PERSPECTIVES ON SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN, MIGRATION AND LABOUR IN GREATER TORONTO AREA

STABILIZING THE SELF:
IMMIGRANT LABOUR AND RETHINKING PRECARITY

By SHAHTAJ SALEEM, H.BSc

A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

McMaster University MASTER OF ARTS (2019) Hamilton, Ontario (Anthropology)

TITLE: “Stabilizing the Self: Immigrant Labour and Rethinking Precarity”. Perspectives on South Asian Women, Migration and Labour in Greater Toronto Area AUTHOR: Shahtaj Saleem, H.BSc (McMaster University) SUPERVISOR: Dr. Petra Rethmann NUMBER OF PAGES: *ii-93*

ABSTRACT

STABILIZING THE SELF:
IMMIGRANT LABOUR AND RETHINKING PRECARITY

PERSPECTIVES ON SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN,
MIGRATION AND LABOUR IN GREATER TORONTO AREA

Shahtaj Saleem
McMaster University, 2019

Advisor
Dr. Petra Rethmann

This thesis is an investigation into migration, identity and labour among South Asian immigrant women in the Greater Toronto Area. It is an ethnographic exploration of how South Asian migrant's relationship with precarity and how it informs the process of subjectification when faced with the realities of downward mobility. I focus on the practices and narrative repertoire that aid the relationship between labour and the making of the self. This inquiry has implications for the study of migration and expands on previous conceptualization in the literature of precarity.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisory committee for their guidance, participation and encouragement. I would like to especially thank my supervisors Dr. Andrew Gilbert and Dr. Petra Rethmann for their assistance and knowledge without which I could not have completed this thesis. I would also like to thank Dr. Geraldina Polanco, my committee member, who generously gave her time, wisdom and support.

I would like to offer special thanks to my parents for their unfaltering support in all my endeavors. I cannot imagine the immense amount of courage it takes to leave a life one is familiar with in the hopes of giving their children a better future. Everything I have accomplished is a reflection of their tremendous love and sacrifice.

Lastly, I would most especially like to thank all the participants who allowed me into their homes and their day-to-day lives. I am honored that you shared and trusted me with your experiences.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Tucked away in the corner of the parking lot stands the supermarket store where Samina has worked for the last 6 years. Her makeshift office is a crammed room stocked up to the ceiling with delivery boxes from last week's shipment and a small desk with a wooden stool tucked underneath. This is where Samina takes her daily lunches, prayer breaks and receives store shipments. Before Samina moved to Canada, she worked from a different office space. A principal of a private academy in Pakistan, Sanmina's office was her pride.

When I was a principal, people were intimidated to just enter my office. I had three secretaries. My office alone was the size of half this store. As soon as you enter the gates of the school, my office was the first thing you saw. My family would joke 'who takes you seriously?' but I knew how to command respect. Not a single decision was ever made in the building unless it went through me. I had the place running like a military general's office.

Samina represents a group of South Asian (SA) immigrant women who moved to Canada in hopes of social and material benefits, often promised in popular migration narrative. The experience of SA immigrants to Canada is often a story of downward mobility, frequently citing the iconic gendered image of male doctors driving taxis. The working lives of many SA migrant women is also a story of downward mobility marked by the loss of material and social status when women from a variety of professional backgrounds cannot practice their occupations because government policies [and social regulatory systems of labour markets] invalidate their credentials. These women remain unemployed, are channeled into low-skilled "survival jobs" for which they are overqualified, or are forced into gendered domestic forms of labour as care-givers, cooks, seamstresses, or workers in a family business (Ameeriar 2017).

Downward mobility by SA women migrants often sees them participating in more precarious forms of labour than those which they left behind; often low-skilled "survival jobs" or flexible, informal, gendered domestic forms of labour. It might be tempting to see this process as part of the larger story of precariatization or precarization in advanced capitalist countries like Canada, the production of widespread vulnerability among workers which ensures their passivity even as they are being exploited (Standing 2011) But I argue that such a view is overly narrow and while it may not always be wrong, it is incomplete for it does not capture how workers themselves make sense of and value their labour. This becomes clear through listening to SA migrant women experiencing downward mobility to account for and evaluate their labour in relationship to that experience. What I argue is that the uncertainties and instabilities of downward mobility have to be studied and analyzed as part of the broader life projects of migrant labourersintegration into host countries . Labour is evaluated in relationship to the self-image of workers, their sense of who they are and their ability to become the kinds of people they want to be. Such concerns about selfhood are paramount for such migrants because work is related to self-making, and the downward mobility of the migration experience threatens their sense of coherent and stable selfhood. Some major representations of precarity or precariatization also assume this – that precarious work conditions deprive workers of valuable social identity that, in turn, has a negative set of consequences like depression, anomie, exploitation and passivity, etc (Stading 2011).But I argue, one cannot assume this and when one does look explicitly at the relationship between (precarious) work and selfhood (social identity), it reveals a set of insights that don't come otherwise. In other words, a shift from individualized

labour relations focused on material workplace conditions and remuneration to a view that extends outside of the workplace and its relations.

Such an approach yields that one**,** we cannot think of workers solely as individuals when assessing their relationship to their work. Rather, they see themselves as part of larger collective units (most often, kin groups) that come with other highly valued social roles and obligations, like that of mother or wife. I argue that work that appears low-skill, precarious, or unstable can nevertheless provide the conditions for women to fulfill those other valued social roles. This translates into less autonomy in work-based relations but more autonomy in kin-based relations and roles; important spaces for subject-making. Once we consider this then we have to rethink what "mobility" means, and what the temporality of mobility means, as it goes from being seen as an individual movement within a single life-course to being part of a collective movement measured across generations.

Secondly, my research on the relationships between self-making and work also shows that people develop a repertoire of practices to recover, maintain, or claim a social status that repairs or bridges over the gap between a pre-migration self and post-migration self caused by downward mobility. These practices include a focus on "standards", "craft", "ethics", "mental health," "social relations," and the value of social reproduction such as being able to produce high quality moral persons (in children) as mothers and teachers. They also include the adoption of new social roles previously unavailable, like that of "helper of new migrants" or "businesswoman" that does similar "repair" work in terms of self-making.

In what follows, I discuss the downward mobility of SA immigrant women and how they invoke a repertoire of practices to make sense of their new marginal status. I consider the meaning making process invoked through their labour and discuss the positive uses to generational obligations and sacrifice for their family.. How do immigrant women reconcile social and economic marginalization and frame selfhood in the face of uncertainty? I showcase that narrative serves as an adaptive strategy where the stories about the self-help immigrants make sense of instability.

It might be tempting to interpret the working lives of SA migrant women as part of the larger story of the production of labour precarity in Canada: increased social vulnerability without a professional worker-based identity, compounded by a loss of hope for the future, stuck and exploited in jobs that do not pay a living wage and are seen as without social value. Yet evidence suggests that the situation is more complex than a simple story of vulnerability and exploitation. Conversations with SA women suggests that the instabilities and uncertainties created by the migration experience of downward mobility, as well as how they value the labour they engage in after migrating, is not captured by narrow or generic conceptualizations of labour precarity. Understanding the self-making projects that migrant women take part in also helps to conceptualize the theories of precarity. Working lives of immigrant women are evaluated against the product value of their labour but rarely takes into account the reproduction of non-economic factors. In addition, is it possible that seemingly exploitative forms of paid labour lead to autonomies in other aspect? This becomes clear if we take a more holistic view that begins by recognizing that experiences of downward mobility resulting from migration introduces instabilities and discontinuities into the very selfhood of migrants – their capacities to pursue desired life courses, fulfill important social roles, and maintain kin relations and obligations. I

thus argue that we need to see how SA migrant women experience and value work as part of a larger life project to (re)stabilize their senses of self – that is, to restore a sense that "they are the means and ends of their own actions, the objects of their own beliefs and desires" (Kockelman 2006: 1). Towards this end, this study asks: What are the practices and techniques of that restoration, and how does their labour/work fit into that life project? How do migrant South Asian women make sense of their downward mobility and attempt to re-establish—through work—a sense of coherent selfhood across the discontinuities of the migration experience? And what might attention to such work-related self-making practices tell us more generally about leading theories of labour and precarity?

In what follows, I draw on three months of ethnographic research among SA immigrant women from Brampton, Mississauga and Malton. I present observations and interviews of five women running their own businesses or working at family owned shops to discuss how these workers frame their labour. I start by providing an overview of theories of precarity and how the experiences of my participants require a reconceptualization of the precarious workers in informal positions. I discuss the use of various strategies found in immigrant narrative such as familial obligations, sacrifice and hopes of upward mobility in order to study what their framing reveals about self-relating and the theories of precarity. Prevalent theorizing on precarity might paint these women as exploited and working meaningless jobs. The women, with whom I spoke, however, illustrate that the labour they perform serves their understanding of the self through the migration experience. Through these cases, it becomes evident that their labour value is calculated beyond the Fordist productivist model under which precarity has historicallybeen conceptualized.

Thesis Overview

The first chapter of this ethnography discusses the theoretical orientation that forms a framework for this research, contribution to existing literature and the methodology and methods used during the investigation. This is also where I introduce my participants with comprehensive profiles and establish how their lives have been impacted by the experiences of downward mobility following migration.

The second chapter provides an overview of the history of South Asian migration into Canada. Here, I show how women make sense and value their workin relationship to fulfilling important social roles like that of mother. I argue that the women in my study see themselves not as individual units, but as part of larger collectives. Their new roles of a "business woman" emerges as an important way to bridge the gap between pre-migration selves and post-migration selves and is a response to the experience of downward mobility. Building upon this, I analyze that we must then rethink what "mobility" means. I demonstrate the temporality of mobility as it goes from being seen as an individual movement within a single life-course to being part of a collective movement measured across generations.

The third chapter discusses the relationships between self-making and work through analyzing how people develop a repertoire of practices to recover, maintain, or claim a social status that repairs or bridges over the gap between a pre-migration self and post-migration self. These practices include a focus on "standards" "craft" "ethics" "mental health," "social relations," and the value of social reproduction. I analyze how women adopt new social roles previously unavailable, like that of "helper of new migrants" or "businesswoman" that does similar "repair" work in terms of self-making.

The final chapter looks to the future contributions of this research. It evaluates further research avenues to analyze narrative repertoire used by immigrants faced with the realities of downward mobility and its uses for reimagining the relationship between work and the self. Ultimately, this thesis aims to discuss the self making techniques women employ when faced with the instabilities of the migrant experience.

Chapter One

Theoretical Orientation and Contribution to Existing Literature

The Precariat

I begin by addressing the notion of precarity and what it means for the lives of SA immigrant women. In one of the more well-known and popular descriptions, labour precarity is known by a number of characteristics: it is flexible, governed by short-term and part-time contracts, non-unionized, and does not pay a living wage (Standing 2011). Under neoliberal flexibilization of labour market, employment structures are presented as a response to the increasing global industry. Vosko explains that it is "work for remuneration characterized by uncertainty, low income, and limited social benefits and statutory entitlements" (2011: 194). Precarious employment extends to multiple forms of labour market insecurity and it is defined by gender, nationality, race, ethnicity, immigrant status, and age inequalities (Cranford et al, 2003)The libertarian understanding of labour saw the world as an open opportunity and by the 1990s, more people were finding themselves working informal jobs, diminishing a sense of employment security which had been available to the previous generation of workers. The precariat class lacks a work-based identity which adds to the social vulnerability workers feel outside of the workplace (Standing 2011). Many in the precariat class rely on unstable and careerless jobs that lack a sense of future in their particular field. The precariat is denied the pursuit of personal development, leaving them in a state of anxiety, both in the economic and social domain. The cycle of precarious existence maintains workers who rely on precarious forms of work to survive. The creation of the precariat is for the precise purpose of sustaining the global economy and to keep workers in the state of vulnerability where they rely on short-term flexible and

unfixed forms of work. Commonly, precarity literature discusses insecurity in the workplace, and Standing's work on the precariat details forms of labour conditions for the precariat class (Standing 2011). However, other literature on precarity has expanded on Standing's theorization by detailing lack of security in other areas such as citizenship (Goldring and Landolt 2011), subjectification (Neilson and Rossiter 2008), gender and class relations (Cranford et al. 2003) and the transition between formal and informal work (Spyridakis 2003).

Labour and Liminality

For the purpose of conceptualizing precarity, I present Spyridakis' concept of liminality which "describes a situation where one's position in the community is uncertain and not fixed" (Spyridakis 2013: 17). Spyridakis argues that the rite of passage model described through stages of separation, margin and aggregation may be a useful concept to understand worker's passage from stable employment to the unstable liminal stage. The transitional quality of liminality sheds light onto the process of downward mobility, separating it into various stages across a timeline and generations which is specific to the migrant experience. The concept of liminality is for the purpose of focusing less on the labour process, employment contract, or labour markets which is more common in research on the precariat class. A discussion on liminality draws attention to individual workers and their subjectivities as they negotiate through the realities of working as precarious labourers in segmented labour markets. The uncertainty along with the transitional nature of liminality renders workers vulnerable but also opens avenues for studying the value of work in the social reproduction of relations and self-relating. The purpose of presenting the experiences of SA immigrant women here is to push against the notion of passive workers who allow themselves to be exploited in unfixed employment.

Spyridakis presents two dimensions for a deeper understanding of people in liminal working states. The first focuses on the "quest for patterns: feelings, experiences, and coping strategies of jobless people are patterned mainly in relation to the politics of the welfare state…The second dimension concerns the way they are presented: liminal workers are considered to be passive recipients of their condition and incapable of reacting and coping with their situation, having going through a pattern begun with shock, followed by optimism and pessimism and ending in apathy" (Spyridakis 2013: 21). The free market narrative is one of labourers as irrational and passively bound by the exploitative conditions of the market, highlighting the importance of choice and whether subjects are free to practice those choices. Yet, my time with these women illustrate that people engage, negotiate and manipulate necessary decisions regarding the labour they perform. Therefore, a study of precarity must be multifaceted to account for the various cases where people struggle to regain a positive sense of self Through this ethnography I investigate forms of labour that de-center the importance of wages and profit. This is where labour becomes part of a broader process of subject formation and forces us to consider how people define personal motives under exploitative conditions, seeking out rewards and work satisfaction despite the disappearance of a stable work identity. The ethnography shows how the work related decisions of immigrant women are not always based on the ideology of maximizing material profit; rather they are a consideration of social benefits across time. This study of immigrant workers adopts the concept of liminality to look at the decisions made by immigrant women, taking into account the future value of their current realities.

Reconceptualizing Precarity

For immigrant women, the loss of accreditation and worker identity can be destabilizing and produce insecurity, particularly when viewed against the norms and social models associated

with Fordism that tend to view the male breadwinner as the norm. The under-researched assumption is that increased precarity at work extends its destabilizing effects to subject formation and the understanding of the self.. This is because under Fordist productivist norms, people were seen as depending upon their work not only for their material survival, but also for their notions of individual identity, place in social structure, and their sense of self (Neilson and Rossiter 2008).It is thus assumed that changes in work conditions would be accompanied by changed notions of identity and self; indeed, Standing notes that one of the hallmarks of the new "precariat" class is a lack of work-based identity which, he argues, adds to their social vulnerability and general social alienation. It is this same assumption that correlates downward mobility with precariatization however, this is not entirely true of SA immigrant women that I interviewed.

There are good reasons to resist this framework. The debate around precarity as a conceptual tool is largely framed as a European collective movement. Through a look at subjectivization Brett Neilson and Ned Rossiter (2008) argue that precarity has always been a norm rather than an exception for non-European immigrant and racialized workers. That is, precarity is not necessarily an exception in other settings therefore, it should not be simply defined by the absence of employment. How useful is the concept of precarity then if immigrant women have never been part of that Fordist memory? It is perhaps more productive to study how labour produces and reorganizes subjectivities which highlights the multiplicity and transitional value of precarity. There are good reasons not to assume that conditions associated with precarity or downward mobility are experienced or understood in universal or generic ways. Firstly, the Fordist norms and stabilities which frame how precarity is understood (and moralized as

exploitative) may not have been as deeply socially and culturally embedded in the countries from which migrants come as they were in Canada. Secondly, as others have argued, even in places like Canada, the norms and stabilities of the Fordist model may be the historical exception, and conditions of precarity the historical rule for the majority of working people (Neilson and Rossiter 2008). At the very least, then, the assumptions that link precarious work conditions with precarious lives beyond the workplace should not be taken for granted – they must be shown. When we inquire into what downward mobility means for SA immigrant women, and how they value the work they do take up, we see these issues framed not as an experience of exploitation but as part of the larger instabilities and discontinuities of the self, introduced by the migration experience.

Although dominant representations of precarity do to some extent match up with the experiences of migrant women and their downward mobility, it does not completely address aspects of precarity that are unique to the migration experiences of South Asian women. According to Standing (2011), social alienation is a natural result of the loss of social identity for the precariat class. For the SA migrant women, they often speak about countering this alienation by expanding connections in their communities. Not only is it important for running an at-home business and meeting new clientele, it also counters the loss of specific social capital which they had access to back home. Facilitated through migration, women working from home continue to rely on these new networks due to the unfixed nature of their work and the quality of life they hope to build in Canada. Even in constraining contexts, individuals make choices within dominant social reproduction ideologies (Ram et al. 2001). This is certainly the case for much of the work performed by many SA immigrant women working from home or managing family

owned businesses. These women work alongside community members who are akin to family. Their work blurs the line between domestic work and traditional economic production.

The model favoring maximization of profit does not best represent the lives SA migrant women because it does not take into account how culturally specific understanding of a working mother has to be reorganized following migration. Women will choose low paying jobs that do not align with previous qualifications because they see it fulfilling other important social roles. Some will even insist that the shift due to economic stability has benefitted their understanding of professionalism and work ethics. Workers are shown to engage in various modes of negotiations within unstable employment structures. The interlocutors consistently evaluate moral and ethical values even under conditions which threaten those exact values. I show that work is not merely a profit making process but also one where moral values are contested and reproduced. Work may also employ the use of both rational and irrational decisions based on the social and economic relationships that people value. One can think of the economy, "neither as a reified domain of inquiry isolated from the rest of human existence nor as a particular form of social action such as calculability…. Rather the economy as consisting of all the processes that are involved, in one fashion or the other, in "making a living," (Narotzky and Besnier 2014: S5). Conceptualizing the migrant experience means studying economic mobility in relation to the ways in which the immigrant self is constructed. Therefore, any robust notion of labour precarity must account for the affective, emerging hopes and desires which are informed by the labour SA migrant women perform. Both migration and work are sites of subjectification and by theorizing on labour precarity, I center how migration as a site of subject formation bleeds into the experiences and interpretations of SA women in their world of work.

Narrative Repertoire

One way to document the larger livelihood projects that frame how SA migrant women evaluate the value of their labour across the instabilities of migration and downward mobility is through analyzing narratives. Narrative construction communicates how one understands and constitutes the self. Using Kockelman (2006) the self here is a way of understanding human being as defined through reflexive qualities. In *Agent, Person, Subject, Self,* Kockelman distinguishes the self by stating that selfhood involves the sense of being "the means and ends of one's own actions" (2006:13). He draws upon the quality of reflexivity and "social relatedness" to argue that selfhood is constructed through the understanding of one's roles and through acting on particular values. This ethnography focuses on values and morals that SA immigrant women see being instilled through the work that they perform. Regardless of the profit value of their labour, women believe that those values are far more important in maintaining an understanding of the self and a family. Their work draws on moral and ethical values that are not always wage driven or maximize profit.

In *Narrating the self,* Ochs and Capps (1996) argue that the narrative and the self are inseparable, simultaneously producing and being produced through one another. Therefore, experience of our "selves" does not stay the same across time and space, and indeed may produce a "multiplicity of partial selves" (Ochs & Capps 1996: 22). Ochs and Capps argue that narrative responds to this multiplicity and the need to bridge gaps between our experiences of partial selves. Therefore, we come to stabilize the self through narrative. It is thus likely that such narrative practices played a significant role in how SA migrant women confronted the multiplicity of partial selves produced through the migration experience, and it is here we might

document the rearrangement of gender roles, values and work, both pertaining to pre and post migration.

Narrative construction draws upon a linguistic repertoire, which offers narrators different resources for constituting and evaluating experience (Kockelman 2006: 28). Verbalized events facilitate the actualization through the stories told about the self. Narrative uses language as a function of actualization though speech and repertoire. Such repertoires are socially constructed and culturally specific. It is here that one can expect to encounter the normative discourses that SA migrant women draw upon to make sense of their labour. For example, the type of labour performed by some women is closely tied to ideas of servitude and cultural discourses of sacrifice that are reproduced for S.A women in their roles as mothers and wives. Adherence to gender norms can facilitate coherence and stability for women across the gaps and instabilities produced through migration and downward mobility as they lay claims to being a wife, mother or daughter. This is often used as a way to justify why some women put off going back to school in Canada or choosing to work outside of their former career. Family cohesion made possible through tending to gender roles results in the importance of one's role in the family as reproducing certain values, The very values that are threatened by the westernization of their next generations. Obligations to one's family experienced by immigrant women claim that sacrifices are part of being a mother/wife/daughter. Making sacrifices is thus culturally understood as some women's role whereas other women disagreed with the notion of sacrificing at all. Some discussed the importance of centering mental wellbeing and having aspirations so they could distance themselves from the image of an all sacrificing mother. By centering their own wellbeing first they argued that it helped them become better mothers and wives. I will

present the diverse discourses that make up the linguistic repertoire which S.A. migrant women draw upon when constructing their selves by narrating their lives.

Attention to narratives of the self also reveals what Kockelman calls the "temporality of semiosis," that is, the way meaning shifts over time and in relation to different experiences of time (Kockelman 2006: 14). Narrative fills gaps and addresses discontinuities between the present, past and the future. It holds sequential value where experiences and events develop chronologically. Narrative about the past exists in relation to the present and it represents how one copes with current realities while evoking the past. Narrative may require different forms of negotiations and "complex combinations of repetition and anticipation, of knowing already and becoming something new" (Makinen 2016: 76). Depending on what they value about the immigrant experience, immigrants may imagine their selves to be more stable than they had been prior to migration. This may be because of a newfound self-awareness as a parent, promise of a future or greater autonomy within the family. The ability to narrate the self, "attempts to resolve the discrepancy between what is expected and what has transpired" (Kockelman 2006:27). Through interviewing participants for this ethnography, I came across cases where women articulated what it means to start a new life in another country and how it differed from what their families back home understood. I share stories of how disconnected these women felt from their past understanding of the immigration process. This opens possibilities to consider new forms of being and contrasting their past self with the new Canadian self.

Part of their immigrant life story includes the "success" narrative where one attempts to build a linear life course for the sake of continuity after relocation. The narrative places the event

of relocation as one that changes the person. It divides the self into the self that was before the move and one that is the successful future self after the move. Although they may seem like opposite understanding of the self or often seen in contestation with one another, they both prove to be integral for the construction of immigrant women's narrative. People can simultaneously be the self they have been and yet change as their new experiences require. In doing so, their previous expectations may also need to be adapted to the circumstances. Both aspects of the self can be looked at as strategies of meaning making. In fact, a change in the self through reevaluation of expectations can be used to reinforce one's desire for progress and a better future.

Selfhood thus "centers modes of meaning that belong to one's beliefs, intentions, memories, perceptions, and plans; one's avoidances, instruments, actions, roles, and identities" (Kockelman 2006:3). And it is particularly in how narratives represent the future that we gain valuable insight into the relationship between S.A. immigrant women's evaluation of their labour and self-making, in part because "an important aspect of what makes something valuable is its capacity to preserve, increase or transform its worth as it moves in time and space" (Narotzky & Besnier 2014: S5). This is often done through discourses of sacrifice and hope in which present and past actions are evaluated against an anticipated future. The symbolic freedom that is practiced in the construction of the life course narrative can prove to be valuable for those who find themselves in precarious situations because it opens new possibilities for hope.

Hope reveals the intersection between the self and time. Hope is a multilayered notion which relies on imagination and temporal progress, led by a desire for a better future. It involves people in different temporalities and regimes of value simultaneously. Narotzky and Besnier

(2014) argue for the study of hope to understand how immigrants in precarious situations relate to a new temporal and spatial belonging. Hope is about projecting into the future and helps people negotiate their expectations with the realities of their experiences. Immigrants learn belongingness by constantly navigating around hope and loss. As Gerber argues, "nostalgic memory may simply be overtaken by immersion in new circumstances that work in time to lead individuals realistically to draw pleasure from the past, while understanding its declining day-to-day relevance" (2016: 291). The study of hope as a livelihood project looks at how people organize around the idea of a better future in their efforts to cultivate a stable self.

Hope is a particularly fruitful object of analysis because it reveals the relationship between imagination, temporal progress, and desire, such as the desire for a certain future (Ritivoi 2002). It involves people in different temporalities and regimes of value, simultaneously. Narotzky and Besnier (2014) argue for the study of hope in order to understand how immigrants relate to and produce new forms temporal and spatial belonging as part of making a living. . Hope projects people forward, keeping alive the sense of a better future despite present uncertainties. It also serves the stories immigrant women tell about themselves to their children and their families back home. The women of this ethnography often referenced their own childhoods in comparison to the childhood they wish to give to their children. The difference in upbringings are marked by the newly found self as well as values that they hope to preserve. As Narotzky and Besnier argue, "A migratory disposition can flourish even against ample evidence that mobility does not deliver its promises or, worse, that it creates a situation in which mobile people who do not conditions that are preferable to the shame of returning empty handed" (2014:

S11). Thus, I present cases where kinship ties and forward-oriented motivations construct a past in relation to one's future in order to make sense of failed expectations.

Methodology

The following ethnography captures the role of narrative in meaning-making and how it is informed through the understanding of one's labour. Ochs and Capps argue that "narrative and Self are inseparable. Self is here broadly understood to be an unfolding reflective awareness of being-in-the-world, including a sense of one's past and future" (1996: 20). The purpose of recording narrative told by the women is to highlight that the ability to tell one's own story can be empowering in the sense that it reinforces hopes and dreams. The process of telling one's life story actualizes the self though time. My interlocutors talk about their work as a way to convince others of their potential though their professional journeys which are deemed largely irrelevant to the jobs they are not seen fit to perform. Their experiences give insight into ways people reclaim who they are through who they have been. They argue for their potential beyond just their accreditation but also through the lives they have lived. Their journey thus being a testament to their merit is often cited as a quality of perseverance. The informal nature of their work is an effective way to study the interdependence between productive and reproductive labour, private and public spheres, and informal and formal economies. The experiences of women speak to the fact that informal labour may indeed be exploitative, but also productive and dynamic.

For Kockelman (2006) selfhood implies that the self is a reflexive capacity, being the means and ends of one's own actions, the object of one's own beliefs and desires. He uses "Temporality of Semiosis" to discuss the role of time passage in meaning-making, creation,

maintenance or loss of social desires as well as the motivation behind their commitments to said desires (Kockelman 2006). The chronological nature of the narrative is used to impose order, thus providing coherence (Ochs and Capps 1996). In this way, narrating allows for one to actualize across time.

Ochs and Capps argue that "narratives have the potential to generate a multiplicity of partial selves. Selves may multiply along such dimensions as past and present (1996: 22). Similarly, temporal unfolding relies on the process of rebuilding and starting anew for the migratory experience. It allows for people to move from one space to another and from one understanding of the self to the next. In conversations with my interlocutors, it shows that time tests one's beliefs and what they hold true about their understanding of the self. They come to both reinforce and in some cases reinvent values and roles. It allows the evolution of the self when my interlocutors refer to westernized norms, which would otherwise be more difficult to maintain back home given their previous status. The study of meaning making across time gives a sense of moving forward or can also highlight one being stuck. It demonstrates resolution, or at least a promise of one. The transitional nature of self-making is also prevalent in cases where my interlocutors spoke about how visiting back home often becomes about matter of becoming the old again. This may involve withholding details about one's reality as a Canadian immigrant in the hopes to manage expectations of family members who look to them for a success story.

Not only does narrative convince one of their potential but it is also read as a form of self-reflection. The concept of reflecting is gendered here because women are burdened with doing the memory work in the instance where they keep records of memories that define their

earlier settler days or the pictures from events that mark their new life (Ritivoi 2002). Similarly, keeping a record of their children's achievements was work largely done by mothers. Recording and maintaining memories is not only a significant part of celebrating how far one has come but also crucial when sharing their new life with family back home. Such achievements highlight their successful mothering and paint a picture of a well-maintained household. The stories told and the memories cherished are also treated as theirs to keep, a form of possession which is highly valued in the liminal state where scarcity is a threat. Such examples highlight the importance of narrative in making the self for those navigating discontinuities through the migration experience.

Questions/ Research Purpose

This ethnography will explore the sense-making and self-making role played by discourses of sacrifice, and kinship obligations in relation to how SA migrant women relate to their work. Study of immigrant South Asian women has frequently been conceived through the lens of brooding and obsessive homesickness. It has been informed by memories of a romantic past and tainted by notions of infinite sacrifices. This has resulted in migrant women being represented as subjects of exploitation, which is partly informed through their racialization as suffering subjects. One cannot simply look at labour regimes in the dichotomy of autonomy and oppression because it overlooks why some people participate in what may seem like their own exploitation.

I ask, how might these women see value in their labour despite the absence of apparent or significant economic benefits? What kinds of desires might such work fulfill? In what other

ways might this work prove to be productive, such that it shapes and stabilizes women's understanding of the self? Under the Fordist regime, desires were cultivated for the mass-produced goods that were symbolically associated with the good life and social status (Standing 2011). However, the desires of immigrant women reflect a different calculation of the relationship between work and the good life, one less associated with the commodities of mass consumption than with deferred hopes for inter-generational mobility.

My research shows that one way to study the immigrant working experience beyond exploitation and economic instability is to look at how it is informed through obligations to kin and the efforts to craft the self across temporalities. The informal nature of their work draws from cultural aspects of domesticity and womanhood therefore the social reproduction of these aspects are just as much tied into the actual work. The work is then in maintaining, reproducing and reinforcing their understanding of selfhood. How do discourses of sacrifices serve as an adaptive strategy where one negotiates the present with past expectations? What are some positive uses to which obligations help to cultivate an understanding of the self?

What follows is an ethnographic project aimed to push against the notion that SA immigrant women are simply aspiring for a 'futureless future' given the realities of their present economic state. It is about ways in which people make meaning and a continuous self in the midst of instability conceptualized as liminal by my research participants. To look at precarity as solely an economic problem dismisses the value people attach to hopes of a future yet to come. Making of the self thus serves immigrants to shape "the dialectics between the search for continuity and the threat of discontinuity [and] to cover the gap between the then and the now" (Ritivoi 2002:30). Hope, kinship obligations and sacrifice can be studied as technologies of the self which allow migrant women to aspire and project into the future. Such desires shape

immigrant subjectivities as many struggle to construct a continuous life narrative informed though the process of immigration. How do they construct a self in relation to different temporalities to establish a linear narrative which allows for continuity when faced with precarity and rootlessness? Might it be possible to work in precarious jobs in a new country without risking self-alienation and exploitation? This ethnography presents the narrative building process of South Asian immigrant women faced with downward mobility who constantly negotiate with their present and the imagined future.

Methods and Data Collection

I first met Farzana in the parking lot outside the Asian bazaar, which she referred to as *Bhaiya's Dukaan* ("Brother's Shop") given her proximity to Bilal, the owner. The shop carries not just groceries but also hosts food stalls, novelty items and serves as a focal point for local businesses to advertise their services. As part of my fieldwork, I decided to visit one of these job boards filled with basements for rent ads and flyers. Watching me take notes of the advertisements, Farzana assumed I was looking for a place to rent and approached me to tell me about her sister-in-law who was looking for new tenants to move in. I told her I was more interested in the catering businesses advertised which is when she informed me of her own catering service for the restaurant across the parking lot. Seeing this as an opportunity to recruit participants, I told her about my research interests to learn about migration and labour among South Asian women. At the end of our short encounter, I gave her my phone number (which she took reluctantly) and over the next couple of weeks Farzana and I connected over the phone to talk in detail about my project and the nature of her work. We decided to meet at the shop again,

where she worked as a part-time cashier and this is where I spent majority of my fieldwork observing the routines and collecting narrative.

The methods in the following ethnography focus on the perspectives that emerge from the narrative of South Asian immigrant women themselves and how their experiences are shaped by and further shape their understanding of the self through modes of labour. I see my interlocutors as experts in their experiences. In particular, I was interested in those South Asian women migrants who worked in high-status professions before migrating to Canada. My research objectives were to investigate how the culturally specific and gendered meanings attached to the experience of work are related to larger aims of creating stable and continuous sense of selfhood amidst the instabilities created by the migrant experience of downward mobility. My focus was to study forms of precarity related to work experience, and to identify an area of immigrant work that remains largely invisible to labour studies and migration studies. In the process, I was exposed to existing cultural stereotypes which are often attached to South Asian women and portray them as passive and subordinate. What is more, little research has been done on the ways in which downward mobility through migration can have a profoundly stabilizing effect on one's sense of self. Evidence suggests that how immigrants navigate the labour market is related to their sense of self – who they imagine themselves to be or to become. This suggests that work cannot be separated from the immigrant desire to create a sense of continuity in the face of discontinuity, and stability in the midst of instability.

Data Collection was primarily based on the standard methods of ethnographic research involving participant observations and semi-structured interviews. The semi structured nature of the interviews allowed me to build rapport with informants which was necessary in the case

where I was asking highly personal questions regarding their professional and personal lives (Bernard 2006). The interviews were meant to gain insight into the lived experiences of these women throughout their immigration process. I was particularly focused on instances of discontinuity in one's expectations of work and the self after migrating.

Participants were provided with a letter of information and consent forms, which they signed (see Appendix A). Interviews were conducted with 5 South Asian immigrant women about their experiences regarding working in the informal sector within Brampton, Mississauga and Malton. They were also asked about their professional histories prior to moving to Canada and how these experiences differed in their social and professional circles today. I used these interviews to develop a detailed account of how their understanding of the self shifted through different stages in their life. Focusing on the changing nature of the labour they performed allowed me to draw from their lived experiences as well as the ideological ways that these women talked about work based on their social and cultural positions.

The semi structured interviews were based on an interview guide (see Appendix B) prepared before entering the field but questions later emerged due to the informal nature of the conversations. Aside from gathering specific information about where the women worked, their professional and academic background as well as establishing timelines, the interview guide focused on what informal and formal relations are facilitated through their work and how these relations are guided through their ideological understanding of the self as a worker. Indeed these discussions focused on the gendered aspect of the work performed as well as the role of their class standing which allowed for certain opportunities to arise.

I recorded about the success and failures that they associated with their working lives and how these bled into a more personalized narrative of being a mother and a wife. How did they use labour to define their roles both inside and outside the home and whom they were obligated to as a result on these roles? Lastly, the interviews inquired about their children and how they saw the work of mothering fit their aspirations for the future generation. They were asked about their hopes of their children and what lives they imagine for them. The goal was to gain an understanding of the aspirations behind what motivates the work and how narrative is used to justify certain motivations over others. The focus of the research is on extracting the narrative and the social relations that facilitate the everyday work of South Asian women. The data collected from the following participants speaks to their varied experiences.

Aside from two participants in the study, the rest were recruited through word of mouth, referrals or contacted using community job boards. Aside from one participant who was interviewed over the phone due to geographical distance, all participants were interviewed in person. Recruitment was targeted at South Asian immigrant women ranging from ages 35-53 who reside in Brampton, Mississauga and Malton. All participants worked from home or contributed to the maintenance of a family owned business. One ran her own business aside from having a formal part-time day job. All those participating were married and had children. This was for the purpose of studying the work of motherhood that contributes to a sense of obligation and servitude. Participants were also targeted for the aspect of class mobility and for the purpose of studying downward mobility. This included interviewing women who held graduate degrees and/or an aspect of professionalization which may have been discredited through the

immigration process. They were also targeted for their professions prior to moving to Canada, given that a few had never worked in the informal sector.

As Charles Briggs (1983) argues, the role of the ethnographer cannot be ignored in the context of an interview. The ethnographer's participation and orientation also generates data. In some instances my interlocutors often referenced my position as a child of immigrant parents whom they assume share similar stories. They would often look to me to confirm their reasoning or to speak of my proximity to their children's experience. Their responses are then in relation to our perceived shared experience which is further reinforced as I am part of the South Asian migrant community. Instead of shying away from this role I chose to use it to elicit stories of their move in comparison to my own family. I used this as an opportunity to ask about how might their circumstances differ? This proved to be useful when discussing class differences. Some clung to the idea of merit and "making it on their own" while looking down on those who tend to become a "burden" on the Canadian government. The process of interviewing was one where my own orientation and perceptions play part in the responses that were shared.

Data collection also included engaging in participant observations which I found to be essential for understanding the sociocultural context of S.A immigrant women at their workplaces and homes. My observations were recorded using handwritten fieldnotes where I was particularly interested in studying everyday practices and the nature of relationships facilitated through the work women performed. In order to talk to women about their responsibilities to their family and work it is important to get a sense of what roles women are required to take on in their everyday work lives. Participant observations were also useful in cross referencing the

narratives of women interviewed. I would bring attention to something I had noted in my fieldnotes to fill gaps or to inquire further. Overall, the observations taken allow me to narrate the labour process as well as the everyday [working?] lives of the women presented. Using traditional qualitative research methodologies, the interviews and observations were coded to facilitate the creation of common themes observed across different informant experiences.

Participant Profiles

Farzana

When I first met Farzana she was working for a delivery service run by a local restaurant which catered various packaged and fresh snack foods to independently run stores. Making 2-3 deliveries each week meant she was also responsible for tracking deliveries and maintaining payment methods. She often emphasized how she personally knew the owners and workers at Bhaiya's Dukaan. Although she was not an official employee hired by Bilal I had noticed that she often worked shifts in the instance that she had to cover for one of the other girls at the store. Not only did she make deliveries but she also helped restock, clean and maintain inventory. Farzana claimed to know where everything in the store is which is not an easy feat considering the amount of stock that is stuffed in one place. As I began to spend more time working with the staff I often noticed her dropping in not just for deliveries but to also do her weekly shopping, catch up with the other women or to simply check in on stock refills.

Before moving to Canada in the 2007 Farzana had worked as a female technician at a Karachi's government hospital in Pakistan. She had explained to me that the institution was well known for its research and was often praised for providing nonprofit services to the marginalized population in the city. She had worked assisting male doctors in the instance that a female patient required the assistance of a female professional. Prior to moving to Canada with her children, she had lived in Jeddah for a short while working at her husband's restaurant. Her husband had later joined the family in Canada 4 years ago and now worked for a trucking company shipping and managing production from various warehouses. Initially, the catering and delivery service, was her husband's idea but over time Farzana took over the business to allow her husband to work fulltime at the trucking company. The nature of his work meant that he was not home often so the household responsibilities fell under Farzana as well. When asked about how she managed to run the house on her own she made the point that her family had always been split for long periods of time so her husband could run the business back in Jeddah. As a result, she had become accustomed to running the household. She also brought up how much help her eldest daughter had been which is why she was able to work delivery services. This was the only participant who had claimed majority of the household responsibilities.

In Farzana's case, her husband starting a business had a positive impact on regaining social position as a provider. Unhappy with the initial hardships in Canada Farzana's husband had decided to go back to Jeddah and continue focusing on the business while supporting his family from outside Canada. This would mean that Farzana could stay back with her daughter who would not have her education disturbed. However, Farzana believed that rather than letting her husband go back to Jeddah and sending money from there, her focus would be on

keeping the family together. This required her to quit her part time job as Walmart associate and focus all her time making deliveries. At that time, the couple had invested some money into the small grocery store and with the help of the catering service, the business had taken off. This meant that both Farzana and her husband were solely focused on maintaining the business in the absence of the owner who also managed other stores in the area. Farzana explained spending all her days at work, going home only to cook food and then coming back to help her husband. She had wanted her daughter to go to school in Canada but she also wanted to maintain the dream of living as a family together. The entrepreneurial efforts led by Farzana and her husband play a key role in the reconstruction of a personal and family identity. Seen as a testament to her exceptional mothering, keeping her family as a unit required her to sacrifice her own wishes to go back to school and upgrade her degree requirements as a technician

My interactions with Farzana were insightful because our conversations mainly focused around the everyday management she has to do between work and home. Like my other participants she was also heavily invested in her daughter's future in an attempt to ensure that her children did not need to depend on the family business to make a living in Canada. According to her, this line of work was not fit for someone who had a degreed education from Canada. These conversations later served as points for me to visit when talking about ideologies around what is considered respectable work and workers as well as the obligations that are maintained across generations.

Samina

At Bhaiya Ki Dukaan, Farzana had introduced me to Samina, formerly a principal at a prestigious all-girls school in Lahore, Pakistan. Being born in Lahore myself, Samina and I were soon bonding over our experiences of the city. I had visited Pakistan exactly one year prior to starting my fieldwork so I was able to relate to her experience of the city. 2 out of the 3 girls working at the store were from different regions of Pakistan and often asked me about my stay as they were curious of what I thought of my time there. Despite my limited Urdu vocabulary, I quickly felt comfortable communicating with the 3 employees and spent majority of my time around them. I began to drop by and help out at the store whenever I could and it was during restocking shelves that I began to learn more about Samina. Since I had my own experience working in the retail industry, I did not have much trouble navigating around the store. Samina often commented on my ability to help around even when they had not explicitly asked me to do so which gave me the chance to stick around and make observations without any resistance from other workers. I used my visits as an opportunity to take down notes and keep a record of interactions between my participants and their everyday routines.

Back in Pakistan, Samina lived with her children and her in-laws. Her husband, a design engineer, spent majority of his time away from the family so her in-laws helped her manage the house and take care of the children. Samina explained that this was incredibly helpful as she was working full-time and often had to stay back at the school for school events and staff socials. She also explained that she had hired help around the house so she rarely had to worry about preparing food for the family after getting home from work. Now, this was a task she was solely responsible for. She explained that it was also her responsibility since her husband worked the night shift at a productions factory. He spent majority of his day catching up on sleep and

running errands while Samina managed cooking and the household. Once moving to Canada, her biggest struggle was the change in family dynamic. She expressed her concerns around not having anyone to depend on, therefore feeling isolated from all other support systems within an extended family. As her children are older now she feels that she can now turn to them for help when managing the house.

I spent a lot of time around Samina as she was one of the people in charge when the owner was away managing 2 other stores in the area. Samina is the oldest of my informants, which brought a different perspective to my study. Samina had 8 years of experience teaching and often asked me about my own experience as a teaching assistant. She mentioned that she had not enjoyed teaching very much but was thankful for the opportunity it opened for her once she was appointed the principal at a prestigious institution, funded by her uncle at the time. Samina was adamant about her work ethic and often commented on the "quality of work" done by her colleagues which was natural considering her rank at the store. What was even more insightful was the way she called upon her former role as a principal which informed her interactions as a store worker, often noting the class differences between a respected principal and a *"Dukaan Wali".*

Dukaan Wali refers to a woman who works at the corner shop. A classed and gendered position of a store working and its comparison to her former job as a principal was insightful for many reasons. One, it allowed Samina to talk about who she had been prior to moving. It also gave us the opportunity to discuss the her social standing and how gender and class inform what people hold to be true about work ethic. Samina talked about its implication on what was seen as

a low position as a *Dukaan Wali*, had it not been for her sense of work ethic which set her apart from others. She had a "no nonsense" attitude towards running the store which I found intimidating at first but I soon came to see it as a way for her to assert the same level of respect she had earned as a principal. In a way, her position as a *Dukaan Wali* reinforced her ideas on respectability and the ethics of labour. In the following chapters, I analyze the narrative tools and practices used by Samina to ensure that her identity as a principal is not lost despite the professional shift.

Fatima

Fatima had used the phrase, *"Lakkar Hazam, Pathar Hazam"* to describe herself to me. The Urdu idiom loosely translates to swallowing wood and stone, meaning one's ability to endure whatever challenges life throws at them. Fatima herself had lived a challenging life from a very early age and that was built into the way she talked about endurance through the difficulties of the migrating to Canada. Fatima also uses her religious faith to speak on resilience. She has been living in Canada for 22 years after moving from Vancouver to stay with her son once he had graduated and started working in Toronto. Her husband works in a produce factory and she often used her husband as a symbol of strength in her life, citing all the times they had struggled to give their son the life they can be proud of. Fatima had been a teacher in Kolkata but now works at Bhaiya's Dukaan alongside Samina. Her everyday duties require her to tend to the general maintenance of the store and to work the cash registers.

Prior to moving to Canada, Fatima had worked in a small office in Kolkata for a company that managed accounts for banks in the states. Fatima had always wanted to be an

educator like her mother and sister when she started working for the company. Her parents saw this as an opportunity for her to get her foot into the world of finance and from there she worked as a teller before getting married. Her Husband had been a superintendent at a private college and soon enough Fatima began working alongside her husband in her desired field of education. Although the work was sporadic, she enjoyed the benefits of working from an office again with the added bonus of sharing a similar schedule as her husband and her son who also attended the same school. Fatima described her time in Kolkata as one that kept her busy but she was still able to make time for her family and herself. When asked to compare her work and family life after migrating, she pointed to the biggest difference being lacking time for things that matter to her sense of wellbeing. Fatima worked various part time jobs which mainly revolved around service work. Recently, she had taken up tutoring math to a few highschool students in her neighborhood. Managing her time working at the store, running the house and tutoring, Fatima ran on a tight schedule. She explained feeling guilty at first for overworking but then reminding herself that her purpose was to help her children achieve more than she was able to achieve for herself. Today, she feels that all the sacrifices of leaving a good life behind had been worth it seeing her sons achieve their own goals. She lives with her husband and her oldest son who works as an accountant in Toronto. Her youngest son lives back in Vancouver and is also doing well for himself.

I found my conversations with Fatima both inspiring but also ones that exposed the realities of living in perpetual struggle. Although she mentioned that recently her family had not struggled as much as they had 20 years ago, I got the sense that struggling was written into the migratory experience. This is also cited in cases of migration studies where the perpetual

struggle is accepted as the norm and even romanticized in order to justify what one has endured (Ritivoi 2002) I used this concept of perpetual struggle to talk about the labour behind the narrative of "making it" and how that is shaped through the working lives of the women. I present instances where not only is it gendered but is also classed when talking about which struggles get to define the self. Women like Fatima do not want their story of migration to just be about struggle and turmoil. They equally talk about making time for oneself and their family as a way to create balance in their life. The quality of "balance" is seen important for one's mental health and their work lives facilitate those values. The ability to prioritize one's mental health opens possibilities for social mobilization since struggle is understood to be a characteristic of a lower class woman. Women rework their experience of downward mobility into a classed narrative of a well-balanced woman who is not defined by her struggle.

Yasmine

Upon discovering an ad for Yasmine's tutoring service I contacted her asking if she would be interested in discussing the possibility of being interviewed. In an attempt to get conversation started, I shared my own experience as a former tutor. Although my experience working for a tutoring service did not compare to her at-home business, it gave us common grounds to talk about our experiences with school aged kids which was closely tied to her experience as a former teacher in Pakistan. Since moving to Canada, she had been trying to get her foot into he teaching profession without any luck due to her transcripts and credentials not meeting the requirements of Teachers College. Without the proper credits, Yasmine expressed her frustration with the school board and the Canadian job market for foreign Teachers.

Upon migrating, Yasmine's biggest frustration was with the education system that refused to acknowledge her credentials while also providing little support for her to upgrade her professional requirements. She was even more frustrated by people who had the opportunity to teach but were far less qualified than her given her former experience in Pakistan. By not having her credentials and expertise acknowledged Yasmine felt that she was unable to prove herself or help her family financially. At the same time, she did not want to give up and settle for a low paying job. She began helping her husband's catering business which got her in contact with women who were already certified within the education board. They had connected her to volunteer positions in various schools where Yasmine started working as a lunchroom supervisor. This position had been a part-time commitment but it had helped Yasmine secure work as a camp monitor and an in-class aid throughout the school year.

Yasmine also volunteers as a classroom monitor at her local public school and prided herself in her ability to manage and deal with younger children. She had shown me the basement of her house which she turned into learning spaces for the children she tutored. Walls were lined with white boards and desks were laid out for her "classses". I was quite impressed by the level of work she had put into a side business that she was only able to work during 2-3 evenings in the week. She often talked about her time in Canadian classrooms and how they shaped her understanding of her professional self as well as being shaped by how her Canadian colleagues perceived her. My conversations with Yasmine were more informal and insightful in the way she talked about her own professional development. She sees her tutoring business and volunteer opportunities as a way to build her resume and to get back to a professional identity that she embodies despite the absence of a formal classroom. I use Yasmine as an example of how one

maintains an identity though ideological markers around what it means to be an educator despite being denied the opportunity to teach formally. Furthermore, the social and cultural obligation to raise well-mannered children is built into her work as an educator. Yasmine's professional work ethic gains her respect from within her community and helps her to reconstruct her identity as a teacher.

Vidya

I heard about Vidya though a referral who had told me that Vidya had been her seamstress for the last 2 years and had helped design South Indian wedding garments. When I first met her, Vidya told me about wanting to start her own business designing Saris and Indian suits for special occasions. Currently she had worked on and off designing clothes for friends and families in the hopes of building contacts and making extra money. Of all the participants in this study, Vidya was a recent newcomer to Canada. She had previously worked in a dance studio teaching Bharatanatyam in Tamil Nadu and continued to do so in Malton. However, she explained that the respect she gained from the profession was not prevalent in the same way in Canada. Being a Bharatanatyam instructor or a "Guru" is a prestige position one acquires through years of practice and cultivating the craft. Women such as Vidya who devoted close to 16 years to the dance technique often hold various awards and are recognized for their specialized style. Similarly, Vidya had held a prestigious title in her region which made her a sought out instructor in Tamil Nadu. After her move to Canada, Vidya had to put a stop to instructing classes due to the lack of access to paid work in the profession. She began working odd jobs including service work and a cleaner at her local YMCA. Not wanting to give up on her

career in dance, Vidya connected with an organizer at her temple who put her in touch with her current dance studio in Malton.

It was her time as a dance instructor where she started designing costumes for dance performances and various studio events. She explained that the people at the studio had mentioned that she should start tailoring full time considering her skill level working with different garments. Vidya explained to me that she had studied textiles in college and her family has a long history of running textile factories therefore, the craft came naturally to her. During our interview she expressed regret for not seriously considering starting a business and was in the process of finding a private boutique to work under until she had the financial means to buy her own studio. She talked about her struggle to find boutiques that are willing to work with her and pay the price for her designs and materials. Unable to find a boutique that paid her fairly for her craft, Vidya used her at-home services to help her husband run the house.. Although her husband was quite supportive of her business ideas, Vidya often felt like she was wasting time that she could be using to help her husband.

Vidya often talked about her labour in terms of building her "craft" which was tied to her designs and art in business. She saw the opportunity to start her own boutique as a way to work for herself for the first time in her life. She expressed that she no longer wanted her craft to benefit others while she felt "spent" making things that did not satisfy nor represent her full range of skills. She went as far as to say that it "cheapened" her designs. The way Vidya talks about her craft can be seen as a reflection of the self in her work. If creating for others cheapens the craft then how does creating for her own business perhaps open new avenues to bettering the

self? In the following chapter, I analyze ways she talks about designing clothes for a living. I analyze how the unstable nature of the migration experiences made it possible for her to explore her craft in ways that were not previously available to her. I look at the role of her family in supporting her but also reinforcing the value of one's craft when they make a living off it. Vidya's case is unique because of the nature of her work. She talks about work as something practiced and embodied through generations (referring to her family's history of textile factories) and work that evolves her understanding of the self through practice and form. Vidya talked about professional work ethics regarding her business and building clientele, emphasizing that kin and professional relations can exist alongside one another. Her labour showed that one cannot think of workers as individuals when assessing their relationship to work. Their labour serves a larger collective of social values and obligations. The work of women like Vidya embodies the importance of individual autonomy behind an empowered business woman but it also looks at how social mobility is a collective movement cross generations and community.

The following ethnography uses semi-structured, informal interviews and participant observations, designed to record the narrative constructions of the self through which SA immigrant women make sense of their labour against the migration experience of downward mobility. Data collected addresses the production and maintenance of social networks, work life in relation to one's family responsibilities, ideas around dependency and autonomy, cultural expectations of wives and mothers, their own ideological struggles with cultural expectations, and hopes of the future. Through the use of coding and thematic similarities the goal was to extract repetitions and discursive patterns to study how these women make sense of the meaning attached to labour and the self. Their narratives are gendered and classed due to the destabilizing

effects of the migration experience. Study of temporal meaning making and the role of hope both lend themselves to a narrative that is used to reconcile the past with the future. An understanding of these techniques opens avenues for looking at how people embody aspirations or the purpose of imposing a success narrative when the reality may otherwise seem unstable.

Chapter Two

Housewives and Businesswomen

Fatima: Who do you think we're doing this for? Of course, it's all for them. One day they will realize how difficult it is to sacrifice everything for someone. I want them to have options I didn't have. If I can make something for them then my hardships wouldn't matter. Nobody sees me defeated like this. All they see is how accomplished my son is.

In the following chapter, I argue that when studying the life narrative of immigrant women we must assess their relationship to their work not in terms of individual struggle, rather one that is part of a larger collective. Their ideas around success extend to generations and their work is seen as means to ensure success for their children. Work that appears low-skill, precarious, or unstable can nevertheless provide the conditions for women to fulfill those valued social roles of mothers and wives. Therefore, "mobility" is not simply an individual movement within a single life course, rather a collective movement that is measured through generations.

The Home and Social Reproduction

This chapter will examine the meaning women attached to their home based businesses when they are unable to attain professional status in their fields serves multiple purposes. Their work lives both shape and are shaped by aspects of class based motherhood specific to South Asian Immigrant women. The experience of running their own business leads to women negotiating between traditional roles and what they understand to be empowered entrepreneurs.

The women from the study see running a business as an extension of them fulfilling their caregiver roles and familial obligations. They do not see it in contrast to traditional modes of domesticity; instead it is one way to actualize their responsibilities as mothers and wives. They expose the binary between being a working woman and a housewife as they emphasize that the innate ability for femininity to be flexible means that they are able to perform both roles unlike their male counterparts (Varela 2017). They also discuss ways in which they employ professional work ethics to bridge the gap between past self and the instability of their current informalized work. These examples of narrative repertoire show how a woman invested in her family's wellbeing is expected to show flexibility when faced with instability. My interlocutors believe that it is this quality of being flexible and self-sacrificing that speaks to their ability of being a successful housewife and a businesswoman.

Interviews conducted with Vidya and Yasmine are the main focus of this chapter since they manage their businesses exclusively from home. The following chapter focuses on how the house as a site for labour is involved in the social and narrative reproduction of femininity in South Asian households. Using David Harvey's analysis of capitalism's use of space in producing labour value, Natascia Boeri (2016) argues that home as an analytical site for work brings attention to ways in which social relations and ideologies around the working self are maintained by women. The site of labour takes into account how gender relations are formed and maintained through a domestic space. Ong (1991) argues that by looking that the space where labour is conducted one can study workspace as settings where neoliberal technologies become apparent.

Navigating dominant ideological frameworks in which the private is feminine and the public is masculine, women like Vidya and Yasmine reinforce and alter the binary to fit their ideal of how a household should be managed (Massey 1994). Through establishing their domestic site as a place to carry out professional and business endeavors, these women share how their work lives lend to their domestic and kin responsibilities. This leads to new possibilities for repair work in terms of self-making as well as kin relations outside the home. I argue that my interlocutors establish new identities as businesswomen to manifest the immigrant dream and to aid social mobility for themselves and their family. This is also how they deal with the informalization of work. It can be observed in the way they manifest and legitimize their professional work ethics when faced with the loss of a work based identity. When interviewed these women express a strong sense of self as businesswomen who have carved their own way into professionalism and have redefined the self.

Homebased work serves as a site where gender ideologies are contested, reproduced and redefined. Boeri (2016) uses the term "home-based" to refer to the decentralized, flexible and often exploitative labour performed by women who have restricted social and physical mobility in the market. The motivation behind homeworking is tied to one's domestic responsibilities. Home based work is often a choice made by lower class women with limited access to formal education as well as restricted mobility outside of the home due to family or cultural pressures (Boeri 2016). In the case of this ethnography, I discuss why middle class women such as Vidya and Yasmine see home based work as essential to growing their businesses in the absence of formal training in Canada. While home based work is often cited as a product of exploitative labour practices, the work performed by my interlocutors is a response to a system that

invalidates their previous specializations. The home is also a site to study the informal as feminine and formal as masculine dichotomies which are rearranged by women who address gender ideologies to talk about themselves as workers (Massey 1994). It is crucial to mention that the homebased work done by my interlocutors is not simply the product of exploitation. Rather I use the home as a site to study how space gives my interlocutor their gender thus being a tool through which women understand the self in relation to work.

History of South Asian Women in Canada

In order to better understand the motivations behind homeworking it is important to examine historic limitations placed on South Asian immigrant women seeking work in Canada. Before the provisions made in 1962, the Canadian immigration system restricted the entry of South Asian women into the country. The racial and sexist regulations were a result of the perceived racial threat of Asian immigrants and it was feared that the reunification of families would give immigrants means to permanently settle in Canada. In a 1913 edition of the *Vancouver Sun* the editors wrote, "They are not an assimilable people…We must not permit the men of that race to come in large numbers, and we must not permit their women to come in at all" (Ralston 1999:33). However, the economic boom shifted the person's admissible category which emphasized education training and skill (Ralston 1999). The notion of skill had been classed and gendered as masculine so South Asian immigrant women were perceived as housewives and the immigration regulations suffered from marital status bias. In fact, single Asian women were not eligible to be independent immigrant applicant until 1974 (Ralston 1999). The 1992 immigration plan pushed for the ideal nuclear family with a primary "labour destined"

applicant (Ralston 1999). Such familial patterns reinforced south Asian immigrant women as housewives who are seen as unfit to participate in the Canadian economy.

Paired with regulation around "Canadian Experience" and the lack of access to Canadian education hindered the women's ability to join the formal job market in their specialized fields. As a result of spousal residency and immigration regulation South Asian immigrant women have often been dependent on their male partners financially, often resulting in marital and financial abuse. In addition, the intersection of racialization and gendered bias makes it difficult for SA women to find jobs in their desired fields. Discriminatory practices such as the requirement for Canadian experience and their dependability on spouses further pushes women into underemployment (George & Rashidi 2014). Labour precarity for SA women is often a result of the intersection between labour and immigration policies, paired with cultural importance places on familial relations which leads women to favor the informal sector. Therefore, for some women managing businesses from home are strategies employed to gain some level of financial freedom without having to compromise family cohesion. Maintaining their family's wellbeing is built into their worker identity and it is intertwined with their motivation behind running a business.

Informal Economy

The International Labour organization defines homebased work as waged work that takes place in the worker's house. It is characterized under self-employed workers or those who work under subcontracted workers (ILO 2002). In debates around formal and informal economy, early

scholarship argued that marginalized workers chose to work informally due to the lack of opportunity and accessibility to the formal economy whereas others argued it was due to their entrepreneurialism (Boeri 2016). Moser (1978) argues that the informal economy worked in the periphery and took a dualistic approach to the informal versus formal debate. There is also the tendency to assume that informal economy is a norm in developing third world countries and therefore a symbol of exploitation. The presence of informal sectorial work addresses the binary between formal and informal. Recent scholars like Carla Freeman (2001) argue against this dualistic approach and challenge western understanding of informal economy as unproductive. In doing so we can begin to look at how the unstable and flexible nature of the work shapes the realities of marginalized workers. How might seemingly exploitative work serve to produce a work based identity for women shaped around kin?

A Study on informal economy implies that family based businesses run from home tend to alienate workers however the women in this study choose such labour based on family dynamics and financial contribution . For immigrant women who have been denied professional positions in their specialized fields, working informally within the community helps to build their work experience. It also provides them with the opportunity to connect with community and the maintenance of such connections is often vital for their businesses to prosper. Many operate through word of mouth or through connections made at community gatherings, religious events and weddings. For example when Vidya first started working for the dance studio, she was asked to create set designs and saris for her students. This eventually led her to create original garments for religious ceremonies and weddings. The downward mobility women experience is tied to the lack of professionalization and institutional support of their work. The informalization and

flexibility of their work allows them to grow their networks and meet other women who are in the similar situations.

Studying women working from home allows us to examine multiple intersections of spatial and social locations. If working outside the home shapes gender then working from home is also a critical site for studying modes of labour production. The flexibility of work hours and the ability to do it from home does not require women to give up primary caregiving roles especially when reproductive work is seen to be their fulltime job. Scholars studying homeworking also point to how paid work within the home is often seen as a use of woman's free time like in the case of Vidya who told me that once she started making garments for her dance studio, her husband often described it as her hobby and the clothes as dance "costumes". Vidya explained to me how she spent more time on her "hobby" than she did teaching at the studio and that every "costumes" had taken her upwards of 16 hours to put together. The schedules of women like Vidya working from home cannot be divided into work and free time but the freedom to choose when and where to perform the labour is a factor that most women found attractive prior to starting their business.

Vidya: I like to have that control. I create original pieces and the studio trusts me to put together a wardrobe for all events. Maybe after the first time I don't think I have ever had to ask for directions or how to execute something. They trust in me and whatever I come up with, that comes with experience and expertise.

Vidya especially found it satisfying to work when she was her own boss. She compared her time working in corporate jobs in Tamil Nadu and other forms of service related work where *someone is always watching you. They question you even if they have less experience than you. At least now I don't have a boss. Yes, it's difficult to work for your own business but it also means I know what I do best and best of all I don't have to answer to anyone. Working to benefit others, making their ideas happen, you get tired. At the end what do I get?*

Vidya's found satisfaction in her work knowing that she was not working under anyone's authority, something that was a norm to her former finance jobs. It also meant that she had a say in the work she produced. Knowing the quality of work she no longer wished for her designs to benefit others. Her biggest struggle now was finding clientele that pay for the value of her creations.

Vidya: I am not selling my designs out of a boutique, of course, some customers think they don't have to pay me my prices but they will walk into a boutique and pay double for something that was sent over from India or Pakistan. I let them go because it's a waste of money, I have authentic pieces, I work hours on them…who am I to say anything but I will not cheapen my work like that.

The authenticity of pieces and the amount of work that goes into creating her pieces are qualities that Vidya holds sacred. By refusing to "cheapen" her work, she advocates for her labour value. It allows her to maintain a few clients who favor quality pieces over boutique names. Her insistence on the quality and authenticity of her craft are major factors in how she identifies as a businesswoman.

Vidya: It's important to know your values when running a business…If you come to me and ask me to design something, I will give you my best work. I will only charge you based on the quality of my material, my technique which you will not find anywhere else. Ask my customers, they will tell you.

Vidya also relies on her clients to expand her network and often such testimonies are important for the validity of her business. I argue that the focus on quality and authenticity is how women like Vidya assign value to their work and the self. Comparing herself to boutique outlets that overcharge for unauthentic designs is one way Vidya sets her business and herself apart. Not only does this earn her a loyal customer base but it also validates her as a businesswoman. By working for one's own business and advocating for the originality of her craft Vidya presents herself as empowered, business savvy and dedicated which she sees lacking in other business models. Through the values of authenticity and craftsmanship, Vidya sees herself growing into the image of a successful businesswoman despite the shift in forms of professionalization prior to migrating.

Working from Home

When Vidya received an order, she liked to begin working months in advance. At the moment I had started interviewing her, she had been preparing for the next dance competition. When she first started, she would only charge for the production of saris or alterations. Vidya often took part in set design as she explained that it was an extension of the dance performance preparations. The sets and what the performers wore had equals parts in telling the story like the

style of Bharatanatyam dance. Sometimes the stage was set for a coming of age celebrations for young girls and families asked to have the venue designed specific to generational and family customs. Vidya hesitated to ask for money at first because she had become accustomed to people praising her on her ability to design and sew. She described it as her doing it out of love for "her girls", referring to her students at the studio. Even within her classes, Vidya was referred as an older sister. She compared her students to her own daughter who has also been learning Bharatanatyam since the age of 6. Working closely with kin ,Vidya became responsible for the social reproduction rewired in her work which largely went unpaid. Vidya resolved this by employing kin relations to her students and coworkers whom she feels indebted to especially in times where their families depend on her to prepare for pivotal life celebrations. Vidya claims that she has seen her girls grow up and sees it as her responsibility to give them the kind of ceremony that she would give her own daughter. Her work becomes the mode through which she maintains kin ties to families while fulfilling her responsibility as a mother and sister.

Unpaid production of care and service is done voluntarily to meet the needs of family, larger community or kin ties which reproduce cultural ideology and gender relations. Boeri (2016) argues that while working for kin allows women to participate economically from home, it also reproduces cultural notions of care tied to femininity. Since social reproduction is built into the work and naturalized, women use femininity and motherhood to make meaning of their roles. Even when planning for ceremonies without pay, Vidya highlighted the importance of how many of these families had helped her get started in Canada. Some of them had welcomed her into their homes when she had felt isolated and served as valuable connections for her business. Vidya explains that while she has worked for free sometimes she sees it as a favor that will

benefit her future self. Keeping, maintaining and renewing ties within the community are built into her idea of a businesswoman. According to her, a savvy businesswoman sees every garment as an opportunity to grow her professional portfolio which has already served her to build a loyal customer base. This complicates the dichotomy of paid/unpaid because for Vidya working a free order is a future investment and an opportunity to cash in on favors.

Women like Vidya relied on community networks to find future customers even if it meant working for free or less money than what she had initially asked for. Sometimes this meant refusing to accept a larger sum or settling for a sentimental gift instead. It was these connections that became sources for referrals and gave her entry into social events that she did not previously have access to. Vidya told me about a studio opening in Toronto that she was invited to where she helped the owner, a previous client, set up a stall of jewelry and traditional Indian suits. As a favor, her client had allowed her to showcase her own designs. Her stall gained a lot of praise from other vendors in the area and it was then that she decided that she wanted to open her own studio. Many of the people she worked for would invite her to weddings and birthdays which she explained was her main source of network building. Therefore, her relationship with her customers cannot to be seen in the binary of exploited worker and a contractor.

Even in Yasmine's case, her entry into working as a lunchroom supervisor into a school was also a result of her connection to a customer who worked in the school herself.

Yasmine: Working from home is easy at the moment because I can take care of the house and take rest when I want to. I can decide when to give my family time and when to concentrate on work.

When talking about informal work, women stressed their roles as caregivers first, showcasing that their business was an extension of other responsibilities to their family. They prided in the ability to not let work life get in the way of taking care of the home. This was important for women to emphasize their ability to plan around varying schedule and commitments. Women described running one's own business as more convenient and a financially viable option. They highlighted the importance of "keeping busy" but also being available for family once everyone is home together. It was important for them that they were financially contributing to the house which allowed women the opportunity to better carry out their responsibilities as mothers and wives. Instead of talking about the difficulties of managing both household aspects women focused on the positives. They also felt that as women it was their job to find balance rather than complain. As Yasmine explained to me,

A woman who complaints isn't prepared for what it takes to run a house…Finding balance is second nature and it's clear in your upbringing….People should be raising daughters to be more balanced because this is what has made it possible for me to run a family and work at the same time.

Tying flexibility to one's upbringing is also indicative of a classed understanding of a woman's upbringing. A woman who is unable to manage business and home is seen as not

doing enough and is a direct reflection of femininity.. Yasmine feels that if she is not working outside the house there is no excuse for her to not be able to balance work and family. Women often planned their schedules around the schedules of various family members in the house. For example, Vidya preferred to spend time with her husband when he gets home from work, emphasizing that it is one of the only few hours in the day that she gets to spend with him due to the nature of his long work hours. Here she emphasizes that being her own boss makes it possible for her to prioritize family even if that means she stays up later in the night finishing a garment for her client.

Khidmat

Using the concept of Patriarchal Bargaining, Kandiyoti (1988) discusses how women achieve mobility within the constraints of patriarchal family values. Through this technique, expected benefits are weighed against the current constrictions while ensuring freedoms in certain aspects of family life (Chaudhuri et al. 2014). Bargaining is often used to maintain family cohesion or minimize conflict for perceived future benefits, even if it is at one's own expense. Kandiyoti argues that this level of contesting and negotiating work reproduce patriarchal relations but during my time working with SA women I experienced negotiation as a tools when women speak of sacrifices for their children's future. This included women talking about working their jobs so that one day their children did not have to struggle in the same way. They spoke of the projected value in servitude, in order to ensure that their time in service to the family meant that their children would not have to wait on others. This was especially true for those with daughters because they often expressed that their daughters were not "made for *Khidmat*" even if it was a desired quality for women to possess. The Urdu word for servitude,

Khidmat is tied to sacrifices and is understood to be a product of a woman's upbringing in natal homes. Yasmine explained to me

Girls watch their mothers sacrifice so that they can have it easy later in life. You learn from an early age, how to care for family and sometimes forget your own selfish wants if it makes your family happy… in the end your family is number one.

Yasmine applied the same level of servitude in her daily life. She delayed going back to school in order to ensure that she would be home to tend to her children. In return, it allowed her husband to work longer hours and multiple jobs. Yasmine describes this as a "give and take" and sees it as a natural response to raising her children. She feared that the absence of parents- especially a mother- at home would have impact her children as they would drift away from the family and start adopting more western values. The decision to tutor other children came from the need to gain teaching experience while also being at home to take care of her family and raising children with similar moral values as her. Her business allowed her the flexibility to both maintain her supervision of her children while gaining teaching experience in Canada. Therefore, the bargaining technique is not just out of enforced subordinated gender norms for these women. Rather, it is an effort to promote family wellbeing and negotiate gender relations which were not previously modeled to Yasmine. This form of negotiation is also a reflection of the concept of *Khidmat* tied to femininity and sacrifice. *Khidmat* implies sacrificing to serve the wellbeing of the entire family which is then a reflection of good mothering raising moral children. According to Yasmine this is also how a woman earns respect.

Business of Teaching

Yasmine: I have been teaching since I was 15. The families in my neighborhood would send their kids to my house every evening, we would sit in my courtyard -it was not big but enough space for me to give tuitions (tutor) - and so I would help kids with their homework. At that time it wasn't common for girls to make money at my age. Not like the kids here, especially not with the family I had. So I started giving tuitions to help my father run the house. I have not working since that day.

Yasmine had been teaching in Pakistan for 9 years before moving to Canada. Since then she has been rejected multiple times by Teacher's College because of the lack of college credits and certification. Unable to go back to school, Yasmine began her own tutoring service as a way to gain teaching experience and one day save enough money for the 2 year college diploma that will allow her re-entry into the teaching profession. She had also been working as a lunchroom supervisor at her local elementary school, where she assisted the teaching staff. Yasmine expressed her frustration with the Ontario School Board and her inability to teach when she feels that she is more qualified than her Canadian colleagues. She sees her tutoring business as a way to "polish" her teaching skills and keep busy. Her dedication to the business is apparent in the way that she has set up small classrooms in her basement in an attempt to separately locate a workspace. She explained that she had previously run classes in her living room but it became harder to do that when her husband came home from work. Having a separate workspace and her own desk also allowed her to show her clients that she is serious about the business. The

classrooms are also a testament to her refusing to stop teaching despite the hurdles placed by accreditation institutes.

Yasmine sees her business in light of the entrepreneurial woman that she has been ever since she started working at the age of 15. Since she had not being allowed to work outside the house, she leveraged her ability to work from home as a way to gain financial independence. Now tutoring allows her to continue teaching even when faced with institutional hurdles. She holds strong opinions about empowering women through entrepreneurship and believes that women making their own money is crucial for their liberation.

Yasmine: You don't have to go against your family, but I knew that if I was going to become anyone I would have to show that I can respect their wishes and make my own money at the same time…obviously I didn't go against what they said because in the end my father gave me his permission. He could see how I was going to help the family.

Yasmine pointed to her ability to balance familial obligation as a daughter and her own ideas of liberation and empowerment. A home business led to a sense of empowerment without having to compromise her family's wishes. Her definition of empowerment did not go against her family wishes; rather it required her to uphold them. Benefits of working from home gave her the respectability women otherwise would not have if they went against their families or left their homes to work. Oza (2006) argues that domestic femininity is appropriated for capitalist production which makes home based work less threatening to women's role as caregivers. As a result women become "cultural repositories, subjectively resolving the balance between the old

and the new" (Oza 2006:7). Feminization of teaching and the narrative of the empowering businesswoman who runs the house reinforce the social construct of femininity by maintaining boundaries of the private sphere.

I argue that by employing narrative such as woman's innate ability to balance the home and work, women come to make sense of the instability which is a result of informalization. Women are constantly working to reconcile the tension between being an empowered businesswoman and a balanced housewife. When asked about how they manage both work and household responsibilities without a fixed schedule, Vidya explains,

I have a timetable (schedule) for myself but I'm not strict on it. I wake up and ask myself 'what needs to get done today' and go from there. Sometimes I have a lot to do but an order will come to me and the woman will say she needs a blouse for a function this weekend. I have to be balanced because I can't spend the weekend on the order, my family will gets no time. I can't do that to them. Work is one thing but family is another. My family is my commitment too right?

Trying to manage both work and household responsibilities created tension between how women interacted with their family. They speak about the lack of sleep, the burden of deadlines, and constantly multitasking.

Yasmine: I tried to do everything all in one day but then I couldn't keep track of my house. Some days my husband would tell me about his plans and I was so busy that I would forget and that made me feel so much guilt… I was around children for majority of the day that when I came

home I wanted to be away from mine for a few hours. When I came home I told them not to disturb me until I have taken a nap. I didn't even want to eat, I just wanted to rest after I came home. I think I was just tired.

When asked about their routines women mention the physical and mental toll behind working from a space that is also tied to familial obligations. Vidya often worked while spending time with her family like in the instance of prepping and templating garments while she watched movies with her daughter. Yasmine explains that she often helped her own children with homework alongside the children she tutored because once she was done working she did not have the time nor the energy. The bleeding of work into family time is one way women obtained balance.

Vidya: If you want to get everything done on time you have to be smart. If I'm working I make sure to involve my family in it. They don't have to do much but just be there when I work… they get to see what I'm doing and how I work all day… even if I don't ask for help they want to help me so it makes it easier for me. My daughter and even my husband is very understanding and they always support me.

Multitasking, asking the family for help and working around schedules was one way in which women dealt with the realities of informal work. Prior to immigrating, all women worked in fixed spaces and on schedules that separated the home from their workplace. The loss of professional identity was further felt by women who were having to reroute their career while having little to no access to workplace professionalization that they were previously used to.

Women like Yasmine and Vidya found it challenging but eventually turned to their families for support. This gave them the opportunity to work around flexible schedules and maintain a balance between work and family. Rather than separating the two, women found it more efficient to merge the two. It also validated their struggle when their families responded with support.

Producing moral persons

Yasmine sees her teaching career as one that provides service to her family and friends. When speaking about the Canadian school system she expressed her disappointment at how Canadian educators were not given the level of authority she had been back at home. She felt that Canadian children attending public school suffered from this due to a lack of self-discipline and knowledge of core principles. She felt that a teacher's job is to not just follow lessons plans but also aid the socializing process of becoming civic participants. She feared the same for her own children's future since they are also growing up in the same Canadian education system. She feared that like the rest of the children in this generation, they were losing touch with core principles and that would impact them for their lives. By framing her work as a service to future generations, Yasmine defines her status as an educator and a mother. Aligning herself with other educators and mothers, she reframes the story of instability and work informalization.

Yasmine: You don't need a degree to teach right from wrong… I know I am qualified to do that- more qualified than most of the people I work with at the schools here. They think just because they have degrees from here they are somehow better than people like us. They can't see how we're contributing to Canada but I am still teaching their children how to be responsible and respectful. I don't need to be given a degree for that.

By framing her business as a service to the community, she addresses the downward mobility of immigrant women who despite having years of experience over their colleagues are not able to get back in their field due to the requirements of Canadian work experience. Yasmine frames this as a loss for the school board who she feels is overlooking qualified educators. Yasmine understands her business as paving her own way into the classrooms she is not deemed qualified to teach.

My interlocutors cite professional work ethics to talk about their businesses. They talked about building clientele and emphasized that kin and professional relations can exist alongside one another. Vidya used tradition as a way to build a closer relationship with her clients. She emphasized that it was common to allow the clients to choose what they are willing to pay for a garment before she negotiates prices. She felt that she was often obligated to give discounts or not charge for embroideries if her client was a longtime returning customer. She felt that it was a way to not only ensure their return in the future but it also showed the client that she had not taken on the project simply for money. She talked about her work as her "craft" which gave her respect within her community. It is important to Vidya that her clients see her as an accomplished designer rather than simply a seamstress. Contrasting between the two is reflective of the varying level of respect that each position earns her. By framing her work under the title of a craft, Vidya tries to assert herself as a sole authority of her craftsmanship. It also allows her the respect which makes it easy for her to negotiate the cost of her labour once she starts selling original designs in her own studio.

Similarly, Yasmine employs professional work ethics to earn the respect of her clients and sets herself apart from other licensed tutoring services which she claims do not care for the academic careers of their students. In contrast she makes it a point to send constant updates to concerned parents or schedules one-on-one meetings to discuss the students' progress. Having worked within the School board as a volunteer she often cites her experience in professional classrooms. Using this experience she aims to cultivate classroom spaces within her house to better address learning gaps at schools. She ensures me that the parents refer to her as *Ustani*, Headmistress, and she expects the same level of respect and professionalism she grew up accustomed to as a teacher. When she is teaching she dresses the part too.

Yasmine: Just because they (the students) come into my home does not mean that I am sitting here in my house clothes. I want to show them that I am just like any teacher of theirs…They don't come to me just to learn maths or writing. They also get to learn about respect and discipline and how to treat people who work teaching them every day. They are not being taught those things at schools here.

The social and cultural obligation to raise well-mannered children is built into her work as an educator. In fact, for Yasmine that is an aspect of professional work ethic which in return gains her respect from the parents and it highlights her experience within the profession. This is a way for Yasmine to reclaim her identity as a teacher to her clients but also in front of family, both in Canada and back home in Pakistan.

Yasmine: when we first came here I couldn't tell my family that I was only volunteering one hour every week and not even making money! I would say I teach in a school. Now I am actually teaching and running the house. Now I say that I am a teacher and a businesswoman.

Reclaiming the teaching title restores her sense of self and maintains her career trajectory for family back home, tying the gaps between the current instability of migration to her past self. In an attempt for coherence, interlocutors reference the multiplicity of cultural themes, both affirming and contrasting their ideals around familial obligation ad sacrifice. Ochs and Capps (1996) reference this multiplicity to argue that the different narrative dimensions are a vehicle for imposing order. The understanding of the self must take into account the life's dilemmas and is not made up of linear solutions. "Rather, narratives may illuminate life as we know it by raising challenging questions and exploring them from multiple angles" (Ochs 1996:23). Yasmine organized cultural values to impose ideal femininity and creates a personal narratives. My interlocutors manage expectations and concerns about how they had previously imagined their lives to turn out after migrating. The management of conflicting ideals serves as a coping mechanism to address their new realities amongst instability. In doing so "narrative activity attempts to resolve the discrepancy between what is expected and what has transpired" (Ochs 1996:27). The use of narrative repertoire is a way to amend connections between the past self and the present.

Children and sacrifice

Fatima: "a mother makes many sacrifices that nobody but a mother can understand… Sometimes the strongest women are the ones who love even our greatest flaws, cry behind closed doors and fight battles that nobody knows about"

Just as women strive for a work life balance outside of their businesses, they also encourage that their children to partake in activities outside of the family business. Literature on immigrant family businesses mainly focuses on the role of first generation children in running the enterprise. However, Villares-Varela (2016) argues that migrant parents have increasingly started to distance their kids from helping out. She makes the argument that the family business is only regraded as a back-up option for children and they are freed from responsibility of working in the enterprise so they can focus on school. This is also evident with my interlocutors when asked about the role of children in their businesses. All women expressed that they did not burden their children with the responsibility of running the business however at times their children did participate in helping out if they were able to do so. The women did not wish their children to take on the business one day and in fact hoped that they wouldn't have to work informal jobs. Vidya even joked that when her eldest daughter told her about wanting to study business and management in University she thought that she wanted to start her own business one day.

Vidya: I wanted to ask her if she was ready to be like her mother. I know she doesn't have what it takes, a business is not just like any job you can pick up… I wanted her to be a doctor or something in the medicine profession so she has an easier life than I did.

Since managing one's own business was a result of exclusion from the formal labour market, the women interviewed did not wish their children to take on the business Instead of working with the family, the children are given the time to volunteer and focus on school. Their investment in their children's education at the expense of the business is in hopes of ensuring

upward mobility. Here the ability to put their kids through extracurricular activities is also a form of social capital. The focus on children attaining education affirms the importance of Canadian credentials which were not afforded to their parents. As Samina explains,

There is so much I would have to go through just to get the kind of education my children are getting… they need to understand the value of education. My children knew that going to the university is a must! There are no exceptions because I would jump at the opportunity. For them it's just handed to them.

Samina's inability to attend school and therefore secure a job in her field made her drill the importance of a Canadian education in her children. She justifies the experiences of downward mobility by repeatedly bringing up the fact that at least it allows her children what she could not afford. Projecting her own struggles with attaining Canadian credentials, she wants to ensure that her children do not find themselves underemployed. This is also the reason behind many immigrant parents not requiring that their children spend time helping out family businesses. Rather, they ensure that the children are spending their time focusing on education and activities that open doors to alternative social relations and upward mobility. Investment in their children's futures is secured through the business. All women spoke about the intention to raise children in better environments and possibilities that were not available to their parents growing up. Contrary to profit maximizing business strategy, the women insisted that their children not be involved in the family business. The goal of the business was not to grow at the expense of their children's future, nor is it asked of them to take on the business after their parents. The children are always encouraged to make school their priority. They are encouraged

to be well-educated even when education has not guaranteed social mobility for their parents. The investment in their children's education, particularly one recognized in Canada, is in hopes that they will attain the aspired educational capital which was not available to the parents.

Another imagined positive to investing in education is the belief that those who are socialized in Canadian culture are better equipped to deal with the discrimination against non-Canadian citizens. Fatima admits that

I understand for you kids it's a different struggle… you deal with the world outside more than I do. There are many things that I know about more than my kids but you understand this culture more than me. You are Canadians!

Fatima's statement reflects the understanding that those who grew up being socialized into the culture do not experience alienation in the same way she had. As an expression of internalization, Fatima ensures that her children benefit from that socialization which she understands to be a benefit in the labour market. This is a response to discriminatory limitations and marginalization of ethnic minorities where well-qualified immigrant workers are regularly pushed into underemployment.

Women also talked about setting a head start for their children so they do not have to deal with some of the struggles that their parents had. Creating a safety net for their children is seen as a crucial marker of social mobility by the women. The ability of their children to fall back onto something is often talked about by women who felt that they did not have a safety net.

Samina: Our parents couldn't look out for us in this way so we do it for our children. I never want them to work as hard as me, sacrifice how we did. I will do everything I can to make things easy for them for as long as I can. This is what parents are for.

Serving as a safety net is an indicator of social capital so while all women expected their children to settle after finishing school, they also talked about how they have built systems for their children in the case that they do not. Yasmine also mentioned that growing up she had taken care of her parents and was expected to provide for them from a very young age. In contrast, she does not wish to depend on her children. She feels that she has been taking on the role of a caregiver her whole life without having anyone to care for her. She speaks of this in a bittersweet manner because she does not want to be dependent on her children. Freeing her children of the burden of taking care of their parents is a social privilege. She wants to make space for her children to live their life without having to worry about some of the obstacles she had growing up without a safety net. Women work to ensure that their children are guaranteed upward mobility by discouraging them from taking part in the family business. By providing their children with a safety net, migrant women ensure that their children reap the benefits of the migration experience even if it is at the expense of the business. This shows that starting one's business or working dead-end underpaying jobs is not just a profit maximizing strategy. Instead it is seen as an investment in the future and upwards mobility.

Chapter 3

Repertoire of practices

Upon moving to Canada, SA immigrant women who are unable to find work within their desired fields work to acquire social mobility through various social markers of status and class. In this chapter I discuss the relationships between self-making and work to show that people develop a repertoire of practices to recover, maintain, or claim a social status that repairs or bridges over the gap between a pre-migration self and post-migration self caused by downward mobility. These practices include a focus on "standards" "craft" "ethics" "mental health," "social relations," and the value of social reproduction – being able to produce high quality moral persons (in children) as mothers and teachers. They also include the adoption of new social roles previously unavailable, like that of "helper of new migrants" or "businesswoman" that does similar "repair" work in terms of self-making. There are several motivations and strategies employed by SA immigrant women to cultivate continuity in their process of self-realization after migrating. When asked about what led them to start their own business or work for family, women in this study cited the need for financial security, access to occupational opportunity, social mobility for the family, a sense of empowerment, independence and ideas about Canadian citizenship. The acquired knowledge and competencies of these concepts were main drivers for the entrepreneurial efforts made by women despite the absence of apparent career trajectory or security. I argue that these motivations are all ways to address the discontinuity of the migration experience. Women evoke their past professional lives and transferable skills to address the lack of a career trajectory. In the absence of stability, bridging the gap between the past self and the present reality is vital to the women's understanding of the

self since, "the smaller the gap between the business venture and the professional or life project, the more likely is it that the immigrant is satisfied with being self-employed (Lund Thomsen 2005:196).

Women spoke about their lives back home to showcase what they had given up by migrating to Canada. Fatima expresses her frustration by saying,

How tiring to work so hard only to be recognized for something you spent years accomplishing. Just because of the title of "immigrant". It's as if everything before that doesn't matter…my time, my money, my hard work… I wish I had known it would have been this hard for me when others who are also qualified as me get the opportunity to do what I am fighting for.

Fatima believes that her capabilities are being wasted working multiple underemployed jobs when people she views as less qualified than her are given the opportunities that should be made available for her instead. In the beginning Fatima had felt that she was not doing enough to create the life she had imagined for her family prior to moving to Canada. She talked about feeling helpless and stuck when she first moved. She became responsible for processing not just her feelings of helplessness but also found herself helping her husband who struggled to find suitable work. Continuing her job working as a tutor has allowed Fatima the opportunity to maintain a career trajectory as a professional educator (Lund Thomsen 2005). This is interpreted by Fatima as an effort to gain autonomy and advantageous when prioritizing family and work on her own terms. Fatima's difficulties in becoming a certified teacher were encountered through starting her own business and maintaining a career trajectory was important

to her story as a lifelong educator. Fatima is still able to use her education in a professional manner, which is otherwise denied to her in the Canadian labour market. The self-employed status is a step toward social mobility countering the categorization of South Asian immigrant women as low skilled workers. The changes after migration are met through acquiring social capital and recognition for one's professionalism which is also an invaluable cultural resource back home. By adapting to the labour market, Fatima is creating a self-image of upward mobility, not just for herself but also for her extended family in India. Therefore, self-realization is part of the entrepreneurial strategy that justifies the instability upon migrating. Fatima's teaching has proved to be fulfilling when she develops a career trajectory in a desirable direction toward a professional identity. In doing so, migrant women manage biographical stories, bridging the gap between their old and new lives.

The value of educational capital not being recognized is a form of symbolic violence which leads to immigrants to internalize a sense of inferiority (Lund Thomsen 2005). The non-recognition of their past professional lives violates their sense of who they are and their ability to define themselves in a new country. It also discriminates based on the assumption that professionals from developing countries operate under illegitimate qualifications which should be regarded the same as someone who is a Canadian graduate. Women often blamed organizations back home for duplicating diplomas which is quite common however, as Fatima explains,

This doesn't mean every engineer coming from there is a fraud… If [employers] think that it is mostly about someone Asian…I understand that this kind of things happen back home but we are not all here on fake degrees.

The limitations and regulations of the Canadian labour market are encountered through working for family businesses in order to deal with financial and social stagnation. Working a low paying, dead-end job is not just about material survival, but it also takes into account the reproduction of non-economic factors. The production of continuity is an important aspect of being self-employed when occupational access into the desired labour market is denied due to regulations against foreign credentials. Self-employment results in achievement of recognition, the understanding of the self and a sense of forward progressive movement which is highly valued amidst labour precarity. As members of upper middle class background in their home countries, the women's' education status has been difficult to regain after migrating to Canada. In the hopes of creating status mobility women utilize existing possibilities, resources and community networks. For some women the aspect of self-realization attached to one's business serves as an empowering process which was an imagined benefit of migrating.

Empowering the self and others

Sarbani Maitra (2011) argues that the study of "enterprising selves" has largely focused on immigrant men who resort to ethnic businesses in order to address the lack of career opportunities in host countries. However, the entrepreneurial efforts made by immigrants should also be studied beyond just means through which immigrants address economic precarity.

Additionally, a focus on women workers within ethnic businesses addresses whether women experience the same upward mobilizing forces resulting from cultivating an enterprising effort which are available to their male partners. Do women performing seemingly unpaid work for family and community members benefit from the security of working within co-ethnic communities like immigrant men? I argue that women working in family based businesses utilize a reworked understanding of their identity which stems from their belief in their efficiency and contribution to the business. The interlocutors of this ethnography often cited ways in which they have helped the business grow without any former training in business management. Along with the validation of their male partners and coworkers they validate their ability to be flexible and innovative in ways that have helped their communities.

During my time restocking shelves at the store, Samina tells me about a woman who took the same bus route as her every day so that she could distribute flyers for her business. Samina would watch the woman hand out business flyers to every rider boarding the bus in the hopes that they would turn out to be a potential customer. When the bus reached its final stop the woman would ride the bus going the other direction and do the same. Feeling sorry for her, Samina agreed to hand out a set of flyers at the store. The women speak of connections that helped them get started and talk about the limited resources that were available to them. Therefore, they help out others, especially immigrant women, who may be going through the same ordeal. I argue that this allows women to reconcile their past self with the struggle of starting anew. What is interesting about this is that it turns their migrant experience into a source of value; helping others becomes a way to demonstrate or enact the values and capacities that align with their sense of themselves as particular kinds of persons. By serving as support avenues

for newcomers like themselves, these women enact a sense of belonging. Not only is it a way to fight the state of hopelessness, it also helps women to validate that their work is not completely unappreciated. They take pride in how they have helped other women from the community in starting their own businesses. These women invest their time, labour and acquired knowledge into building those who are newcomers to the country. In doing, so they recall their past selves as a newcomer with limited opportunity and address the hardships they had once faced. Here, I ague that SA immigrant women faced with downward mobility see mobility as a collective struggle which involves family and chosen kin. They take pride in not just mending their own instability but also in the way that they help others. Samina explains,

Every single day there's some poor soul coming around looking for a place to live because they have no relatives here. When somebody comes with a basement listing I keep it to the side. Who knows, it might help someone.

She also mentioned agreeing to hand out business cards for women in the neighborhood who have their own home salons but feel uncomfortable advertising in public. By working as a point of reference for those seeking help, Samina feels that she manages not just the cash register at the Dukaan but she is also serving as a support system for other women in the community. Samina speaks of ethnic networks and how helping other immigrants is a natural part of running a business. The assistance provided to newcomers places Samina in a place of admiration and respect from others. This is another aspect of self-recognition and status acquired through work.

Samina prides herself for knowing all her regulars and even being invited to parties in the neighborhood every now and then. The presence of the local mosque around the corner allows her the opportunity to go for a Friday prayer if she wishes to do so. It is evident that maintaining a social and religious life is important to her as she is constantly working for the store or at home for her husband and children.

Samina: I don't work all day. I also stay social with people. If all you do is work all day you drive yourself crazy… On Fridays I start late so I can go pray first. Sometimes, I leave work for a while, go home and get ready for the mosque… normally I don't miss any Friday payers and it makes me feel happy that I can pray. Before I came to Canada I would hear that people weren't allowed to pray at work or they would have to hide and go to the car to pray. But I'm lucky that I don't have to worry about that. Now even my employees who aren't Muslim ask me if I don't go to pray on Fridays.

The ability to maintain a social life and the freedom of practicing her religion without compromising work is understood to be a positive outcome of Samina's job. This is a different way to value "work" in that it enables one to be a moral person. Participating in social gatherings at the mosque also provides a different environment to socialize with people who share similar interests and class positions that might facilitate future social relations and routes to upward social mobility. The ability to maintain a social life outside of one's work is granted as a social capital available to an individual of a certain status. Samina resents the label of a *Dukaan Wali,* referring to a lower classed woman who is forced to work in low paying jobs. Rather than letting it consume her understanding of the self, Samina highlights her interests outside of work such as

neighborhood *Dawaats* (Dinners) and mosque gatherings where she is more likely to be surrounded by women of her own social standing.. Her understanding of the self lies in her classed upbringing as a respectable principal back in Pakistan and by including herself in "appropriate" social circles, she preserves that status. She claims that she has even met some of her old students and colleagues who show her the same level of respect they had shown years ago. It is a way for her to relate and affirm others in the community who share her same struggle of de-professionalization and underemployment. These networks are essential in not only recalling the past self but for also validating the current self. By surrounding oneself with people who are perceived to share the same classed standing, immigrant women working in domestic spheres cushion the realities of downward mobility.

The women in my study emphasize the importance of leisurely activities that serve as class markers. Active participation in maintaining an entrepreneurial self and the ability to give time to leisure is a way for women to tackle the realities of downward mobility though maintaining balance. Vidya mentions that she likes watching dramas and that it helps her stay connected to fashion back home. As she is unable to visit home as often as she would like she studies trends in popular movies and dramas for inspiration. She mentions that given time she takes on her own designing projects that specifically interest her. While that is rare she sees it as a way to exercise her creativity and independence over expression which is often not afforded when working on garments specified by her clients. The opportunity to study trends and create original pieces is integral to refining her craft.

Work and Mental Health

Women justified multitasking by expressing that they preferred to be working rather than not doing anything with their free time. Yasmine explained that working as a teacher means continuous learning. It kept her mind and body "active" as she explained

What would I even do all day? If you want to keep your mind active and healthy you should always be doing something, doesn't matter how big or small…doing something that will always keep your mind running.

In a study on the mental health of South Asian women Boeri (2016) argues that the push against idleness is how Indian women maintain cultural domesticity and it is a way through which they construct the ideal middle class Indian woman. The maintenance of domesticity and the image of the ideal classed woman serve as a form of social capital especially empowering for women facing downward mobility (Boeri 2016). The notion of respectability is seen in women's need to be empowered businesswomen who are not sitting idle at home. Instead, they contribute to the household while maintaining their primary caregiving role which speaks to their ability of being balanced mothers and wives. They also leverage this to gain independence in some aspects of the household while adhering to cultural notions of domesticity.

Villares-Varela (2016) argues that participation in class-restoring activities help immigrant women to center their own interests and motivations behind family businesses and gives a sense of balance. While some women emphasized the role of sacrifice in a mother's life, other women did not wish to align themselves with the image of an all-sacrificing woman. They cited the importance of balance which they believed to be vital for one's mental wellbeing. By

centering their mental health first, they claimed to be better wives and mothers to their family. While issues of mental health are not commonly addressed in South Asian communities, mental wellbeing has started to become a more common issue due to dialog generated in popular ethnic media. The reoccurring issue of gender violence in South Asian communities has brought mental health to the forefront and women are encouraged to take charge of their own wellbeing. The individual's classed background also has an impact on access and the ability to prioritize their mental health. Those belonging to a lower class are often expected to work for mere survival however the women in my study do not wish to be seen as overworked and beaten down since it goes against their idea of an empowered woman. Therefore an emphasis on work-life balance is a discursive strategy to assert class distinction when possession of resources and professional status is not available. Fatima mentioned the importance of wellbeing as primary caretakers.

How can I care for the family if I'm not okay? There is a lot of tension (stress) that goes into this life. It's not easy so for your whole life you carry that stress with you. When we moved here we didn't know anything, I didn't even know how I was going to make any money or if we would survive. God willing it worked out for us because my husband and I are hardworking people but I see too many people who are struggling even after years of settling here.

The work life balance narrative is often used to show that they do not wish to mindlessly work and that they have curated a life with interests and hobbies outside of work. These women do not wish to be seen as those who are endlessly working for mere survival and it can be argued that their work-life balance serves as social capital when faced with downward mobility.

Work Ethic

When asked if Samina will try to get back into teaching she explained that she does not feel the need to do so since her children have settled down. Now Samina is ready to reap the benefits of a "settled life". Samina ensures me that she does not depend on her job at the Dukaan to sustain her family. Instead, she works because she has "fallen into a routine". Samina's case is a good example of how the motivation behind working in underpaid jobs is often a narrative that extends beyond just sacrifices for the children. I argue that women like Samina have cultivated the space to be treated in the same manner that they were in their past professional lives through showcasing the value of work ethics and discipline. When working at the Dukaan, Samina is praised for her attention to detail. Working as a supervisor, Samina holds more authority than the owner Bilal who often comes to her for advice on certain issues. Observing Samina's work at the store I could see her attention to detail and insistence on keep a well-functioning staff. She took pride in the respect she earned by being a worker who took her job more seriously than others. Samina was constantly trying to maintain her workspace, regularly cleaning and organizing the little space behind her cash register. She often showed her frustration at the other workers who did not put the same amount of effort into cleaning or did not perform up to her standards. She often complained about the clutter which is hard to maintain in a small store where produce takes up every corner. Since the staff under her was made up of three other women, she expected the workspace to function orderly.

Samina: How does this place look like that when there are 4 women working here? We shouldn't have a place this dirty.

The two men working inventory in the back were not included in maintenance of the store. Responsible for hiring workers, Samina often chose those from her personal connections and preferred women over men since she claimed that women were easier to train. However, the job of loading inventory and keeping counts were reserved for men. Working at the register meant that Samina was the first face that customers would see entering the store so she stayed consistent with her quality of customer service. She claimed to know many regulars on a personal basis and had working relationships with other stores and workers in the neighborhood plaza.

When asked how she stayed motivated to work often 49 hours a week, she replied that if she did not do it then the owner had nobody to depend on. She also talked about the importance of respect and admiration from her employees. Samina holds herself accountable for the quality of work stating,

At the end, I have to answer to myself too. Did I do a good job? Let me ask you this, just because others around you don't have respect for work doesn't mean you can be like them too.

By setting herself apart from those who do not share her commitment to work she validates the importance of her job. She feels that while others can put off the work, her doing so would affect her own standards and harm the business. Since respect and authority were central to her role as a principal samina seeks out the same from her job at the store. Samina finds her commitment to the store as fulfilling and keeps herself accountable for the quality of her work which is something she has carried from her time as a principal. She claims that she holds the

same level of work professionalism as she had in her past, bridging the gap between how she carried herself in both roles. Coming from an upper-class military family, Samina also claims that she grew up with everything handed to her and her "*khuari*" (struggle) is her time to show that she is not lazy or does not understand the value of work. Although working at the store is considered beneath her according to her family back home, it is also a testament to her discipline and professionalism.

These women take pride in their ability to be resourceful and carry their skills to different types of jobs and their ability to excel in them. Upon arriving to Canada, immigrant women turn to institutional sources and employment agencies to seek work where they are tasked with the job of learning how to become Canadian workers. The process of job training is often training in how to assimilate oneself into the Canadian society (Ameeriar 2017). Through this training, flexibility and cultivating transferable skill is highly valued. Referencing their role in self owned and family businesses, women point to how they already acquire those skills but are not valued and discredited only because SA women are not imagined as productive members of the society. Women speak about their own ability to create opportunity through forms of work, no matter how small and informal.

In the case of migrant entrepreneurs, the self is not entirely 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" (Maitra 2011: 9). The empowered

businesswoman is also human capital in a new country. Women profit from identifying as the enterprising self when they pose their businesses as ways that they are a productive member of the host country. Ong (2003) explains that in countries where "human capital, self-discipline and consumer powers are associated with whiteness these become important attributes for judging others, especially when it comes to non-white immigrants" (739). Citing egocentric hegemony Ong (1996) argues that immigrants are taught that techniques like self-discipline and entrepreneurship define success in the West. Therefore, women seek self-aspiration and self-fulfillment through their business and emphasize self-development as success. In line with the neoliberal enterprising self, Maitra (2011) argues that, "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" (20). The women I spoke to take pride in not needing any help from the state which is rooted in the classed notion that they never became a burden on Canadians like other immigrant who would be less desired for needing government handouts. They insist that their resourcefulness and the ability to make something out of nothing make them more deserving of the title of being a Canadian. Despite coming from upper and middle class background, all women upheld the narrative of "starting from nothing". Their understanding of what success means goes hand in hand with deserving citizenship and who is considered fit to be part of the Canadian society. Therefore self-development and independence are tools used to compete in a neoliberal free market and to fit into the Canadian society.

Upon arriving to Canada, SA immigrant women are faced with the realities of underemployment as a result of the limitations and regulations placed on foreign education. Unable to acquire jobs in their fields and with limited resources to upgrade their education

women get involved in family businesses. In this chapter I argued that women do not simply give up their past self. They continue using their former education and resourcefulness to produce a career trajectory. This may take form in a former teacher who tutors to maintain her status as an educator. It can also be studied in the case of Samina whose dedication to professionalism at the store is a product of her days as a respected Principal in Pakistan. By evoking her past role, women like Samina cultivate the ideal citizen competing in the neoliberal free market. Their businesses serve as tools to cultivate self- development and self-realization which are valuable when faced with economic precarity.

Conclusion

The main contribution of this ethnography is to recognize in anthropological terms the lives and experiences of South Asian immigrant women in Canada faced with the loss of social and material benefits. The experience of immigrant women is often a story of downward mobility who are faced with deprofessionalization when faced with labour policies that invalidate their past credentials. Channeled into low-skilled "survival jobs", women find themselves having to funneled into service based jobs that they are overqualified for. While the informalization of migrant labour can be seen as part of the larger story of precariatization in advanced capitalist countries like Canada, I argue that it does not capture how workers themselves make sense of and value their labour. Thereofre, the study of migrant workers must centre the narrative of women experiencing downward mobility.

I argued that the instabilities of downward mobility have to be analyzed as part of the broader life projects of immigrant labourers. Evaluating the relationship between labour and the self shows how women maintain, repair and reprodcue selfhood which is cruicial to how they relate to their work I also argue for a shift from individualized labour relations focused on material workplace conditions and remuneration to a view that extends outside of the workplace.

Taking this approach, I argue that one cannot assess workers solely as individuals. Rather, they see themselves as part of larger collective units made up of kin groups. Their roles and obligations as mothers and wives are embedded into the relation they have with their work therefore, work that appears low-skill, precarious, or unstable can nevertheless provide the conditions for women to fulfill those valued social roles. As a result, I reevaluate what "mobility" means, and what the temporality of mobility means, as it goes from being seen as an

individual movement within a single life-course to being part of a collective movement measured across generations.

Secondly, the relationships between self-making and work also shows that people develop a repertoire of practices to recover, maintain or bridge the gap between a pre-migration self and post-migration self. These practices include a focus on "standards" "craft" "ethics" "mental health," "social relations," and the value of social reproduction such as being able to produce high quality moral persons (in children) as mothers and teachers. They also include the adoption of new social roles previously unavailable, like that of "helper of new migrants" or "businesswoman" that does similar "repair" work in terms of self-making. My research evaluated how SA immigrant women invoke repertoire of practices to make sense of their new marginal status. I considered the meaning making process invoked through their labour and discuss the how the precarious nature of the work opened avenues for women to relate with the self. I showcased that narrative serves as an adaptive strategy where the stories about the self-help immigrants make sense of instability.

Future Research

Upon analyzing the participant profiles and career trajectories of the women involved in the study, further research would prove useful to gain a more comprehensive understanding into education being a common field of labour open to women, both in South Asia and in Canada. Certainly, schools serving as sites for social reproduction of gender would be insightful in the different forms of narrative repertoire used by migrant women. Another fruitful avenue to study

narrative would be through analyzing the job search process that migrant women take part in. While research on this topic exists, its main focus has been to study how the immigrant is produced as the ideal worker through the job search process (Allan 2014). I believe it is increasingly relevant to study how these workers would speak of themselves in cover letters and, job applications and even advertise their business as a reflection of the values that they speak on. As a result, I suggest a line of inquiry related to research at the intersection of work, migration and subjectification.

The experiences, values and conversations of the South Asian women that I encountered demonstrate resilience, courage and hope. As a second generation immigrant myself, I recognize my own mother and aunts in these stories. I am honored to have shared their experiences and hope that I have done justice to all those who placed their trust in me with their recollections.

References

Allan, Kori

2014 *Learning how to Skill the Self: Citizenship and Immigrant Integration in Toronto, Canada*. Ph.D. Dissertation. Department of Anthropology. University of Toronto.

Ameeriar, Lalaie

2017 *Downwardly Global: Women, Work, and Citizenship in the Pakistani Diaspora*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Bernard, Russell H

2006 "Interviewing: Structured and Semi-structured". In *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and quantitative Approaches (fourth edition).* Pp.210-50 Oxford: AltaMira Press.

Briggs, Charles

1983 Questions for the Ethnographer: A Critical examination of the role of the interview in fieldwork. *Semiotica* 46 (2-4):233-261.

Boeri, Natascia

2016 *Boundaries of Home and Work: Social Reproduction and Home-Based Workers in Ahmedabad, India.* Ph.D. Dissertation. Department of Sociology of University of New York.

Chaudhuri, Soma and Morash, Merry

2014. Marriage Migration, Patriarchal Bargains, and Wife Abuse: A Study of South Asian Women. *SAGE* 20(2):141–16.

Cranford, Cynthia , Vosko, Leah and Zukewich, Nancy

2003 Precarious employment in the Canadian labour market: A statistical portrait. *Just Labour* 3(6): 6–22.

Freeman, Carla

2001 Is Local: Global as Feminine: Masculine? Rethinking the Gender of Globalization. *Signs* 26 (4): 1007–37.

Gerber, David

2016 Moving Backward and Moving on: Nostalgia, Significant others, and Social Reintegration in nineteenth century British Immigrant personal correspondence. *The History of The Family* 21(3): 291-314.

George, Purnima and Rashidi, Mariam.

2014 Domestic Violence in South Asian Communities in the GTA: Critical Perspectives of Community Activists and Service Providers. *The Journal of Critical Anti-Oppressive Social Inquiry* 1: 67-81.

Goldring, Luin and Landolt, Patricia

2011 Caught in the Work–Citizenship Matrix: the Lasting Effects of Precarious Legal Status on Work for Toronto Immigrants. *Globalizations* 8(3):325-41.

ILO

2002. *Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture*. Geneva: International Labour Organization.

Kandiyoti, Deniz

1988 Bargaining with Patriarchy. *Gender and Society* 2(3):274–90.

Kockelman, Paul

2006 Agent, person, subject, self" *Semiotica* 162: 1-18.

Lund Thomsen, Trine

2005 *Immigrant Entrepreneurship as Gendered Social Positions: A study on motivations and strategies in a biographical perspective*. Ph.D. Dissertation. AMID, Academy of Migration Studies in Denmark. Aalborg University.

Maitra, S

2011 *Redefining "Enterprising Selves": Exploring the "Negotiation" of South Asian Immigrant Women Working as Home-based Enclave Entrepreneurs*. Ph.D. Dissertation. Department of Adult Education and Counselling Psychology. University of Toronto.

Makinen, Katariina

2016 Valuable selves: Potentiality and temporality in work-related coaching. *European Journal Of Cultural Studies* 19(1): 69-84.

Massey, Doreen

1994 *Space, Place, and Gender*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota.

Moser, Carolyn.
1978 Informal Sector or Petty Commodity Production: Dualism or Dependence in Urban Development. *World Development,* 6(9/10):1041–64.

Narotzky, Susana and Niko Besnier

2014 Crisis, Value, Hope: Rethinking the Economy. *Current Anthropology* 55. Supplement 9.

Neilson, Brett and Ned Rossiter
2008 Precarity as a Political Concept, or, Fordism as Exception. *Theory, Culture, and Society* 27(7-8): 51-72.

Ochs, E.A., & Capps, LA
1996 Narrating the Self. *Annual Review Of Anthropology* 25: 19-43.

Ong, Aihwa
1991The Gender and Labour Politics of Postmodernity. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 20:279–309.

Ong, Aihwa
1996 Cultural citizenship as subject-making: Immigrants negotiate racial and cultural boundaries in the United States. *Current Anthropology* 37(5):737-762.

Ong, Aihwa
2003 *Buddha is hiding: Refugees, citizenship, the new America*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press.

Oza, Rupal
2006 *The Making of Neoliberal India: Nationalism, Gender, and the Paradoxes of Globalization*. New York: Routledge.

Ralston, Helen
1999 Canadian Immigration Policy in the Twentieth Century: Its Impact on South Asian Women". *Canadian Woman Studies* 19(3): 33-37.

Ram, M., Abbas, T., Sanghera, B., Barlow, G., & Jones, T
2001Making the link: Households and small business activity in a multi-ethnic context. *Community, Work & Family 4*(3): 327-348.

Ritivoi, Andreea

2002 *Yesterday's Self. Nostalgia and the Immigrant Identity*. Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publisher.

Spyridakis, Manos

2013 *The Liminal Worker. An Ethnography of Work, Unemployment and Precariousness in Contemporary Greece*. Routledge.

Standing, Guy

2011 *The Precariat*. London: Bloomsbury Academic

Villares-Varela, María
2016 Not helping out: Classed strategies of the non- contribution of children in immigrant family businesses. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40 (10): 1758-1775.

Vosko, Leah F
2011 *Managing the Margins: Gender, Citizenship and the International Regulation of Precarious Employment*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Appendix A

LETTER OF INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

DATE: _____

A STUDY OF LABOUR AMONG THE IMMIGRANT SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN OF GTA

Principal Investigator:
Shahtaj Saleem
Department of Anthropology
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
(647) 409-1761
E-mail: salees8@mcmaster.ca

Purpose of the Study: You are invited to take part in this study of labour among the immigrant South Asian women of the GTA. I want to learn about what kinds of businesses are being run by women in the community and how they balance work with their family life. I hope to study why women are attracted to working in family run or independent businesses as well as the advantages this has for their family's wellbeing. I am also hoping to learn more about challenges faced by immigrant women who have former professional degrees/jobs but find themselves un/der-employed since moving to Canada.

What will happen during the study?
I will be conducting one-on-one interviews with you to discuss your business or your involvement in a family business. You will be asked about the kinds of services you provide as well as your relationships with your clients. You will be asked about your experience as an immigrant woman working in Canada and the challenges you have faced when looking for jobs. I will also ask you for some demographic or background information like your age and education. You will be asked to talk about how you balance family life with work. A Part of this research is to also observe what your days look like and to learn about the tasks you are responsible for in order to run a business. I would like to come to your workplace and observe what a typical day there looks like for you. With your permission, I will be tape recording and taking handwritten notes of my observations and during the interviews but you are free to stop anytime if you do not wish to continue. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to participate even if you have previously agreed on doing so. The interviews can be held at your home or we can arrange for another convenient location. There is no set time for how long the interviews are meant to be so you can take as long as you wish to discuss your answers.

Are there any risks to doing this study?
The risks involved in participating in this study are minimal. You may feel uncomfortable with sharing personal information about your experiences. You do not need to answer questions that you do not want to answer or that make you feel uncomfortable. All the information gathered will be kept anonymous and not shared without your consent. You should take into account the Possibility that you may be identified though the stories you tell. You may find it stressful to give a "right" answer to the questions asked but there are no right or wrong answers. The purpose of the research is to learn more about your experiences as an immigrant woman in Canada. I describe below the steps I am taking to protect your privacy.

Potential Benefits
The research will not benefit you directly but I hope that what is learned as a result of this study will help us to better understand the challenges faced by South Asian women looking for work after coming to Canada. I also hope to represent South Asian women as empowered businesswomen with a variety of skills and assets.

Confidentiality
You are participating in this study confidentially. I will not use any information that would allow you to be identified unless you say otherwise. You will be assigned Pseudonyms (false names) and no one but the researcher will know whether you were in the study unless you choose to tell them. If you are not comfortable with the researcher making observations at your workplace and/ or home, we will simply conduct the interview. The information you provide will be kept in a locked desk where only I will have access to it. Information kept on a computer will be encrypted for securing your privacy. Once the study is complete, an archive of the data may be maintained for future research. This is a common practice of anthropologists because such data forms an important social, cultural, and historical context for future research. It is also a way of acknowledging and honoring the fact that you are our teachers, and that you play an indispensable role in our scholarship. Upon the completion of the study, identifiable data containing names, pseudonym charts and location of work will be destroyed to protect your privacy.

What if I change my mind about being in the study? Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is your choice to be part of the study or not. If you decide to be part of the study, you can stop (withdraw), from the interview for whatever reason, even after signing the consent form or part-way through the study or up until August 31, 2019 when I expect to be submitting my thesis. If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. In cases of withdrawal, any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. If you do not want to answer some of the questions you do not have to, but you can still be in the study.

How do I find out what was learned in this study?
I expect to have this study completed by approximately August 31 2019. If you would like a brief summary of the results, please let me know how you would like it sent to you.

Questions about the Study: If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact me at: *salees8@mcmaster.ca*

This project is being supervised by Faculty Supervisor Dr. Andrew Gilbert at McMaster University.
If you have any concerns or questions as a participant or about the study, please contact Dr. Gilbert at (905)525-9140, ext. 22660 or email gilbera@mcmaster.ca

This study has been reviewed by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:
McMaster Research Ethics Secretariat
Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142
C/o Research Office for Administrative Development and Support
E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

CONSENT

□ I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Shahtaj Saleem of McMaster University.
□ I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested.
□ I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at anytime before August 31, 2019.
□ I understand that the information I provide will be de-identified through pseudonyms. Upon the completion of the study, identifiable data containing names, pseudonym charts and location of work will be destroyed to protect my privacy.
□ I have been given a copy of this form.
□ I agree to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____
Name of Participant (Printed) _____

1. I agree that the interviews can be audio recorded.
[ ] Yes
[ ] No
2. I understand that the researcher will be observing me at my workplace and taking notes of my daily interactions.
[ ] Yes
[ ] No
3. I agree to have my pseudonymous data reused in future related projects.
[ ] yes
[ ] no
4. I acknowledge that the data will be de-identified with Pseudonyms however there is still a Possibility that I can be identified through the stories I tell.
5. [ ] Yes, I would like to receive a summary of the study's results.

Please send them to me at this email address _____
Or to this mailing address: _____
_____
_____

[ ] No, I do not want to receive a summary of the study's results.

Appendix B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Information about these interview questions: This gives you an idea what I would like to learn about the labour South Asian women perform throughout the GTA. Interviews will be one-to-one and will be open-ended (not just "yes or no" answers). The exact wording may change a little. Sometimes I will use other short questions to make sure I understand what you told me or if I need more information when we are talking such as: "*So, you are saying that …?*), to get more information ("*Please tell me more?"),* or to learn what you think or feel about something ("*Why do you think that is…?").*

1) Information about you: Your age now? Age of your children? Your education? Your professional background?
2) When did you move to Canada? What were the circumstances/ motivations behind your decision to move?
3) Tell me about your experiences around employment when you first came to Canada? What kinds of jobs did you work or did you work at all? How does running a business differ from your previous professional experience both in Canada and back home?
4) What led you to starting your own business/working in a family business? What are some advantages of a business for you and your family? What are some challenges you and your family have faced when it comes to maintaining a business?
5) What are your duties to this business or what is your role in ensuring that the enterprise runs smoothly? What would you say you contribute to the business?
6) What are your relationships like with the clientele?
7) How do you divide household responsibilities i.e. which members of the family are responsible for which tasks? Who mediates these responsibilities?
8) Would you want your children or grandchildren to take over the business one day? Why or why not?
9) In the case of a family owned business would you say that you are equally involved in its maintenance or are some family members expected to spend more time/energy/resources than others?
10) How has your family dynamic changed or been modified since starting the business? Did you find these changes positive or negative for your family?
11) Is there something important we forgot? Is there anything else you think I need to know about?

END