica of the “European/Victorian ideal of the ‘respectable’ nuclear patriarchal family” (Freeman, 2007, p. 29), but to a great extent refashioned, reorganized to harbour on love and mutual support for each other. This sense of love and support was evident in how most women, rather than solely
blaming their spouses for not helping them with house-work, were overtly critical of the Canadian system that, they felt, not only marginalized them but their husbands as well. Suffering from unemployment, many men had taken up survival jobs in factories, warehouses and grocery stores where they worked long hours, so that the women felt that they proffered support to their spouses by being responsible for the household.

Shabana’s husband was a machine operator in a factory, where he worked a twelve-hour shift from midnight to morning, and had another part-time job in a drug store on the weekends. Thus Shabana mentioned that, by the time her husband came back, the only thing he could do was really just to sleep and get ready for the next shift. In such circumstances, Shabana had to take up the household responsibilities:

I have a son and my husband was working 8-11 a.m. at night. I had to take care of the house and my son. He needed my support.

Shashi had a similar story, with the added fact that she, too, had worked in a grocery store, but because of her deteriorating health she decided to give up her part-time job. Her husband worked long hours in a factory:

When we came here my husband got a job in the factory. He started working. I have a graduate degree from home and I was looking for a job. I worked at [grocery store] for a couple of months but the hours were odd and I wasn’t feeling well. I left the job and decided to study.

Then there were some who preferred to be at home in order to continue with their job search or training while their husbands supported them by working outside to survive financially. Jennifer, for instance, was taking the ECE course and had no time to work in any job outside home. She had decided to finish her course to be able to look for teaching opportunities and did
not want to waste her time in some low-level job. Some of the men also supported their wives in their business endeavour. Ghazala, for instance, mentioned how difficult it was for her to set up the store without her husband’s assistance. When she needed a loan to pay for the store and was declined by the bank for not having a good credit history, it was her husband who went to several small lenders within the community and finally managed to secure financial assistance for her.

Priya’s husband was equally enthusiastic about her business. During the interview she spoke at length about how encouraging and supporting he is of her endeavour:

He feels for my condition. He knows about my previous job and knows that I feel bad about not being able to get into my own profession. So when I took up the business he helped me in every possible way. Even now he helps me with house work with everything. He is my greatest supporter.

In light of the above discussions, it is important that we do not merely refer to stories of patriarchal exploitation within South Asian families, but take into account the mutual help and support family members often extend to each other, especially upon migration, when life opportunites become much more difficult for many.

At times, South Asian women did experience rigid patriarchal control (Dua, 1992; Martins & Reid, 2007; Ralston, 1988) where they were expected to “bear most of the responsibility for providing support and sustenance to the family… and to define themselves in terms of their roles as wives and mothers” (George & Ramkissoon, 1998, p. 114). A few women, like Leela, made reference to men’s reluctance to do housework:

Men don’t like to work. So even if I work outside I’ll have to come back and do all the household work and I don’t have that energy to do all these things together. I don’t have that energy. I have thus decided to look after the children and stay at home.
In these situations, the increased responsibilities for housework as well as lack of help from their spouses, hindered women’s job search abilities. But women did not just comply with such circumstances. They actively tried to change the situation they were in. One of the common strategies most women undertook was to openly discuss the issue with their husbands. For example, Nabila’s husband was reluctant to allow her to work, leaving their small child with the babysitter. She knew that with only her husband’s income, the family would be unable to maintain all the expenses. She thus made him calculate the expenses that they have to meet every month and he was forced to allow her to work.

Women also resorted to manipulation. When Jyoti’s husband was not happy to let her take up a job, she would purposefully look sad and depressed every day so that seeing her in that condition, her husband ended up advising her to get a job to keep herself happy. Jyoti not only started her home business, but also took up a part-time work in a store.

Complete defiance was noted in one case. Shania completely went against her husband’s decision and went ahead to take up employment. She, too, like Jyoti, was handling both business at home and also part-time work outside. Although her husband did not talk to her for some time, he gradually realized how important her work was for the family. Thus, immersed within familial relations, the lives of South Asian women remained simultaneously “constrained and supported by rapidly changing” (Pun, 2005, p. 24) South Asian families.

At times, women had to deal with a taken-for-granted attitude from their family members with respect to their home-based work. Assuming that their home business was nothing different from the housework that they did, many men would initially devalue their wives’ work by not accepting it as important. In such circumstances, one of the strategies women adopted was to
make their spouses realize the economic importance of their work. Jennifer had a story in this regard:

See initially my husband never took me seriously. He thought it’s just something for short time. But I am serious; I am working and contributing whatever to family income. I told him that.

Since then Jennifer mentioned how her husband had become more supportive of her work:

He respects my work now. On weekends when I am busy, he cooks and cleans.
He is supportive now.

In another instance, Mita reported how, when she started to sew from home, her husband did not take the work seriously. So she decided to discuss the matter with him. She told me how she explained to him that even though she was working from home, she was contributing financially to the family and that there were people who liked her work and came to her. If she would not finish her work on time and deliver, people would lose trust in her, which would not be a good thing in the community. Since that day, Mita’s husband became much more understanding and helpful. She mentioned how he would help her with cooking and cleaning and even accompany her to the market to buy buttons or threads, something he would have never done before.

There were several other instances where women mentioned how, by emphasizing their financial contribution to the family, they were able to raise the importance of their work within their families. Saadiya gave me an example:

There are birthday parties, kid’s dresses, school stuff, every day small expenses, like groceries…shopping…sometimes children want to have pizza… all these expenses my income covers all that. Last year when we went to Pakistan, it was
because of my income that we could go. I saved the money from my business…my husband couldn’t believe it when I told him.

While not suggestive of a complete reversal of patriarchal ideologies, women’s economic status did seem to “provide room for renegotiating women’s power in the family” (Pun, 2005, p. 63). This was evident in the pride they took in their earnings, their belief in their work skills, and their ability, however difficult, to balance their work and family lives. Women did a lot of adjustments while engaged in their home businesses, such as Mita would usually sew in the afternoon when nobody was at home, Zarine would do sewing on the weekends; yet when there were times they felt that their families needed to adjust to their work, women would demand support from their families. Thaya asked her husband to take care of all their children’s needs when she was busy doing sewing for a wedding or a festival. When Leena had to finish a large catering order, her husband took care of the cleaning and laundry.

Thus what follows from the above discussion is how women valued their home businesses vis-à-vis their ability to be with their families. In many cases, women would actually refuse to work in meagerly paid, low-status jobs, preferring to be at home, working from home and extending their support, love and understanding to the other members of the family. Yet, at the same time, when needed, women would stand up for their rights, manipulating or defying any gender ideologies that might be hindering their life opportunities in Canada. The immense value that women placed on their home-businesses and household labour echoes Nakano Glenn’s (1986) analysis of how women of colour see their “reproductive labour- that is feeding, clothing, and psychologically supporting the male wage earner and nurturing and socializing the next generation…as work on behalf of the family as a whole rather than as work benefitting men in particular” (p. 192). In the face of the racism and exclusion they experience from the mainstream
Canadian society, the women collectively “create and maintain family life in the face of forces that undermine family integrity” (Hill-Collins, 1994, p. 47). In fact, in Pun’s study, there were instances of how patriarchal relations could both enable and constrain women’s lives in the neoliberal economy. Pun (2005) highlighted in her study how rural migrant women, severely controlled by the Chinese patriarchal families, would escape to work in the multinational factories to avoid being married off at an early age. Many women in her study reflected on the single life and the “freedom” they enjoyed being away from their families trying to determine their lives and work. Being infused with the desire to become the urban dagongmei, these women, under the disciplining and regulatory forces operative within the factories, would internalize modes of fashion, aesthetic values and codes of conduct that presumably would set them apart from other rural migrant and underclass women. Yet, when there were points of conflict with the factory management or difficulties in pursuing such regimented factory work, families proved to be the greatest support and strength, nurturing their scuffled selves that bore the brunt of neoliberal disciplining.

By remaining immersed within the collective and the familial, South Asian women redefined the neoliberal values of individuality or autonomy that only emphasizes market related activities and economic benefits. It seems difficult to deny then that these women are not mere “‘family puppets’ rendering their fates for someone to decide” (Pun, 2005, p. 61). While at times powerless, they also renegotiated and remade their familial relations challenging those who suggest women’s lives are utterly oppressed within ethnic enclaves. By negotiating the various patriarchal ideologies and valuing their domestic work as well as businesses from home these women confirmed how far from being “secluded and passive” acceptors of gender stereotypes, they were active agents in refashioning their households.
Configuring Their Location Within Enclaves: Cultivating Ethnic Ties

Being located within ethnic enclaves, the women participants in my study were in close association to their own communities so that most of their networking and mobilization of resources for starting or running these businesses were being done with other women in the community. The friendship and trust that women spoke about was important in dealing with the isolation and frustration they often experienced in their everyday lives. As I will discuss in the following section, this relationship that women established among themselves challenged the individualized image of the enterprising worker, the autonomous and competitive self whose only interest lies in self-development.

One of the issues that women often spoke about was that of networking. The discussion first came up when women would talk about the training sessions and how they were constantly being told to network in order to gain employment. Women were quite critical of such abstract suggestions that do not take into account immigrant women’s constraints in building such network. The literature on the enclave economy suggests that women are unable to network successfully within enclaves that severely impede the growth and success of their enterprises (Moore, 1990; Reskin & Padavic, 1994). Women’s networking skills are seen as disadvantageous to their economic mobility as women tend to network disproportionately with females (Reskin & Padavic, 1994), and such networking is also viewed as usually smaller and more homogeneous as compared to men (Moore, 1990). Many scholars thus argue that women’s major household and childcare responsibilities and a gender division of labour impede their abilities to network, especially outside their kin and families (Moore, 1990, Renzulli, Aldrich, & Moody, 2000; Schrover, van der Leun, & Quispel, 2007; Wright & Ellis, 2000). Such inabilitys are taken to hamper their business endeavors as well as exposure of their enterprises outside of
the enclave (Portes & Bach, 1985). However, scholars like Wright and Ellis (2000) argue that women’s networking patterns are different from men’s. Through their study of immigrants of colour in Los Angeles, they maintain that social networks play an important role in determining the kind of employment immigrants undertake so that “[i]mmigrant women are more likely to funnel into occupations where other immigrant women work, regardless of nativity, than into jobs beside co-ethnic men” (p. 597). Their findings corroborate the patterns of South Asian women’s entry into home-based work. In fact, when asked about how they came to know about these businesses, most women mentioned having heard about it from their friends within the community. Saadiya’s business idea came from one such friend:

I have a friend from Pakistan who works as a sewer and she gave me the idea to start a business from home.

In order to set up their businesses, women actively organized familial and kin network thereby showing their “power and creativity in making and remaking their familial and kin networks” (Pun, 2005, p. 50). These networks were instrumental in providing them with information about the details of starting a business. Although these micro businesses were quite informal, for many there were “lots of things” they needed to know. For example, “finding clients” and “spreading the word around” were two vital elements women needed assistance with. Sabitha, spoke about the issue in detail:

I had decided to start a garment business but I had never done it before. I was worrying what to do but then there are many women from our countries who do this kind of work. I knew some of them and decided to talk to them. They were very helpful. They gave me the idea that put up flyers, it will be useful. Also the grocery stores, you know, that’s also my friend’s idea. Three of us visited quite a few grocery stores to place our flyers. We decided to put up one flyer and then
share the earning if any…Yes, yes we got good response. I would also let people know when I meet them in the elevator. I don’t mind mixing or talking to people I don’t know (laughs). A friend of mine has also advertised in Bengali and Hindi newspaper. She told me yesterday. I think I’ll also do that.

One of the primary ways women networked and built their resources to successfully continue with their work was by creating what can be defined as “relationships” with other women within the enclave economy. Women’s networking skills and building of relationships has been elaborately discussed by many scholars. Pun (2005), for instance, mentions how women within the factories often resorted to a cultural sense of collectivity by making friends or adhering to kinship bonding within the factories, to fight market forces as well as the internal regimes of surveillance and punitive control. Although thoroughly disapproved by the management, Chinese women workers would still hold on to some of their cultural practices and collective forms that acted as a “counter tactic to the individuation project of capital in the process of Chinese proletarianization” (Pun, 2005, p. 9). Explaining this process, Pun argues that the kin network and social relationships were used by Chinese migrant workers as a counter tactic that provided women with support and trust for each other. Therefore, according to Pun, the interplay of “atomized individuation” and “certain forms of collectivity specific to Chinese society” (p. 9) worked simultaneously to create the dual process of “self making and being made by power” (Pun, 2005, p. 9).

Similar to Pun, in an earlier study done on women workers in the shop floor of British factory, Westwood (1985) elucidated how women create bonding amongst themselves against the capitalist control within the factory. By referring to what she defines as “patriarchal capitalism” (p. 5), Westwood (1985) draws attention to how capitalist production exploits women workers within factory settings, while patriarchal ideologies produce them as “gendered
subjects” (p. 6) so that working outside home is not only about “becoming a worker; it is most crucially about becoming a woman” (p. 6). Thus, the interlocking relations of capitalism and patriarchy produce a contradictory situation for women. This is because, according to Westwood, while at one level women creatively resist the governing and disciplining processes of capitalism, on the other level this very creativity binds them to an “oppressive version of womanhood” (Westwood, 1985, p. 6). In trying to subvert the manipulation by the management and the union in producing a deskill, individuated, controlled, and gendered labour force, many women generated a culture of femininity that according to Westwood, “reinforced a definition of woman that was securely tied to domesticity… or domestic labour in the home” (Westwood, 1985, p. 22). Women, mainly women of colour in her study developed various creative ways of opposing the powerful forces of capitalist control. For example, friendship proved to be an important part of the women’s lives on the shop floor. Similar to the women workers in China, here in the British factory as well we find friendship working as an “antidote to the pressures of work” (Westwood, 1985, p. 90). Just as in China friends, here, too, supported and helped each other from the harsh lives and daily work regimes of the factory. Moreover, through sharing of food, film stories, celebration of birthdays, baby-showers, and pursuit of informal businesses such as selling of make-up and baby clothes the women demonstrated the “strength of collectivity” against the individuating and disciplining regime of capitalist forces. The support network that they created within the factory was a great source of strength against their isolation and patriarchal control at home, although their very belief in marriage, family and children tied them to domesticity and patriarchal ideologies.

A similar support system was apparent amongst the South Asian women. Not only women took ideas from each other to start a home-based business, but often they would help
others by introducing them to prospective clients. Ghazala was proactive in this. She mentioned having helped many women not only with the setting up of business, but sending clients to them. Given the small size of the clientele, I was curious to know whether women felt any sense of competition when it came to referring customers to each other. Ghazala pointed out that it was precisely because of this small customer base that women in the community needed to be more helpful with each other. She felt that by being supportive of each other, they were able to create a harmonious relationship that was very important when running small businesses within enclaves. Many others also shared same opinion as that of Ghazala. Tina mentioned that the work they do is “not profit based but really based on good relationships” so that women do not think about competing with each other. Tina further added:

See I don’t know crochet work but if I have a client who is looking for that I will send her to my friend who does crochet. We try to help each other this way

Moreover, women would also sew together or help each other with cooking. Neeta and Rumona were friends who stayed in the same building. Rumona mentioned that some times during festivals like Id when they have catering to do they help each other with cooking and other preparation:

We just share the work and it become so much easier. We also enjoy those times, there so much of fun when we work together.

Many others also talked about similar forms of collaboration. Women mentioned learning from each other, exchanging recipes or setting stalls together for exhibitions. These activities not only helped women to be in close association with each other, but also provided them with a support system that they often lacked in the mainstream society. In particular, this was important for those women who only worked from home. Some of those who were only involved in their
home-based work emphasized the relationship and collaboration that they felt was instrumental in fighting any feeling of isolation or desperation. While remaining engaged in their home-based work, a few women also engaged in community services. Saadiya, for instance, mentioned how she would help other women prepare their resumé or type out letters for them. They would provide information about community services or often accompany those women who were weak in English to clinic and other places. Rehana offered a free, English conversation course from home and gave free Koran lessons to girls. Jennifer would often babysit for free if someone was unable to pay or was facing financial difficulties. Mita taught computer lessons to other South Asian women who could not afford to get paid training.

What comes out from the above discussions is how, going beyond the neoliberal values of “competitive, ‘corporate’ entrepreneurs” (Fenwick, 2002a, p. 717), women actively crafted what can be defined as an “alternate – [model] of enterprise” based on qualities of collaboration, “meaningful work and relationships” (Fenwick, 2002a, p. 717). While crafting such collaborative relationships, women often reinvigorated what can be defined as “relational value” (Elyachar, 2005, p. 160), based on their own cultural moorings. Julia Elyachar (2005), through her ethnographic study of micro-entrepreneurs in Cairo, has argued that in light of the various “conditions of structural adjustments where jobs and futures were no longer being provided by the state” (p. 26), the Egyptian “worker masters” would often rely on various exchanges that although not “exchange of money”, yet were “essential to the master’s success in the market” (Elyachar, 2005, p. 42). Similar to these Egyptian workers, the South Asian immigrant women also depended on a number of practices that, by valorizing certain cultural practices, mobilized ethnic ties and kinship amongst the members of the enclave. This valorization or reinvigoration of cultural practices was not only important to the women for “keeping and acquiring customers”
(Elyachar, 2005, p. 140), but was also effective in creating “sisterhood networks” (Pun, 2005, p. 61) amongst themselves.

One such practice was cooking and sharing of food. Meals occupied an important place in the lives of the South Asian women. Often, when I would visit them for interviews, not only would I be offered various snacks and sweets, but many would ask me to stay for lunch or dinner. The few times that I stayed, the meals would be lavish consisting of meat dishes, kebab, pulav, biriyani, dal, chapattis, vegetables so on and so forth. Sharing of meals and cooking was a common way women maintained their ties with other women. Often, women mentioned, on weekends, they would cook together and organize potluck or picnics. These get-togethers over food not only forged friendship but also provided opportunities for sharing information, exchanging of business skills and breaking out of isolation at times. Shaoli and Tina shared such activities with me:

We often meet, we cook and bring it with us and then on say Saturday afternoons we will just meet, chat….

I love when we all meet together. In our building I have few friends and we sometimes plan to sew together especially during festivals. A few of my friends cook really well so they bring all kinds of snacks and we have a great time.

This hospitality was practiced not only amongst friends and families when women had people coming in to pick up their orders, it was a common custom to offer them chai (tea) or mithai (sweets). Often many of these clients who were regulars would be asked by women to stay back and have a meal together. According to Rehana, such practices are helpful for making contacts and friendship within enclaves and between owners and customers:
See, in our businesses you have to constantly expand and make contacts as the work sometimes can be very less or seasonal. So when you make friends, they visit you or you invite someone for dinner that creates that friendship. They will then come back because of the good relation we have.

On various religious occasions like *Id* or *Dussera* women mentioned that they not only visited each other but often distributed sweets to families in the buildings, sometimes even if they did not know the family. Religious festivals and meals would bring them closer. Thus, living in an “alien present”, a society that keeps them marginalized, the sharing of meals signified “emblems of a shared knowledge” and thereby, “a communal identity” (Ganguly, 2001, p. 124). These culinary activities thus functioned as a “technique of nearness” (Ganguly, 2001, p. 136), a “form of sociability”, a form of “collective” as opposed to the individualistic neoliberal enterprising principles. Apart from cooking and sharing food, women would also wear ethnic wares within homes, speak in vernacular, and spend time together in long sessions of *adda* - “the long, informal, and unrigorous conversations” that form a vital idiom of social interaction (Chakrabarty, 1999, p. 110) amongst the women within enclaves. Women’s insistence to hold on to some of these cultural practices not only led to an overt creation of a sense of community, but also demonstrated their active negotiation with those mainstream training sessions that while trying to conform them into Western comportments, also aimed at eradicating some of those very deportments or values that women actually practiced within enclaves. Most of the training courses that women attended were “assimilatory” and encouraged them to “abandon or ‘unlearn’ their original knowledge and skills, including their language and culture” (Goldberg, 2007, p. 33). The agency of the women therefore, becomes apparent here where they purposefully adhered to such cultural values, relationships and practices that actually kept them economically productive than blindly adhering to the remedial processes of whitening that brought them
nothing more than marginalization, precarity and a sense of being essentially “deficient” as compared to a homogeneous, “hegemonic European-Canadianness” (Bannerji, 2000, p. 51).

In this chapter, I highlighted how, South Asian immigrant women despite adopting enclave entrepreneurship that is often considered as one of the most effective means through which immigrants can avoid the labour market constraints and create opportunities for themselves, challenge the ideologies of productivity and success that remains associated with the notion of entrepreneurial self. While neoliberal economy measures success and productivity in terms of economics, these women through their work provide an alternative. By underscoring love, community ties and familial relations, they highlight how creation of relationships, love and mutual support can also be markers of entrepreneurial success. Despite being in an individualized, competitive market economy, these women rather than pursuing the ideas of neoliberal worker-subject, redefine the notion of enterprising selves to encompass, collaboration, love and creativity.
Chapter Six: Conclusion

My dissertation studied the experiences of university educated, professional South Asian immigrant women running small, informal businesses from home within ethnic enclaves. Similar to many other immigrant women of colour, these women had migrated to Canada with dreams in their eyes-- the dreams of new possibilities and new beginnings. Yet, very soon those utopian dreams started becoming contradictions as the constraints against social mobility and the various exclusionary experiences of living in a gender/race stratified society started taking shape. In a country, where racism is deeply embedded and Eurocentric ideals, values and norms dominate, South Asian women experienced difficulty in finding a bearing for themselves in the Canadian society. The constraints were particularly evident when they tried to enter the labour market. The various institutionalized barriers such as the need for the Canadian work experience coupled with the employer’s discriminatory attitude, systematically devalued and desksilled their previous education, knowledge or expertise and relegated them to unemployment and eventual poverty.

Marginalized and excluded from the labour market, these women found themselves in a dilemma. On the one hand, there was the neoliberal thrust to remain productive, self-sufficient and self-responsible citizen-subjects, and on the other hand, their inability to enter their own professional fields, despite having all the skills and education to be successfully working in the Canadian labour market. It was in this context, that I located the negotiation strategies adopted by South Asian immigrant women in their everyday lives. By employing Foucault’s notion of governmentality, I examined how the hegemonic discourse of “enterprising self” impacted the lives of South Asian immigrant women trying to enter the labour market. This framework was useful in revealing the various, everyday subtle techniques adopted by the settlement service...
providers that attempted to regulate the immigrants of colour to make them enterprising worker subjects and also aimed at moulding them to comply with a “white ideal Canadian self”.

I showed that one such subtle regulatory techniques was evident in how non-white immigrant women were being encouraged to remain highly productive and competitive workers, who could pull themselves up by the bootstrap and would not depend on the state or the welfare to establish themselves in the Canadian society. Often in the workshops, the trainers or the counselors would try to instill such ideals of self-reliance or self-responsibility within the women by reiterating the importance of sincerity, hard work and zeal to perform. These values were presented again and again as the mantra for being successful in the Canadian labour market and were part of the strategy to assist immigrants of colour to “learn to govern themselves” (Ong, 2003, p. 15). The underlying message beneath these discourses presented by the trainers, employment counselors or other service providers was to clearly depict that the Canadian state had provided its citizens with opportunities and resources and that it was now the duty of the citizens themselves “to reduce their burden on society” (Ong, 2003, p. 14) and become economically productive individuals by pursuing sincerity, hard work or a competitive attitude.

I further utilized Foucault’s framework to understand how this ideology of the enterprising self that promotes ideals of an empowered, responsible and self-reliant agentic subject, also rested on subtle processes of domination and socialization that ended up disciplining and regulating immigrants of colour to conform to certain normative Eurocentric standards. The process was quite pronounced in the way South Asian immigrant women (similar to other immigrant women of colour) were pushed into “training” by the counselors and job trainers to foster in them values, norms and deportments pertaining to white “Canadianness”.
Being seen as “different” and “inferior”, these women coming from so called “third world” countries, were hardly considered to be “authentic Canadian in the ideological sense, in their physical identity and culture” (Bannerji, 2000, p. 43). Their previous knowledge was also invalidated by the credential and educational regime of Canada which, relying on a “‘difference-blind’ or liberal-universalist approach, assess differences from the domestic norm as deficient, incompatible and inferior, thus invalidating the knowledge of immigrant professionals, particularly from the third world countries” (Donaldson, 2007, p. 55).

The need for their training was then to “help” them “rise up to the Canadian standards (Goldberg, 2007, p. 32). However, rather than providing them with the knowledge that would genuinely assist them to understand the labour market and enter their respective job sectors, the focus of the training was primarily on socialization to certain preexisting values, behaviours and bodily deportments. The training programs also had a “paternalistic attitude” aimed at transforming the immigrants and making them responsible for integration.

What was further problematic was that in all these workshops attended by the women hardly any attention was given to the participant’s existing knowledge, education or culture other than merely identifying them as “deficient” and pushing them towards tutelary courses supposedly for their own good and in order to help them enter the mainstream labour market (Gibb, 2008). The whole emphasis on “re-training” and “re-learning”, also contradicted the objective of the Canadian immigration policies that seek to bring in the “best and the brightest” (Bourgeault, 2007, p. 96).

This socialization and compliance to prevailing customs or values that the South Asian women were subjected to was more akin to a “civilizing” mission that tried to “treat” these women to the ways and cultures of the normative white citizenship. Successful conformity was
thereby predicated upon the “reinvention of oneself as an ‘Englishman,’ and any deviation was seen as ‘backwardness’ or lack of civilizational maturity” (Kapur, 2007, p. 542). These training processes directed at inculcating “Canadianness” within the women, attempted to do so by governing their “everyday behaviour, and to make them individually responsible subjects of a neoliberal market society” (Ong, 2003, 277). Foucauldian framework was therefore important to understand how the process of regulating the immigrant women of colour was carried out in an insidious and ideological way. The rationale for these regulations and modifications was justified on the ground that with these training and acculturation, immigrant women of colour would be able to easily integrate to the Canadian society. Such rationale helped to make the regulatory processes appear as “common sense” (Gramsci, 1971) and was crucial for getting immigrants to consent to such regulation and modification. Such consent was also necessary for the self-regulation of the immigrants who would willingly act upon themselves to imbibe such socialization. South Asian women’s attempts to get used to western clothes or improve their English accent to fit the requirements of the labour market are indicative of such self-regulatory practiced desired by neoliberal governmentality. The ultimate goal was to prepare willing subjects, who in order to efface their perceived deficiencies and lack, would passively accept the “normative yardstick of integration based on the aspirations and standards of those already well established in Canadian society” (Li, 2003b, p. 330).

Furthermore, denying how access to employment in Canada was necessarily mediated by race, gender and other inequalities, the neoliberal discourse of training seemed to assume that “individuals have complete agency to demonstrate to employers that they have the skills for their dream jobs and masks the way power circulates among the state, employers, and potential employees in hiring processes” (Gibb, 2008, p. 327). Thus as Gibb (2008), critiquing such
training programs rightly points out, that immigrant subjectivity is being “individualized” and “psychologized” (p. 326)\(^\text{12}\) so that any amount of success or failure is put on the immigrant rather than other inequalities or power structures that can play a far more vital role in carving out success or failure for immigrants. In the case of South Asian immigrant women, for example, the lack of opportunities or structural inequalities existing within the Canadian labour market or hiring processes (Mitchell et al., 2007), was never addressed or brought in to focus. Rather, the women were merely encouraged to remain positive and active in order to get into an employment. Additionally, they had to deal with the immense pressure to “gain” Canadian work experience, “develop” labour market strategies and “access” training opportunities. The entire onus was on them for becoming self-sufficient as soon as possible. Such a framework expected immigrants to be “up and running” as soon as possible and to contribute to the Canadian economy with minimum services and minimum welfare expenses on the part of the host society (Shan, 2006).

The hollowness of the ability of training to assimilate non-white immigrants was easily borne out from the lived experiences of most of the participants. Even after repeated training sessions, they remained unemployed. What then training did was to perpetuate a myth of integration in the future, a promissory note of a better tomorrow yet to come, held out to a vast section of immigrants by the state and its social apparatus. Yet for most of them, that note would never be redeemed and the failure categorized as an ontological resistance to progress on the part of the immigrants rather than any responsibility of the state. As Mojab and Gorman (2003) note, “the rhetoric of learning has become essential for maintaining the appearance of opportunity. The idea that opportunity flows from skill acquisition masks the fact that there is not a skills gap, but

\(^{12}\) “Psychologization blames the individual and lets power structures off the hook” (see Mojab, 2006, pp. 349-350 for further discussion on this).
a jobs gap” (p. 234). Excluded and marginalized from the mainstream labour market, immigrants of colour, and in particular, immigrant women were therefore, relegated to the more precarious and informal market economy. By “locking” these immigrant women of colour, into “zones of menial labour and low wages” the Canadian state thus “actively de-skill[s] and marginalize[s] Third world immigrants by decertifying them and forcing them into working class” (Bannerji, 2000, p. 76).

In the light of the above theoretical discussions, my thesis presents two important findings. Despite being pushed in to (re)training and (re)learning processes by the Canadian settlement services, South Asian women thwarted such “whitening” or remedial processes that tried to locate lack in their abilities and attempted to conform them to Eurocentric ideals. While in their eagerness to enter the Canadian labor market, they did conform to certain self-regulatory processes to fit the need of the employers or the labour market itself, that conformity was not driven by any sense of them having any lack or deficiency that needed to be corrected through the training or socialization processes. In fact, that initial conformity was followed by a critique of the system and their effort to understand how racial and gender politics underlie training allied with the labour market. By identifying the contradictions underlying their whitening, these women revealed the inadequacies of the services as well as the service providers, their lack of knowledge and ability to guide the immigrants towards their desired goals. They did not embark on any kind of self-blame for not being able to establish themselves in the labour market, or anxiously changed their habits/attitudes completely to fit the labour market needs. On the contrary, they critiqued the discourse of training by putting forward the argument that rather than the immigrants, the policies needed to be revised along with the necessity to address racial and gender discrimination. This critique of the discriminatory system that the South Asian immigrant
women presented rendered their governing incomplete. This was because, rather than putting the blame on themselves or their cultural backgrounds for not being able to succeed, even after going through all the training, they retained the belief in their abilities and expertise. They did not accept the “deficit mentality where the identities of immigrant professionals are constructed as deficient, ‘in need of training’ and ‘not up to Canadian standards” (Goldberg, 2007, p. 34).

Secondly, through their home-based work they challenged the individualized, autonomous, competitive and enterprising worker whose only interest lie in self-development. While under neoliberal discourse of entrepreneurialism, success or productivity is defined or calculated in terms of profit, growth or competition, the South Asian immigrant women did not necessarily define their personal success or productivity in such materialistic terms. Rather, they spoke of love, creativity and passion in guiding their notions of success or entrepreneurialism. There were of course, feelings of desperation, frustration or isolation for not being able to enter their own fields of work. Yet, at the same time, the women did not undermine their abilities and resourcefulness that was required on their part to start their businesses, however small and informal. Moreover, while continuing to work from home, the women were able to actively refashion their positions within their households, extending their love and support for the family members and also establishing community ties with other women within enclaves, thereby creating a support system that they often could not find in the mainstream society.

While undoubtedly “enterprising” in the way they set up their businesses, expanded it, dealt with their clients and successfully renegotiated gender roles within families, they at the same time steered away from the neoliberal market ideology that through its idea of “enterprising self” promotes values of “individualistic competition”, “profit motives of global capitalism” and “material markers of success and size” (Fenwick, 2002a, p. 718). No longer certain that lessons
in “Canadianness” would guarantee them employment and status in the society, South Asian immigrant women thus took alternative routes to remaining productive and self-reliant, routes that arose out of their daily struggles for survival as well as their aspirations to be ‘successfully’ working.

Far from the “self-absorbed” neoliberal enterprising self, these women, by evoking kin network, and by valuing their family lives and relationships, thus put forward new forms of agentic worker-subject who actively negotiated various exploitative ideologies and barriers “for their own ends in the daily struggles” (Pun, 2005, p. 61). By providing new significance and meaning to their relationships with the family and other women in the community, these home-based women workers also challenged the stereotypical assumptions of oppressed and isolated women reeling under family pressure within enclave economies. By negotiating their presence in the peripheries of the Canadian market economy, that offered nothing more than precariousness, these women therefore, demonstrated how alternative crafting of an “enterprising self” was possible by “offering collaborative, meaningful work and relationships” (Fenwick, 2001, p. 717).

Their struggle against dominant race, gender, class relations and hegemonic discourses of enterprising self, is a form of negotiation producing “processes of ongoing adjustment […] and conflict” (Ong, 2003, p. 15). My interpretation of South Asian immigrant women’s agency as negotiation moves away from the belief that organized movements can be the only parameter for explaining women’s agency. My concept of negotiation thus adds to the burgeoning scholarly work (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Kondo, 1990; Ong, 1987, 2003; Pun, 2005; Scott, 1985) that views agency neither in terms of any singular form, nor as a practice “in isolation from compliance, accommodation, and even pleasure” (Freeman, 2000, p. 206). What is instead emphasized is that rather than conceiving of agency in terms of only macro or collective actions and organized
resistance, the more individuated or subtle forms need to be highlighted as they are equally essential in subverting power structures but often remain under the social radar to be recognized.

The importance of locating these subtle forms of agency stems from the understanding that power relations when seen as “unilateral and undifferentiated” (Mohanty, 2003a, p. 66) can lock women and men into binaries of “powerful” versus “powerless” and forever mitigate them into discourses of “powerless”, “victim” and “exploited”. Accordingly, scholars like Bhabha (1995) assert that the dominant structures of power can never be all encompassing or impenetrable, as there are bound to be blind spots, aporias and vulnerable areas that keep open an opportunity of instability or insurgency at any moment. Experiences of domination can therefore, never be totalitarian and homogenous, but marked with fissures and disjuncture implying the possibility of struggle and contestation and a constant negotiation of such social forces of domination (Bannerji, 1995). While Foucault himself had written that there is no all encompassing power relationships, he did not explicate what forms any counter strategy can take (Ong, 2003). My conceptualization of “negotiation” extends Foucault’s work by demonstrating what forms of strategy or agency can develop against the regimes of neoliberal control and governing. Building on the work of such feminist scholars as Aihwa Ong and Pun Ngai, I argue that given the subtle and non coercive ways citizens are being governed in the neoliberal era, any contestation of such forces cannot always be captured in terms of overt resistance. Resistance can also be effective through such forms as manipulation, critique or deflection put forward by individuals as “they learn to become self-governing subjects in way not fully intended by the programs” (Ong, 2003, p. 10). These alternative forms of agency suggest that neoliberal governing can never achieve a “uniformity” or “totalitarian effect” (Ong, 2003, p. 17) and that
there are bound to exist other “expressions [or] conduct[s]” that can challenge or disrupt such regulatory practices.

This particular way of looking at agency that I describe as ‘negotiation’ in my thesis, also posits an implicit critic to agency being seen as equivalent to only autonomy and empowerment. Sharon Wray (2004), through her study of the impact of ageing on women, draws attention to the fact that British/American notions of agency are overtly constructed based on such notions as “self-sufficiency”, “autonomy” and/or “empowerment” (p. 23). In effect, this kind of formulation, by squarely equating power with independence and powerlessness with dependence completely overlooks the fact that “it is possible to be dependent without this posing a threat to autonomous or independent action and to be empowered and disempowered at the same time” (Wray, 2004, p. 23). Any blanket equation of dependence = powerlessness results in elision of the diverse forms that agency can take depending on ethnic, cultural and historical specificities. Moreover, to perceive autonomy as a marker of unconditional agency might actually feed back into the principles of neo-liberalism, which today rests heavily on the assumptions of an autonomous subject able to seize the opportunities of market forces. Wray (2004) thus points out that the reason that agency can take multiple connotations are because power relations also operate at multifarious levels within various cultural and ethnic domains that mandate agency be similarly thought of in variegated ways. Not only Wray, but Hall (2000) too in this connection had pointed out the significance of understanding how experiences of agency can be shaped differently across social, cultural and historical diversities, otherwise marginalized experiences that do not fit the category of mainstream agency might be silenced and undermined.

In the context of the South Asian immigrants, this concept of negotiation highlighted how often while consenting to neoliberal self-disciplining, women would also contest those very
forces through various culturally defined strategies. In situations like this it is hard to define them as passive victims of subordination but rather an embodiment of the “dual process of domination and resistance [that] is marked by various forms of collaboration, transgressions, and defiance that together come to make up its complex, dissident, and heterogeneous subjects” (Pun, 2005, p. 15).

Although, in this dissertation, I see them as pioneers who by negotiating with the tensions and contradictions in their everyday lives illustrate “new poetics of transgression” (Pun, 2005), I do not intend to depict them as “miracle workers” (Trotz, 2009, p. 378) or glorified, high-profile entrepreneurs as that would lead to the underestimation of their daily struggles and efforts to sustain (Trotz, 2009). My intention is to highlight how they negotiate the various complexities in their lives and work and their “small daily triumphs” (Fenwick, 2002b, p. 171) that go beyond any reified formulation of agency as overt resistance or collective action. These are women whose endeavours not only need to be recognized but also their businesses counted as important part of the Canadian economy. Going beyond the discourse of any static definition of productivity or self sufficiency, these efforts on the part of the women are important in delineating how immigrant women of colour can actively refashion their own course to “success”, “taking a multiple front, criss-crossing individual and collective levels, and negotiating not only with” (Pun, 2005, p. 196) racial and gendered factors but cultural experiences as well. In recognizing their tremendous effort-filled abilities to sustain and survive in Canada, I end this thesis with a quote from one of the interviewees, Sheila, who aptly sums up the significance of their work for the Canadian society and its labour market:

Because we do not have a big business we are not taken seriously. But there are so many women doing this, and they want to expand and taken seriously. I mean, even for me my earning is important to my family. I am not just sitting home or
making sandwiches. I am doing an important work, and it takes a lot of my time, energy and resource. I want the society to recognize that. Do not look down upon me just because I am South Asian.

The home-based business endeavours of these South Asian immigrant women thus demand recognition and need to be counted as part of the larger Canadian economy.
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Appendix A

Brief Profile of Research Participants

Mita

I migrated to Canada in the year 2004 along with my husband. I am a graduate from India and I have seven years of experience as an administrative assistant in a multinational company in India. I have good computer skills and English language skills. I have attended numerous workshops and resumé clinics to make my skills more marketable in Canada. I have also volunteered in various capacities in few community-based organizations in Canada. Presently I am running a home-based sewing and catering business.

Leena

I am a graduate from India and migrated to Canada in the year 2002 with my husband. I was the principal applicant and my husband was the co-applicant. I was a kindergarten teacher and have five years of teaching experience. I wanted to become a kindergarten teacher in Canada and attended many workshops which I thought would be helpful in getting me a job as a kindergarten teacher in Canada. Presently I am running a home-based business of sewing and babysitting. I also work as a part-time cashier.

Rehana

I am a graduate from Pakistan and migrated to Canada in the year 2005 along with my husband. I was a grade two teacher in a school in Pakistan. I want to teach in Canada and have just submitted my certificates for evaluation to be able to teach in Canada. Right after immigration I did apply to few schools but was never called for an interview. Presently I am running a home-based business of sewing and also taking care of my two children.

Shashi

I have a Masters degree in commerce from India and I have seven years of experience as a financial analyst in one of the biggest insurance companies in India. I have attended workshops and resumé writing clinics after coming to Canada. I have also taken some courses in an effort to make myself more visible in the job market. Presently I am running a home-based catering business and also working as a part-time cashier. I am planning to enroll in a project management professional program offered by a Toronto-based institute. This course might be useful for me to get a job in my own field. I have two children.
Jennifer

I am a graduate from Sri Lanka and migrated to Canada in the year 2000 after marriage. My husband was already settled in Canada and he sponsored me. I worked as a Montessori teacher in Sri Lanka for five years before coming to Canada. Now I run a home day care and a sewing business. I have two children. I am also taking an ECE course so that I can get a job related to my own field.

Sheila

I am a political science graduate from Sri Lanka and migrated to Canada in the year 2001. I was sponsored by my husband who was already working in Toronto before we got married. I was a public relation officer in one of the biggest agro-based companies in Sri Lanka. I have taken few courses on customer relations in Canada and now I am applying for jobs through different recruiting agencies. I have a home-based sewing and child day care business.

Sabitha

I migrated to Canada in the year 2004 along with my husband. I used to work as a teller in a private bank in India. I have done my Masters from India. After coming here I took a course on bank teller but still could not get a job. I am thinking of changing my line and planning to take a course on IT. Presently I am running a catering business from home. I have a five year old daughter.

Jyoti

I was a fashion designer in Bangladesh. I have a Masters in commerce and a diploma in fashion designing. I was a successful fashion designer in Bangladesh for more than five years before migrating to Canada in the year 2004. I want to continue as a fashion designer in Canada. I have taken a course in fashion designing in Toronto. Presently I am running a home-based business of sewing and also working as a part-time cashier.

Leela

I migrated to Canada in the year 2003. I am a graduate from Sri Lanka and used to work as a customer relations officer in a state owned Telecom Company in Sri Lanka. I have more than four years of working experience. In Canada I applied to various positions like administrative, secretarial as well as managerial opportunities. Unfortunately I was not hired for any of the positions. I have been advised to take some courses related to my own field. Presently I am running a home-based business of sewing.
Shaoli

I came to Canada in the year 2002 after marriage, sponsored by my husband. I am a graduate and used to work as an assistant supervisor in a private limited company in Bangladesh. I have more than four years of working experience. When I arrived here I did apply to many supervisory positions in offices and community organizations. I have also met employment counselors and worked on my resumé and interview skills. But I was never called for an interview. Presently I sew and cater from home.

Mala

I am a graduate from Sri Lanka and migrated to Canada in the year 2000. I used to be a data entry operator in a government owned agency in Sri Lanka. Before coming to Canada I thought that there were many IT opportunities in Canada. Even when I met employment counselors they assured me that once I work on my resumé I should be able to get into my own field. I went and met many recruiters in agencies but was never offered any work. Presently I am involved in a home-based catering business. I also work as a part-time packer in a food manufacturing company in Toronto. I have one daughter and one son.

Shazia

I am a graduate from Pakistan and migrated to Canada in the year 2001. I used to work as a computer data entry operator in Pakistan and I have more than four years of working experience. I have applied to many data entry positions as well as jobs related to IT. I also took a short computer networking course to gain Canadian education. I also applied to many positions but did not get any interview calls. Presently I am running a home-based sewing business and also working as a part-time cashier.

Rita

I migrated to Canada in the year 2001. My husband sponsored me after marriage. I am a graduate from Bangladesh and used to work in a non-governmental organization in Bangladesh. Presently I am running home-based sewing and catering businesses. I am also working part-time in a call centre. I had intended to work in community organizations here as that was my field before but did not get any opportunity.

Ghazala

I am a graduate from Pakistan and came to Canada in the year 2000. I used to work as an office assistant in Pakistan and presently I have a home-based sewing business. I am planning to set up a garment store of my own and finalizing details of that. I have two sons.
Laxmi

I am a commerce graduate from Sri Lanka and came to Canada in the year 2005. I used to work as an administrative assistant in Sri Lanka. After coming to Canada I tried hard to get a job in my own field. Most of the jobs that I applied to were asking for experiences that I possessed. Yet I was never even called for an interview. Now I have two home-based businesses that of sewing and catering.

Zarine

I am a graduate from Pakistan and migrated to Canada in the year 2000. I worked as a secretary in a bank in Pakistan and presently I am running a sewing business from home. I have three children. My son is fourteen years old, my daughter is twelve and my youngest son is five years old. I did apply for some teller positions but was advised by employment counselors to apply for administrative positions as that was more related to my field. I also did that but never got an opportunity.

Neeta

I am a graduate from Bangladesh and migrated to Canada in the year 2004. I was an officer in a non-governmental organization in Bangladesh. I have managerial experience and after migration most of the jobs that I applied to were in such positions. When I was not getting any call I was advised by employment counselors and recruiters to apply to lower level jobs in offices to gain Canadian work experience. But even then I was not hired. Presently I am doing a catering business from home. I have a two year old son.

Priya

I am a graduate from India and moved to Canada in the year 2004. I was the principal applicant when we applied for immigration. I was a state government employee in India and presently I am running sewing and catering businesses from home. I am also a part-time sewer in a garment factory in Toronto. I have applied to many positions and have not been successful in getting any job. I may continue with my business as this is something I am enjoying now.

Nabila

I have a Bachelor in Science from Bangladesh and migrated to Canada in the year 2003. Before coming to Canada I used to work as a data entry operator. Presently I am running a sewing business from home. Despite applying to many places I never got any opportunity. I was under the impression that there were many IT jobs in Canada. I even took a data entry course here. But I still remained unsuccessful in getting a proper job.

Thaya
I finished my high school in Sri Lanka and could not complete my graduation as I got married early. I migrated to Canada in the year 2001 after being sponsored by my husband who was working in Canada. I used to work as a sales representative in a store in Sri Lanka. Presently I am running a sewing business from home. I plan to continue with my sewing business. I did get some part-time jobs as a cashier but did not take them as I want to be with my family. I have three children.

**Tina**

I am a graduate from India and moved to Canada in 2001. I used to work as a store manager in a mall in India. My work was mainly administrative and I also used to supervise every day work in the store. After coming here I applied to many administrative positions as I know typing, computer and also accounting. I have also taken a short course on bank teller. Now I do sewing from home.

**Saadiya**

I have a Masters in Science from Pakistan. We applied for immigration where I was the principal applicant and came to Canada in 2002. My husband was a businessman and he did not want to come under Business class so we applied under Economic class. I used to work as an assistant editor in an advertising agency in Pakistan. Now I have a home-based business of catering and events planning. I am planning to enroll in some courses but have not decided yet.

**Rumona**

I am a graduate from Bangladesh and migrated to Canada in 2005. I have worked for two years in an administrative position before immigrating to Canada. Presently I am running a beauty parlour and a catering business from home. I have a five year old daughter. I was planning to take courses but they were so expensive so right now I am saving some money from my business to take some courses related to my own field.

**Malathi**

I am a science graduate from Sri Lanka and I migrated to Canada in 2004. I was an office employee in Sri Lanka. I have applied to so many jobs but was called for an interview only once. I was not offered the job as I was told I did not have enough Canadian work experience. Presently I am running home-based sewing and garment businesses. I am still continuing with my job search.
Shabana

I am from Bangladesh and immigrated to Canada in 2004. I am a university graduate. I have two daughters, three and five years old. I have worked in Bangladesh as a secretary in a multinational company for three years. I have applied to many secretarial positions here as most of the job descriptions that they advertise are similar to what I have done before. But I was never called for an interview. I have attended many workshops and went and met many employment counselors but nothing has worked out so far.
Appendix B
Research Flyer

Are you a woman from INDIA, PAKISTAN, BANGLADESH, SRI LANKA?
Do you stitch clothes at home or sell ethnic clothes from Home or cater from home?
If so you can participate in a study and earn $15 for an interview.

Share your experiences …

I am conducting a research project at the University of Toronto to study the experiences of South Asian women who do stitching or sell ethnic clothes or do catering.

To compensate you for any travel costs, lost work time or childcare expenses, you will receive $15 for participating in the interview.

- Interviews will be for an hour and will be held in a place convenient to you
- No personal details, names or earnings are asked. All information will be kept confidential.

If you would like to participate in this study, please contact Srabani Maitra at 647-839-1972.
Appendix C

Information Letter

INFORMATION LETTER FOR HOME-BASED WORKERS IN TORONTO [To be produced with OISE/UT Letterhead / logos]

Date May 16, 2007

Dear Madam

I am a PhD student at the University of Toronto (Department of Adult Education, Community Development& Counselling Psychology) under the supervision of Professor Kiran Mirchandani. I am conducting a qualitative research study on South Asian immigrant women in home-based work. The purpose of this study is to focus on immigrant women from South Asia to understand their experiences and struggles in the home-based industry in Toronto. My particular focus will be on women sewing or catering from home. I will be conducting interviews with twenty women workers.

I would like to invite you to volunteer to participate in this study. We can meet at a time and place that is convenient for you. The interview will last no more than 60-90 minutes and if you consent, I would like to tape record it. Questions I would like to ask you during the interview are:

- When did you come to Canada?
- What did you do before coming to Canada?
- Did you look for job? Did you take any training?
- How did you become a home-based worker?
- Describe the nature and schedule of your work.
- Describe your workspace and how you organize it.
- Describe the advantages/disadvantages of working at home. Does it make your life easier or difficult? How?
- What do your friends and family think of your home-based work? Do they prefer you to work at home? Why or why not?
- Have you ever experienced any racial discrimination around your ethnicity or work? Describe.
- Based on your culture, skin colour, class, status, do you feel any particular advantage or disadvantage around home working?
- To what extent has your house-work increased or decreased after you started working?
- Have you ever taken steps against racial or gender discrimination? Describe.
- What are your plans for the future? Do you plan to continue to do home based work?

All data generated during this study will remain confidential. Neither your name nor the name of your workplace will be used in the published study, and only myself and my supervisor will have access to the interview transcripts. I will transcribe the tapes myself. Tapes will be retained for a period of 3 years after the completion of the study. They will then be erased. Transcripts (with no names attached to them) may be retained in both paper and disk form for a longer period (in case
a follow up study after 5 or 10 years would be useful). You will be free to raise questions or concerns with me throughout the study, and may withdraw at any time if you choose. If you decide to withdraw for any reason, I will not use any of the information you have provided. Please be assured that you are under no obligation to agree to participate in an interview.

During the interview, you will be providing confidential, anonymous information. Your employer will not know that I am interviewing you – this is so that you can feel free to talk to me about things that you do not necessarily want your employer to know. The information you give me will be confidential. Only I know the names of the people who are being interviewed, and there will be just one copy of these names, which I will keep under lock and key.

Although the findings of this study will not benefit you directly, by participating in this study you will be contributing to the production of new and potentially illuminating knowledge about the industry in which you work. The findings of the research will be reported in my PhD thesis, various articles and other publications. You will receive a copy of the summary of findings from the study.

In order to compensate you for any travel costs, lost work time or childcare expenses I would like to offer you a token sum of $15 for your participation.

Please review the enclosed consent protocol, and inform me whether it is acceptable, and if you would like to participate in this study. Also, perhaps you can indicate the days you will be available to meet with me. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,

Sraban Maitra
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Appendix D
Consent Form

CONSENT FORM FOR HOME-BASED GARMENT IN TORONTO
[To be produced with OISE/UT Letterhead / logos]

Date:

I, _________________________, agree to take part in a study of the experiences of home-based workers.

I understand that, as a participant in the study, I will be asked to respond to a set of interview questions. I understand that participation in the study may involve answering questions such as:

- When did you come to Canada?
- What did you do before coming to Canada?
- How did you become a home-based sewer?
- Describe the nature and schedule of your work.
- Describe your workspace and how you organize it.
- Describe the advantages/disadvantages of working at home. Does it make your life easier or difficult? How?
- What do your friends and family think of your home-based work? Do they prefer you to work at home? Why or why not?
- Have you ever experienced any racial discrimination around your ethnicity or work? Describe.
- Based on your culture, skin colour, class, status, do you feel any particular advantage or disadvantage around home working?
- To what extent has your house-work increased or decreased after you started working?
- Have you ever taken steps against racial or gender discrimination? Describe.
- What are your plans for the future? Do you plan to continue to do home based work?

I understand that the interview will take 60-90 minutes and will occur at a time and place that is convenient for me and you.

I understand that I am under no obligation to agree to participate in an interview.
I understand that I may refuse to answer any questions, to stop the interview at any time or withdraw from the study. If I do participate, and there are any issues that come up during our interview, which I would rather not talk about, I will say so. If at some point I decide that I would like not to continue the interview, I can just let you know of that and we will stop – in that case you will not use any of the information I have provided.

I understand that my specific answers and comments will be kept confidential. I understand that my employer will not know that I am being interviewed for this study.

I understand that neither my name nor the name of my workplace will be identified in any report or presentation which may arise from the study.

I understand that only the principal researcher (Sraban Maitra) and her supervisor (Kiran Mirchandani) will have access to the information collected during the study. Tapes will be retained for a period of 3 years after the completion of the study. They will then be erased. Transcripts (with no names attached to them) may be retained in both paper and disk form for a longer period (in case a follow up study after 5 or 10 years would be useful). If I am not comfortable with the interview being taped, I will just ask you to take notes during the interview instead.

I understand that while I may not benefit directly from the study, the information gained may assist both researchers and education professionals to better understand the experiences of home-based garment workers in Toronto.

I understand that a summary of the findings of the study will be sent to me. In addition, I will receive $15 for lost work time, travel costs or childcare expenses.

I understand what this study involves and agree to participate. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

________________________________________
Signature

________________________________________
Date