Approval

Name: Rishma Johal
Degree: Master of Arts
Title of Thesis: Moving Beyond the Citizen’s Shadow: South Asian Canadian Women’s Agency
Examiner Committee: Chair: Lara Campbell, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

Habiba Zaman, Ph.D.
Senior Supervisor
Professor

Willeen Keough, Ph.D.
Supervisor
Associate Professor

Parin Dossa, Ph.D.
External Examiner
Professor
Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Date Defended: June 27, 2014
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Abstract

Citizenship is more than a set of legal rights and includes social and cultural components that are actively negotiated; yet such negotiations often take place within a range of limited options. Without denying the individuality of immigrant experiences, it is important to observe the patterns that have emerged in South Asian women’s encounters with Canadian citizenship and immigration policies. Most South Asian women migrated to Canada as dependents and faced similar forms of subordination after moving to Canada. Mainstream society marginalized South Asians for their skin colour and ‘foreign’ accents, superficial indicators that were undergirded by a profound perception of racial difference. This study will explore how the meaning of citizenship has changed for South Asian Canadian women by focusing on two periods: 1919-1949 and 1967-1997. This thesis will argue that various legal, social, and cultural factors have constrained South Asian Canadian women’s citizenship experience but they have utilized their agency and autonomy to overcome the secondary status that these barriers have imposed on them.

Keywords: agency; autonomy; citizenship; gender; immigration; race; South Asian;
Dedication

For my mother and grandmother, who always taught me to value education. They encouraged me to immerse myself in my studies and learn as much as possible because there are no boundaries to obtaining knowledge. I lived by their examples and watched both of these women counteract very different barriers in their respective lives. Their stories of struggle and day-to-day negotiations were inspirational; they gave me a sense of strength and self-confidence that is indescribable. Thank you for your encouragement, Mummiji and Naniji.
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1. Introduction

From woman, man is born; within woman, man is conceived; to woman he is engaged and married. Woman becomes his friend; through woman, the future generations come. When his woman dies, he seeks another woman; to woman he is bound. So why call her bad? From her, kings are born. From woman, woman is born; without woman, there would be no one at all (Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji, Raag Aasaa Mehal 1).

Recent historians have sought to uncover the stories of women through memoirs, novels, biographies, letters, and oral history, but before the feminist movement emerged, women were largely absent from historical accounts. Guru Nanak’s words from the 16th century celebrated the significance of women’s domestic role and highlighted men’s dependence on them, even though his banī was unable to advance women’s position to the standards later set by renowned western feminists such as Beauvoir (1949), Friedan (1963), and Firestone (1970). Beauvoir and Firestone scrutinized women’s reproductive role, while Friedan’s analysis provoked criticism of women who chose to become homemakers.² These feminists believed that as housewives and mothers, women could not achieve professional or educational success, which made them financially dependent on men. However, in the past, these roles were vital for the survival and sustenance of many cultural groups such as South Asian Canadians. For example, T. D. Gupta states, “The [first South Asian Canadian] men realized that without women and children, their community would remain temporary, lacking in stability and stripped of political and social rights in Canada” (1994, p. 62). Similarly, in India, there had been a level of equality between men and women before the British introduced private property—a colonial intervention that forced women to become financially dependent on men (Rai S. M., 2008). Thus, many western feminists that initiated the second-wave of feminism overlooked the agency that women had expressed and the advantages that their position may have given them (Gupta T. D., 1994).³ Historically, various groups within India and Canada considered motherhood (in wedlock) a position of great honour, although this depends on the specific period and context (Chattopadhyaya, 2012;
Errington, 1993; Mohanty, 1984; Naidoo, 1987). Consequently, many women who felt excluded or undermined by early western feminist discourses began to voice their concerns and extended feminism’s pertinence to marginalized women throughout various parts of the world during the second and third ‘waves’ of the feminist movement. Nevertheless, it is imperative to note that solely focusing on motherhood and analyzing gender relations within a heteronormative framework has held negative implications for women who may not identify with these ‘categories’ as well.

1.1. South Asia: The Land of Amulets, Crosses, Veils, and More

South Asia is a vast region occupied by people who believe in a variety of religions, traditions, and customs, so it is difficult to outline a collective history or herstory for these peoples. ‘South Asia’ denotes the area that encompasses Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka (Jacobsen & Kumar, 2004). In addition, the diversity of individuals originating from this region has increased because they have migrated to other areas around the globe (Jacobsen & Kumar, 2004; Koshy, 2008). In some situations, South Asians were forcefully expelled from their country of origin. For example, the French sent Indians from Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh (India) as slaves to Mauritius in the 1790s (Carter, 2008). In other cases, they migrated by choice, such as the Punjabis that moved to Canada in the early 1900s, although poor economic circumstances may have influenced their decision to move (Basran & Bolaria, 2003; Buchignani, Indra, & Srivastava, 1985; Sharma, 1997). The South Asian diaspora today is composed of those living in Australia, Britain, Canada, East/South Africa, Fiji, Guyana, Mauritius, Trinidad, United States, and other nations where a significant group of South Asians or those of South Asian descent reside (Koshy, 2008). South Asians practise Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, and many other faiths; they also adhere to various sects of these religions. Overall, diasporic movements and the disparities among different areas of this region demonstrate that South Asia is more than a land of amulets, crosses, and veils.

In fact, the heterogeneity of this group suggests that it is impossible to examine the migration experience of South Asians to Canada. This is a popular term that is
utilized by scholars and non-academics alike, but is it an appropriate form of categorization? This is a tough question to answer. One, South Asians share a common history and despite differences they have major cultural similarities (Buchignani, 1987; Ghosh, 1994). Gender relations among South Asians parallel one another as they all follow patterns of patrilineal descent and patrilocal residence, so the women do not obtain any direct inheritance, and after marriage, they move to their husband’s house (Buchignani, 1987; Naidoo, 1987). This region is composed of the Indian subcontinent, and countries such as Pakistan and Bangladesh were a part of India at one time (Ayres, 2009; Naidoo, 1987). Historically, the majority of the groups within this region spoke Sanskrit and it was considered a prestigious language among them (Hock & Pandharipande, 1978). The ancient trade route renowned as the Silk Road extended across this region as well, linking it to Europe, Japan, China, and the Iranian plateau (Grotenhuis, 2006). Hence, many customs such as the application of Mehndi (Henna) to the bride in wedding ceremonies are evident throughout South Asia and parts of the Middle East (Arthur, 2000). Some scholars associate a strong preference for sons among this group as well; however, other scholars note that this form of inequality exists worldwide, although it may be less evident (Patel, 2007; Sen, 2003). More recently, Bollywood’s popularity has protracted to South Asian nations outside of India and parts of the Middle East, Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia. Today, South Asia is composed of ‘progressive’ areas where women have paid jobs and they are trying to improve their position like ‘western’ women and conservative regions where women remain confined within the home (class may play an imperative role among these divisions). This is a part of the incongruent development that nations within South Asia are currently undergoing with pockets of developed areas coexisting with underdeveloped or developing regions. These socio-cultural similarities suggest that ‘South Asia’ is a useful term to denote this broader region.

Furthermore, the use of the term, ‘South Asian’, is important for those living in North America because it denotes a coalition politics (Grewal, 1999). It is a title frequently utilized by South Asian groups to identify themselves and their organizations (Grewal, 1999). For example, Agnew states, “The experiences of some South Asians in Canada are presented as if all shared them. The group has sometimes used such perceptions of unity to advocate and lobby politicians and bureaucrats on their own
behalf for additional social services” (2003, p. 13). More importantly, George and Ramkissoon state, “On the surface, it seems practically impossible to find any shared experiences among women from these various countries; however, colonialism and their commonalties as women coming from the same region in Asia far outweigh their differences” (1998, p. 104). The usage of the term, ‘South Asia’, first emerged about 60 years ago when American scholars in area studies began utilizing it to speak of the Indian subcontinent and acknowledge their political awareness of other nations, besides India, that comprise this area (Dirks, 2004). While some individuals may contest the usage of this term, communities within the South Asian diaspora have embraced it for their own political purposes. Therefore, South Asian is a crucial term that builds a collective understanding of the way that South Asian women have sought to counteract challenges of gender and race in Canada.

South Asian women’s experiences arguably bear similarities because Canadian citizenship and immigration policies have affected them analogously. Most of these women arrived as dependents of male household heads, and Anglo-Canadians perceived these women as ‘others’. Moreover, these women’s citizenship status has relied on their husbands’ formal status within Canada, which was also true for some women of dominant ‘white’ Canadian groups at the beginning of the century (Agnew, 2003; Ghosh, 1994; Gupta T. D., 1994). Canadian society marginalized South Asian immigrants, utilizing superficial indicators such as skin colour and ‘foreign’ accents to reinforce a profound perception of racial difference. The initial South Asian population that entered Canada was primarily composed of Sikhs but they were mistaken as Hindus and referred to as such in official documents (Johnston, 2011; Sharma, 1997). South Asians have faced comparable forms of misunderstandings and they have been subjected to derogatory stereotypes (Dua, 2000; Koshy, 2008). Furthermore, Canadian citizenship and immigration policies have created many discrepancies, opening doors to certain groups of South Asian immigrants, while restricting the entry of others (Gogia & Slade, 2011; Kelley & Trebilcock, 2010; Stasiulus & Bakan, 2003). For example, India has generally been a preferred source country for immigrants in comparison to other South Asian countries, which becomes evident through an analysis of the records in Employment and Immigration Canada (see Chapter 4). On the other hand, citizenship is more than a set of legal rights and includes social and cultural components that are
actively negotiated. This study will explore how the meaning of citizenship has changed for South Asian women, and how they have been part of this process by focusing on two particular periods: 1919-1949 and 1967-1997. In 1919, the Canadian government lifted the ban against the migration of the wives and children of South Asian men living in Canada. Following this modification, a number of South Asian women migrated to Canada but this migration pattern ended quickly because there were few South Asian men still residing in Canada. In addition, the implementation of new discriminatory immigration laws halted the mass immigration of South Asians from 1949 to 1967. Finally, in 1967 the federal government established the Points System and an influx of skilled immigrants arrived from South Asia. These policies remained consistent until 1997, when the system was again modified and, according to Zaman, “Since the publication of the 1997 report, Not Just Numbers, the government has charted new directions for immigration policy that allow the entry of immigrants who will contribute to Canada's economic prosperity” (2010, p. 3). Given this shift, I have chosen to conclude my study in 1997. This thesis will provide a comparative analysis of the experiences of women who arrived in the earlier part of the century and the period between 1967 and 1997. In particular, it will argue that although various legal, social, and cultural factors constrained South Asian Canadian women’s citizenship experience, they utilized their agency and autonomy to overcome the secondary status that these barriers imposed on them.

It has been more than a hundred years since the first South Asian women came to Canada but few historical accounts acknowledge their significance. The federal and provincial governments refused to allow South Asian women to enter British Columbia, yet some men brought their wives, demonstrating not only defiance but also a strong desire to have their wives join them for companionship and to solidify their community. Modern resources that commemorate South Asian Canadian history note the existence of these early exceptions, while failing to express how these women negotiated their position within a country that had rejected them. There is little information on women that came before 1919 but reading male-centered records across the grain for as well as studying oral history accounts from the women themselves can help us construct a narrative of those who arrived between 1919 and 1949. Many South Asian Canadian historians continue to value men’s story over women’s (intentionally or unintentionally)
by focusing on official, political, economic, and legal issues within history that men dominated at this time. Agnew states, “The silence [regarding South Asian women] is significant, however, for it reveals the biases of male historians. These biases focused on the right to immigrate and the right to employment as the most critical issues for immigrants and gave little attention to women’s experience of migration…” (2003, p. 9). This thesis highlights South Asian Canadian women’s contribution towards establishing a society that has become home to one of the largest sectors of the South Asian diaspora today. Agnew also explains that there is a gap in knowledge regarding the differences in experience between second-generation South Asian Canadians and previous generations, so this study is imperative (2003). Only two sources provide significant knowledge about these women, Manhas’ Zhindagee: Selected Stories of our First Daughters, which provides a collection of women’s stories and Johnston’s Jewels of the Qila, for which most of the information was derived from the accounts of two women, Sarjit and Jackie—though the focus of this book was largely on men. Moreover, few South Asian women have been involved in the feminist movement, partially because its tenets have undervalued their role as homemakers and overlooked their concerns (Bannerji, 1993). Therefore, these women have remained hidden in the shadows of their husbands for too long and it is time to accentuate the contributions that they have made as Canadian citizens.

1.2. Methodology

Oral history and standpoint feminism both place substantial value on the individual’s story. Standpoint feminism was first proposed as a significant theoretical perspective by Hartsock in 1983, during the second wave of the feminist movement. She stated, “As an engaged vision, the understanding of the oppressed, the adoption of a standpoint exposes the real relations among human beings as inhuman, points beyond the present, and carries a historically liberatory role” (p. 232). Her insights were derived from Marxism. Hartstock argued that by utilizing women’s marginal position based on the sexual division of labour, an understanding could be developed at the epistemological level about patriarchy’s ascendency (1983). Hence, this movement’s focus on ‘the personal as political,’ became a point of emergence for other forms of feminism such as anti-racist feminism. T. D. Gupta states, “It is useful to reiterate the validity of linking the
‘personal’ to the ‘political,’ an approach which is one of the most important contributions of the feminist movement as a whole. In order to participate effectively in larger political movements, women of color and working-class women have to be personally empowered” (1994, p. 72). T. D. Gupta’s statement extends beyond the formation of a standpoint to developing a collective understanding and taking political action. However, I recognize that it is impossible to claim one universal experience for all women, so I will be incorporating a contemporary feminist standpoint. The original theoretical position was widely criticized by postmodern feminists and anti-racist feminists for failing to identify disparities among women (Harding, 1986; Rolin, 2009; Stefano, 1988). Opponents argued that women’s experiences varied depending on their location (Naidu, 2010; Narayan, 2004; Sandhoval, 2004). However, standpoint feminists today regard this framework as relational and acknowledge that those who are marginalized in some instances may be privileged in others (Dill & Zinn, 1996; Narayan, 2000). Some proponents also suggest that there are multiple ‘women of colour’ standpoints (Naidu, 2010). Ng has adopted this approach in her work, which conceptualizes race, gender, and class as social relations (1993). Ng suggests that people relate to one another based on productive and reproductive activities, so they can construct or alter their relations to societal forces in accordance with the means at their disposal (1993). Likewise, Bannerji expresses the necessity of valuing these women’s standpoints by arguing that they form a lens through which one can examine the formation of race, class, and gender (1993). Combining a contemporary feminist standpoint with anti-racist feminism, I have conducted interviews with South Asian Canadian women because they possess significant knowledge about the challenges that they encountered after immigrating. Nonetheless, I will keep in mind that these findings are precise to the respondents’ location/situated context and they cannot be homogenized to represent the experiences of every immigrant woman.

Oral history focuses on the individual’s story as well and seeks to provide an interpretation of history through the use of personal accounts. It recognizes that each person holds essential knowledge about their marginalization as well as their surroundings. There may be multiple sites of oppression and oral history provides the opportunity for a narrator to speak about all, one, or none of these. Riordan suggests that oral history should be regarded as a celebration of diversity that demands a
connection among different people (2004). Yow notes that many oral historians, particularly those who employ feminist approaches, have discussed and shown that it is impossible to adopt an objective position in search of one universal ‘truth’ while conducting this type of research work (1997). Oral historians recognize that there may be multiple ‘truths’ and many sides to one story (Kindon, Pain, & Kesby, 2010). Moreover, “our” interpretations are influenced by “our” worldview (Sugiman, 2004). Based on this framework, it is important to reflect upon my position as a researcher, especially one that comes from a South Asian background, located close to her narrators through a similar ethnic background, race, gender, and in some cases, religion. There was an age gap between me and most of my narrators who referred to me as beta (child) except two who were younger than the rest of my participants. Most of the respondents regarded me as an ‘insider’ based on a shared cultural background; although some of the women were hesitant and saw me as an ‘outsider’, I felt that this shifted during the interview process. I found that our discussion often extended beyond the formal interview process, after which some women felt more comfortable discussing aspects of their lives that they had not mentioned before. Some also continued to think about the interview and phoned me a week or two later to add something that they had forgotten or chose not to include earlier.

My narrators’ experiences have influenced my understanding of the two eras that I have covered in this thesis as well. I must admit my admiration for these women’s courage and hard work to establish a good life for themselves and their children within a new country. I have therefore embraced my own subjectivity in the interview process. In addition, as Sugiman shows, a researcher’s intervention affects each aspect of the interview process from the decision to conduct the oral history project to deciding which testimonies are included and this was also true for my research (2004). Yet there was always an element of collaboration between me and my narrators. My interview process demonstrated that oral history demands a connection among people, including the narrator and researcher (Yow, 1997). Furthermore, the ability to interview South Asian women offers access to previously unrecorded qualitative data as a vital primary resource. It provides an alternative to the traditional focus on official documents, which overlook ‘ordinary’ people that remain afar from political administration (Thompson, 1998). Buchignani indicates that only one book by 1987 focused on the social history of
South Asians in Canada, even though there was a reservoir of second-generation South Asian Canadians who could provide vital information through oral history accounts (1987). Although, this situation has transformed, the focus on men continues to dominate research regarding the early history of South Asians (Agnew, 2003). Oral interviews provide a means of introducing women’s voices into the narrative. Additionally, interviews allow a researcher to directly speak with the respondent and not only pose questions that are pertinent to his or her study but allow the respondent to share aspects of their lives that are meaningful to them (Portelli, 1998). More importantly, Thompson states, “Reality is complex and many-sided; and it is a primary merit of oral history that to a much greater extent than most sources it allows the original multiplicity of standpoints to be recreated” (1998, p. 24). Consequently, oral history provides an avenue for the expression of women’s voices in accordance with standpoint feminist theory, which argues that women’s perspective is fundamental for the understanding of any issue (Naidu, 2010). Historically, this has been nearly impossible to obtain through documents written by men about men (Agnew, 2003; Riordan, 2005).

More importantly, this study aims to identify women’s stories as central to developing an understanding of South Asian Canadian women’s citizenship experiences in all their complexity. It will therefore create a multifaceted set of historical data from previously muted voices.

Canada is esteemed in popular understanding as a multicultural nation with an anti-racist ethos but political rhetoric often obscures the lived reality of people that reside between the boundaries of policy and society. Various racial incidents taint Canada’s historical past and this discrimination has been explicitly evident in immigration legislation. Racism and sexism have limited South Asian Canadian women’s access to similar citizenship rights and experiences as those of the hegemonic group, most particularly, ‘white’ Anglo-Canadian middle-class Protestant men. In order to examine how South Asian Canadian women have challenged these limitations, and maintained control over their lives, an avenue for the inclusion of personal experience becomes necessary. Thus, theories of oral history in association with the theoretical insights of standpoint feminism and anti-racist feminism have shaped the research methods utilized in this work.
This analysis will adopt two additional lenses examining the lives of South Asian women: one, it will utilize an anti-racist feminist standpoint; two it will analyze citizenship as an experience that involves legal, social, and cultural aspects. The anti-racist theoretical frameworks of Bannerji (2000), Calliste (2000), Dua (2000), T. D. Gupta (1999), Mohanty (2003), Ng (1993), Razack (2002), and Thobani (2007) will inform this study. Mohanty criticizes western feminists for creating a homogenous image of ‘third-world’ women as oppressed. This is vital for my project because I have used the term ‘South Asian’ that appears to impose a ‘first-world’ perspective on these women but I recognize that there are considerable distinctions among them. Moreover, South Asian is a term that the community has adopted for political action on their own. Rather my goal is to focus on the ‘first-world’ oppression that has equivalently subjugated these women in Canada. Mohanty argues that colonialism and racism have constructed differences that impede women’s ability to develop a sisterhood across borders. Nonetheless, she suggests that the challenges ‘black’ and ‘third world’ feminists have posed to western feminism can pave the way for a transformative feminism based on the specificity of their historical and cultural locations as well as women’s common context of struggles (Mohanty, 2003). More importantly, this study aims to highlight South Asian Canadian women’s own efforts to exercise agency. Calliste and Dei state that anti-racist feminism must advance beyond a simplistic analysis of viewing and naming the structures that marginalize racialized women to examine how they resist oppression and suggest transformative possibilities (2000). This thesis will incorporate all three of these recommendations and problematize the notion of ‘democratic citizenship’ through an examination of South Asian women’s agency.

As mentioned above, my methodological framework and analysis have been heavily influenced by Bannerji’s anti-racist feminist writings, which critically examine Canadian society from a Marxist perspective. She has adopted a lens that incorporates anti-racist feminist concerns with a class based analysis and identifies women’s experiences as imperative to establish an understanding of the forms of subordination that racialized women face. In regards to one’s personal experience, she states, “It is more than the raw data of physical reflexes and feelings. It is the originating point of knowledge, the door to our social subjectivity” (Bannerji, 2000, p. 12). She emphasizes the use of personal experience for epistemology, acknowledges the significance of
subjectivity, and suggests the adoption of a transformative standpoint feminism. Bannerji also focuses on how ideas and discourses surrounding ‘difference’ are constructed by the hegemonic group to ‘other’ individuals over whom they would like to remain dominant. In addition, she discusses how ideas of difference can be altered to serve the interests of the hegemonic group at any point (Bannerji, 1993). The dominant ideology may shift over time, yet it continues to produce ideas of otherness; the enforcement of labels such as ‘minority,’ ‘women of colour’, ‘immigrant’, etc. are in many ways a component of modern day discourses that other individuals within Canadian society (Bannerji, 1993). Bannerji acknowledges the daily lived relations and experiences of non-white women as necessary to shift the epicentre for change. Overall, these insights have significantly informed my research, and although I could not incorporate a class based analysis, my arguments often hint at an underlying connection between classism and patriarchy.

Dua’s anti-racist feminist theoretical perspective has shaped the way that I have approached my research work as well. She adopts an anti-racist feminist lens to examine the ‘construction’ of the nuclear family within Canada as a racialized and gendered venture. Dua demonstrates that notions of race and gender have been constructed by the hegemonic group within Canada in accordance with its 19th century nation-building project (1999; 2000). More importantly, Dua discusses how a racialized understanding affects who is considered a Canadian and who is not; she highlights the hidden implication that a ‘white’ person is a Canadian, while any person of colour is an immigrant and she ties this to the historical formation of the Canadian state (1999). She focuses on the process of racialization and exhibits how this has created differences among women. Essentially, Dua’s analysis conveys how race and gender combine to structure social inequality.

Similarly, T. D. Gupta’s anti-racist theoretical approach identifies the links between gender, race, and class within Canadian society, especially in relation to South Asian Canadian women (1994). She connects her personal experiences working with South Asian Canadian women in Toronto to formulate a theoretical understanding of the manner in which race, class, and gender intersect. Gupta has also examined how multiculturalism has coopted anti-racist activism within the purview of government endeavours ‘celebrating diversity’ (1999). She explains how the adoption of
multiculturalism has produced a polite form of racism and/or systemic racism. Her research coincides with Dua’s in terms of the way that Canadian nation-building has led to the ‘othering’ of racialized groups as immigrants. Additionally, she explicates how dominant ideologies that produce notions of race, class, and gender support the apparatus of the hegemonic group by subordinating ‘others’.

More importantly, Ng’s theoretical position specifically highlights the importance of the lived experiences of racialized women. Her study of race, class, and gender is similar to Bannerji and ascends from a Marxist understanding that regards the individual’s experiences as necessary to identify oppression (1993). Thus, she adopts standpoint feminism with an antiracist lens to examine the formation of the Canadian state. Ng states, “This paper is an attempt to develop a method of thinking which illuminates sexual and racial oppression from the standpoint of women of colour—standpoint in this context referring to the relationship between the knower’s experience and the social organization generating her experience” (Ng, 1993, p. 186). She also associates race, gender, and class with Canadian nationalism and explores how these forms of inequality are embedded within various state institutions. Overall, Ng’s research is closely tied with that of other anti-racist feminist scholars such as Bannerji, Dua, and T. D. Gupta whose work has all strongly affected my theoretical understanding. I have adopted an anti-racist feminist framework combined with the lived experiences of South Asian Canadian women to portray the types of negotiations that these women have had to make in Canada.

In addition, South Asian women’s experiences of citizenship in Canada have been multifaceted, so they will be assessed as a synthesis of social, cultural, and legal rights. Stasiulus and Bakan state,

Citizenship includes legal status, demanding formal national state certification, but citizenship is not reducible to legal status alone. Citizenship exists on a spectrum, involving a pool of rights that are variously offered, denied, or challenged, as well as a set of obligations that are unequally demanded” (2003, p. 2).

Correspondingly, Thobani explains that ‘white’ nationals’ citizenship is exalted above that of racialized ‘others’ through social and cultural processes that she terms rituals and
rites (2007). This is similarly demonstrated through Razack's exploration of the establishment of a 'white' settler society in Canada. She explains that the Canadian nation-building project has ignored Aboriginals as belonging to an earlier space and time, while conveniently forgetting the Chinese who constructed the railways and the Sikhs that worked in the lumber mills (2002). This thesis will also critically examine how gendered and racist constructions have imposed hierarchical understandings of labour on South Asian Canadian women through citizenship policies and societal norms (Gupta T. D., 1994; Valverde, 1992). Likewise, Bannerji (1993) and T. D. Gupta's (1999) work form an integral basis for this study because they parallel Thobani and Razack's discussion by scrutinizing Canadian multiculturalism for failing to share power with 'visible minorities'. Moreover, they examine the intersection of race and gender, focusing on how they combined within Canada to marginalize South Asian women. The second period that this thesis will explore marks the advent of multicultural policy and it will determine how this supposed legal transformation affected South Asian women's ability to negotiate, resist, and/or adapt to Canadian society.

My definition of citizenship will involve a broader understanding of this term that incorporates the experiences and negotiations an individual makes within a state's given boundaries. The traditional hierarchical understanding of citizenship involves a top-down approach whereby a state defines who constitutes a citizen. However, there are other important factors associated with citizenship according to those who inhabit the space within a country in addition to formal legal status. Crowley, Lewis, Werbner, and Yuval-Davis establish an alternative understanding of citizenship that incorporates the family, community, and identity in the Feminist Review's 1997 edition, Citizenship: Pushing the Boundaries. One of the main goals of this edition was advancing the understanding of citizenship as more than an officially designated legal status (Crowley, Lewis, Werbner, & Yuval-Davis, 1997). Likewise, The First National Survey on What it Means to be a Canadian Citizen of 2012 illustrates that most Canadians regard citizenship as more than a legal status and include broader behaviours of good citizenship such as obeying laws (35%), participating in the community (25%), helping others (17%), and accepting others’ differences (14%) (Neuman, 2012). Consequently, this report provides a holistic view of citizenship that supports the arguments of many scholars, such as Stasiulus and Bakan (2003) as well as the articles noted above by Crowley (1997), Lewis (1997),
Werbner (1997), and Yuval-Davis (1997). By utilizing this criteria to examine the first South Asian Canadian women’s experiences, it is apparent that they were active citizens who obeyed laws, helped others, participated in the community, and accepted others’ differences. Their experiences may have been constrained but they used their agency to surmount many challenges and acted as good ‘citizens’.

1.3. Research Design

Six interviews were conducted to establish a qualitative analysis of the lived experiences of South Asian Canadian women. I was unable to find any women that migrated between 1919 and 1949 who were capable of providing an interview. Thus, I interviewed three South Asian Canadian women who were the daughters of South Asian women that migrated during this period to discuss their mothers’ and their own experiences. Three more South Asian women who arrived between 1967 and 1997 were interviewed to understand the impact of modifications in official immigration and citizenship policies as well as social and cultural changes on their experiences. Each of the respondents took part in an oral interview of approximately two hours in length. The interview was open-ended and conversational.

Participants were recruited from South Asian networks in the community by giving notice with a simple explanation about the study at the Abbotsford Hindu Temple, Mission Sikh Temple, Greater Vancouver Bangladesh Cultural Association, Multicultural Helping House Society, Nepal Cultural Society of British Columbia, Pakistan Canadian Cultural Association, and South Asian Artists Canada. Third-party recruitment through these organizations was particularly effective, as members helped me to contact individuals who they thought might be interested in my project. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and audio-recorded; some of these recordings are available through SFU’s Summit Repository.

1.3.1. My Positionality

I am a second generation Indo-Canadian woman, born and raised in Canada. I am committed to an anti-racist feminist framework but I recognize its limitations as well
as the importance of other forms of difference such as class, able-bodiedness, sexual orientation, and age. It is imperative to be aware of how intersectionality works and I understand its significance but I am unable to address many systems of difference in a short MA thesis.\textsuperscript{20} I have opened this proposal with a quote from Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji because of his inclusive disposition toward caste, gender, religion, and social justice, which was well ahead of his time. Rather than expecting people to convert to any given religion, Guru Nanak advocated for a personalized form of religion (Buchignani, Indra, & Srivastava, 1985; Hindu-Canadian, 1916). His followers were composed of Hindus and Muslims belonging to all castes; N.G.K. Singh states, “Rather than split Sikh from Hindu, his vision invites us all - Hindus, Muslims, Jews, Christians and Sikhs - together to hear and see the cosmic harmony” (2004, p. 30). Additionally, in a patriarchal society that maintained many restrictions on women’s lives, his teachings served to improve their lot years before the emergence of western feminism.\textsuperscript{21} Yet, despite his teachings’ popularity, gender inequality prevailed within the Sikh community (Bariana, 1997; Singh N.-G. K., 2004). My feminist tendencies have transcended from the disparity that I saw between Guru Nanak’s teachings and this religious group. Additionally, the sexism and misogyny that persist within mainstream Canadian society have reinforced my position on these issues.\textsuperscript{22}

Furthermore, my anti-racist feminist disposition was influenced by my parents’ and grandparents’ stories about their transition to Canada, although I remain distant from the actual experience. This has positioned me as both an ‘insider’ and an ‘outsider’. I consistently face racism and sexism, whether social, cultural, or legal, but these power differentials are not exactly the same as those my parents experienced when they migrated to Canada. My experience also varies from how immigrants experience discrimination today because I have been raised in Canada, so I am familiar with the mainstream Canadian culture. Indeed, racism and power differentials based on ethnicity come into play in complex ways within racialized groups. Moreover, systems of power such as gender, race, class, etc., intersect, shift and change over time, place, and culture, further complicating our understandings of oppression (George & Ramkissoon, 1998; Ng, 1993). I have a Hindu first name, Rishma, which is also a Pakistani name. Furthermore, my last name is Johal—a Sikh name from the Jatt caste. Both my parents are Sikhs but very open-minded. They are more spiritual than religious and taught me to
respect all faiths. Nonetheless, my name has created a conundrum for people in the South Asian community because they want to know whether I am one of them or the ‘other’ based on perceived ethnic, religious, and cultural differences between Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims, Pakistanis, and Indians. Moreover, I am often mistaken as a Muslim by Anglo-Canadians, so I have felt how Islamophobic sentiments that emerged after the attacks of September 11th 2001 changed people’s demeanor towards me in everyday interactions. Overall, these experiences determine that the politics of South Asia continue to affect the way that I am perceived, despite being an Indo-Canadian, and explain why I have adopted an anti-racist feminist standpoint.

1.4. The Metaphor of the Shadow

Shadows represent grey areas; they suggest something that is ethereal and has no identity of its own. A shadow is solely deciphered by its relation to the individual that it follows. Within some South Asian cultural groups particularly Punjabis, women during the early 1900s were represented as beings without agency or an identity.23 Similar notions have been perpetuated in Indian folk songs and films until today, which suggest that women’s role is to follow men and women must always make sacrifices for men (Khan, 2011). The remnants of these ideas can be seen today in various forms of gendered discourses. For example, a line that the heroine of a recent Bollywood blockbuster Jab Tak Hain Jaan (Until there is life) sings—Chaavay chaavay paavay asi tere parchavay thurna, which translates as “I will walk in the shade of your shadow,” reinforces the idea that femininity involves submissiveness.24 The media worldwide continues to portray submissiveness as a desirable feminine quality. Certainly, these types of discourses recreate the belief that women are subservient to men in South Asian cultures and, to an extent, the mainstream North American culture as well (Khan, 2011; Stillman, 2006). Hence, I have utilized the shadow to represent negative social and cultural attitudes about femininity that reinforce women’s subordinate position by restricting their ability to enjoy a citizenship status within Canada equivalent to men in the dominant Anglo-Canadian group, during the 20th century.

After confederation in 1867, the Canadian state consolidated the establishment of a ‘white’ settler society with racist immigration policies. And although ‘white’ women
were encouraged to immigrate to Canada, both in family groups and as independent migrants to provide a marriage pool for ‘white’ settler men, racialized women were not seen as desirable immigrants to the new country (Gogia & Slade, 2011; Keough & Campbell, 2014; Perry, 2001). Indeed for South Asian women, any type of independent migration to Canada was not possible until 1974. Their entry was restricted before 1919, despite the fact that many European women could enter Canada as independents during this time (Dua, 2000). After this period, they could only migrate as wives or unmarried daughters of male residents. Moreover, the Points System of 1967 aimed to eliminate inequalities by allowing individuals to migrate based on merit (education level and employment skills) but it failed to eliminate sexism. Women were allowed to migrate as independent migrants after 1974, yet men continued to dominate this category, the reasons for which are discussed in detail in Chapter 4 (Stasiulus & Bakan, 2003). Thus, I have also used the metaphor of the shadow throughout this paper to demonstrate the legal barriers that established a secondary citizenship status for South Asian women.

1.5. Introduction of Respondents

In the first instance, as non-white women, our experiences of ‘difference’ need form and expression. For this reason, creative writings or oral histories are crucial, and make a fundamental demand for change (Bannerji, 1993, p. xi).

Bannerji’s words indicate the importance of oral history in giving voice to women who have been marginalized by dominant culture.25 This is a brief introduction to my interviewees, using fictional names to protect participants’ identities.

Kel

Kel was born at Fraser Mills, British Columbia, where a small portion of the South Asian community resided in 1934. She does not remember when her grandfather or parents migrated from India but by the time that she was born, they had all come to Canada. After Kel finished most of grade seven, she went to India and stayed there for several years. She migrated back to Canada after marriage. Kel’s mother was a homemaker and she faced many hardships in her life. Kel also remained a homemaker and she had a number of children, so taking care of them was always her first priority. Although Kel describes her life as quite difficult, she is happy to have grandchildren with
whom she can share her feelings. She is a Sikh and an avid practitioner of the faith. She goes to the *Gurdwara* (Sikh temple) as often as she can and completes her prayers every day.

**Pooja**

Pooja is a first-generation Indo-Canadian woman and she was born in Duncan British Columbia. Her father first migrated to California in 1913, then entered Canada by walking across the border. In 1930, his wife migrated from India and joined him in Canada; Pooja was born a few years later. Pooja’s mother lived a happy life surrounded by other South Asian women in the community. She completed most of the household tasks and participated in *Gurdwara* activities. Pooja went to college for two years and then married. She worked at a financial institution for many years, and after retirement, she continued to participate in community events. She has won numerous awards for her volunteer work.

**Simran**

Simran is a first generation Indo-Canadian woman and she was born on March 18, 1925, at the Vancouver General Hospital. Her grandfather migrated to Canada in 1906 by himself, leaving his wife in India. In 1913, his wife passed away, so he received government permission to bring his mother and four sons to Canada. Simran’s father went to India in 1923 and married Simran’s mother. They had a daughter in India but when they were expecting Simran, they migrated to Canada. Her mother was primarily a homemaker. She went back to India and took Simran with her when she was seven and a half years old. Simran completed grade 12 in India and married there. Simran and her husband both came to Canada and settled in Port Alberni. She handled the family business, while he worked at different labour jobs over the years. Both of them helped establish the Alberni Valley *Gurdwara* Society and practised the Sikh faith.

**Inderjeet**

Inderjeet was born and raised in Punjab, India. She migrated to Montreal, Quebec, in September of 1987 as a student and obtained her M.A. at a university there. She is well-known for her community involvement as a media personality. In fact, she is
one of the first Punjabi women in British Columbia to have her own live talk show. Inderjeet is pursuing a political career now that her son is in university. Recently, she participated in the electoral campaign as a British Columbia Party candidate. Inderjeet believes in hard work. She is a single parent, yet she feels that she has fulfilled all of her responsibilities as a mother and citizen. She is a Sikh but she does not like to associate herself with one faith, stating that she embraces a broader spirituality that involves practising “what is right”. Overall, Inderjeet is a proud Canadian and considers herself lucky to live in this country.

Radha

Radha grew up in Bangladesh, where she completed her master’s degree in psychology. She also married there and had a son before coming to Canada. Her husband applied as a principal applicant through the Points System and she migrated as a dependent in May of 1997. Radha upgraded her education in two Canadian colleges, improving her English speaking skills and attaining the credentials for her current job as a school and student support worker (SSSW). Radha faced many challenges when she first migrated but she is content with her current position. She also gave birth to a daughter in Canada. Radha has handled most of the household duties alongside her career and she actively participates in various community events. She believes in Hinduism and volunteers at the Hare Krishna Temple. In addition, Radha teaches Bangla at the Multicultural Helping House Society of BC (MHHS) and has helped facilitate this program.

Trisha

Trisha grew up in Kathmandu, Nepal, and migrated to Canada after her marriage in 1996. She was sponsored by her husband, who had come to Canada with his parents as a child. Trisha completed her B.A. in English and Sociology from a college in India. It was easy for her to adjust to Canadian society because she was used to living away from home. Trisha applied for citizenship several years after immigrating. She attended a Canadian college and received a certificate in tourism but did not pursue a career in this field. She worked as a frame shop manager for some time. She was one of the founding members of the Nepal Cultural Society of BC (NCSBC). Trisha believes in
Hinduism, but she only goes to the temple for special occasions because she thinks that the most important tenet of religion is to do good deeds.

1.6. Overview of Chapters

This exploration of the lives of South Asian Canadian women unfolds over six chapters. The second chapter will present a glimpse into the lives of South Asian men that initially migrated to Canada and examine how racism and sexism were embedded in early immigration policies. It will discuss the legal, social, and cultural restrictions that limited early South Asian women’s citizenship experience. Chapter 3 will investigate how South Asian women negotiated their citizenship experience and utilized their agency to overcome multiple barriers. Following this analysis, South Asian Canadian women’s adoption of Canadian attire and changes in cultural expectations will be explored. The fourth chapter will commence with a discussion of major policy changes in Canadian immigration law from 1967 and analyze the Points System’s impact on South Asian women. Additionally, this section will explore the social and cultural constraints that South Asian women faced between 1967 and 1997. Chapter 5 will demonstrate how legal changes have also produced an avenue for South Asian Canadian women to utilize their autonomy. This section will explain how access to higher education, employment, and cultural changes have provided some women with the ability to escape a secondary position. It will also briefly examine South Asian Canadian women’s thoughts about feminism. The conclusion will summarize the advancements that South Asian Canadian women have made over time, which have led to a more positive citizenship experience for many today. It will also explore what the future of South Asian women in Canada may hold and investigate how their experience of citizenship may improve or decline.
2. Citizens Without a Shadow: The Exclusion of South Asian Women

2.1. The Citizen

It is unknown when the first South Asian migrant set foot on Canadian soil, or North America for that matter, but it is likely that this individual was a male. During this era, ‘respectable’ Indian women from the middle and upper classes did not travel without a male companion and most South Asian cultures expected women to remain within the home (Brown, 2007; Sharma, 1997). The earliest records indicate that a Portuguese Indian was selling cloth to the indigenous people of Mexico City in the 1640s (Buchignani, Indra, & Srivastava, 1985). However, the initial group of South Asians in Canada that has been recorded was comprised of Sikh men who passed through Vancouver as a part of the British regiment to attend Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee in 1897 (Broad, 1913; Hindu-Canadian, 1916; Singh N., 1994). Five years later, another contingent stopped in Vancouver on its way to Britain for King Edward VII’s Coronation (Sharma, 1997). Consequently, some of these men moved to Canada after hearing about the opportunities there; whereas others went back home and informed locals about this mountainous land (Basran & Bolaria, 2003; Hindu-Canadian, 1916; Singh S., 1911). Most scholars concur that the first South Asian migrants arrived in 1903, a year after the King’s coronation (Basran & Bolaria, 2003; Buchignani, Indra, & Srivastava, 1985; Sharma, 1997; Singh N., 1994). These men were able to enter without attracting the attention of Anglo-Canadian immigration officials, whose energies were diverted towards tightening control over the migration of Japanese and Chinese men (Singh N., 1994). Nonetheless, many companies hired migrants because they were willing to take menial jobs in railway-building, mining, lumbering, and farming and these industries began recruiting South Asian men; thus, these initial migrants, most of them from Punjab, found employment relatively quickly (Gupta T. D., 1994; Nayar, 2012; Sharma, 1997). However, as their numbers increased, Anglo-Canadians saw them as a threat to
the homogeneity of a ‘white’ settler society, and as the Canadian economy sank into a recession in the early 1900s, ‘white’ labour in particular viewed all South Asian, Japanese, and Chinese workers as the cause of declining employment opportunities and wages. In 1907, the government of British Columbia abolished many of the rights that South Asians had possessed before this period. New government policies disenfranchised them, excluded them from various professions, and barred them from buying property in many areas. In 1908, the federal government followed suit with its discriminatory Continuous Journey regulations.

The first South Asian men who migrated to Canada lived in arduous circumstances, leaving behind their wives, mothers, and other family members. Pooja explains that when her father migrated in 1913, his wife and two daughters remained in India. In fact, he was never able to meet his daughters again because strict immigration laws continued to halt the migration of married children, even though his wife was able to migrate after 1919 (2013). Similarly, Simran’s grandfather left his wife and children behind when he migrated to Canada; his wife died before immigration law was altered in 1947, so he never saw her again (2013). Hence, the early South Asian community in Canada was a largely bachelor society and men were responsible for completing all of the household tasks such as cooking and cleaning (Johnston, 1984). They either lived in small quarters that lumber mill owners constructed for them or on farms, so conditions were anything but ideal. For instance, Dhillon states,

They [South Asian men] were the ones who suffered because they didn't have their families with them. They lived together on farms, the group of them; they did their cooking together. Since they couldn't own land, they lived wherever housing was available. It was camp life they lived. They set up cots for sleeping, and all the possessions were in a suitcase under their bed. They worked from sunrise to sunset, and on their one day off, they did their washing by hand. Whoever had a car he would share it with others for transportation (2001, para. 33).

Moreover, these men often spent their first night in British Columbia on the streets, trying to find shelter (Johnston, 2011). Sometimes, there were up to ten men living in one bunkhouse or quarter to save money and they utilized this space collectively for cooking, eating, and sleeping (Johnston, 1984). Generally, the men that were unemployed would do the cooking and complete the household tasks (Gupta T. D., 1994). Therefore, life
without women was not only lonely but quite difficult for men and legal policies increased these hardships.

2.2. Immigration Laws and Reforms

Canada’s immigration policies from the late 19th and early 20th century reflected the prevalence of a racial hierarchy, which privileged certain groups over others. Vineberg indicates that the most desired type of migrants to Canada were British subjects or Americans, then northern Europeans, and last, central or southern Europeans (2011). Similarly, Basran and Bolaria affirm that ‘white’ northern Europeans and Americans were the ideal migrants, followed by eastern and southern Europeans, while ‘non-whites’ were deterred from entering Canada (2003). On the other hand, as the nation-building project advanced, it required immigrants to do jobs that ‘white’ Canadian citizens were reluctant to conduct (Gupta T. D., 1994). As a result, in the latter part of the 19th century, Asian immigrants were recruited for these jobs, especially to construct the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) (Habib, 2003). This led to a proliferation of Chinese and Japanese migrants, especially in the northwest, so immigration laws were curbed to prevent the entry of more migrants through the Chinese Immigration Act of 1885 and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1923 (Gogia & Slade, 2011; Habib, 2003). Likewise, when the population of South Asian men increased, particularly in British Columbia, officials set various discriminatory policies to halt their immigration and eradicate the civil rights that they were entitled to as British subjects. In 1907, the government of British Columbia disenfranchised all natives of India who did not have Anglo-Saxon parents (Buchignani, Indra, & Srivastava, 1985). In the same year, the British Columbia Act barred Indians from working in specific professions, serving on juries, obtaining government contracts, and buying property in certain areas of Vancouver (Sharma, 1997; Singh N., 1994). More importantly, on January 8, 1908, the Canadian government implemented the Continuous Journey Policy, which stipulated that migrants could only stay in Canada if they came on an uninterrupted voyage from their country of origin and possessed $200 upon landing (Agnew, 2003; Habib, 2003). Hence, after being disenfranchised and facing other racially prejudicial laws, South Asian men realized that they held a subordinate status in Canada.
South Asian men became frustrated with this treatment and they began lobbying the government at both provincial and federal jurisdictions. They also met with British and Indian authorities to appeal for greater rights, particularly the loosening of immigration regulations to allow the migration of their wives and children. Sikh men were loyal British subjects because they had received preferential treatment in the Indian army from the British (Buchignani, Indra, & Srivastava, 1985; Sharma, 1997). When countless Indian soldiers had rebelled in 1857 during the First War of Indian Independence, the Sikhs had remained quiescent because the British Raj had benefitted them (Sharma, 1997). Nevertheless, in Canada this perception and treatment of the Sikh population changed. Although Sikhs considered themselves equal citizens, they soon realized that they had even fewer rights to migrate to Canada than most other immigrants (Broad, 1913; Hindu-Canadian, 1916; Singh J., 1982). Consequently, this second-class treatment enhanced their support for the Ghadar Movement—the revolutionary Indian independence movement that emerged in North America in 1913 (Buchignani, Indra, & Srivastava, 1985).

Sundar Singh, a political activist who represented the South Asian community at the time, expressed this frustration:

"We are subjects of the same Empire; we have fought, we have sacrificed...The Japanese has to show only 50 cents when he arrives, but the Sikh has to show $200, and, if he cannot, he is sent away. Of course you can understand what the reflex action of this treatment might be in the present state of India....You cannot expect people to, be moral, if you debar them from bringing in their wives and children (1911, para. 9-11)."

In this speech, Sundar Singh was referring to strict immigration policies that restricted the entry of their wives and children and arguing that this discriminatory treatment alienated the community, strengthening support for the Indian independence movement. Indeed, Sikh political organization assumed a much more vigorous character after this point and South Asian men began strongly agitating to attain permission for the migration of their wives and children.

South Asian men challenged the restriction on family immigration on two prime occasions. In 1911, Hira Singh brought his wife and daughter to Canada in defiance of the immigration ban and Canadian officials ordered his family’s deportation (Manhas, 2009; SFU Library, 2011). The community appealed to a lower court and succeeded in
convincing authorities to permit the family to stay. However, the Minister of the Interior clarified that this decision was only an ‘Act of Grace’ and did not institute a precedent for other families (Johnston, 1998; Manhas, 2009; SFU Library, 2011; Sharma, 1997). Nonetheless, in 1912, Bhag Singh brought his wife, Harnam Kaur, to Canada. At the same time, Balwant Singh also brought his wife, Kartar Kaur, and two daughters to Canada. Each of these men and their families hoped to utilize their case to set a precedent for the migration of other South Asian men’s wives (Johnston, 1998). Once again, authorities ordered the deportation of their families. Once again, the community protested these verdicts and families were allowed to stay as an ‘Act of Grace’ (Buchignani, Indra, & Srivastava, 1985; Johnston, 1998; Manhas, 2009; Sharma, 1997). Similarly, when Hakam Singh Hundal’s wife died, he sought permission to bring his mother, Bishan Kaur Hundal, and his four sons to Canada; yet again, the Minister of the Interior approved his case as an ‘Act of Grace’ only in 1913 (Johnston, 2011). Hence, although South Asian men consistently lobbied and challenged discriminatory policies, and a select few succeeded in bringing their families to Canada, they were unable to achieve any permanent amendment to immigration laws at this time.

Perhaps, the most tragic outcome of South Asians’ activism and defiance was the conclusion of the Komagata Maru Incident in 1914. No shipping lines existed to transport South Asians to Canada after the federal government instituted the Continuous Journey Policy, yet many individuals wanted to migrate. Therefore, a wealthy fisherman in Singapore named Gurdit Singh (originally from the village of Sarhali in India) chartered a ship from Hong Kong for those who wanted to go to Canada (Agnew, 2003; Sharma, 1997). Gurdit Singh was optimistic and believed that the South Asian community in Canada could raise $200 per person to meet the requirements of the head tax (Buchignani, Indra, & Srivastava, 1985; Singh N., 1994). When the ship reached Vancouver, immigration officials prohibited those on board from entering Canada because they had not come on a continuous voyage from their country of origin, India; rather they had boarded the ship in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Moji, or Yokohama. Balwant Singh, Bhag Singh, Mit Singh Pandori, and Hussain Rahim formed a shore committee to fight on behalf of the passengers and raise the hefty amount (Kazimi, 2004). They argued that both Canada and India were British colonies, so as subjects of the British Empire, the passengers had the right to travel between colonies (Sharma, 1997). After
the failure of a test case and a series of unfortunate events that further demonstrated the racist attitudes of officials and the general population in Vancouver, the incident came to a close. Officials only allowed 20 people to enter Canada, while expelling 354 (Basran & Bolaria, 2003; Gogia & Slade, 2011). Moreover, British authorities suspected those on board of being Indian revolutionaries, so when the passengers landed in Baj Baj (India), the British tried to force them to take a train to Punjab but many did not want to return. This resulted in a small skirmish and many passengers were arrested or murdered (Kazimi, 2004; Singh N., 1994). South Asian men’s efforts to challenge discriminatory immigration policies during the Komagata Maru episode thus failed with tragic consequences.

2.3. Gendering the Shadow

The ban on the migration of South Asian women was racist and the rhetoric surrounding their prohibition was gendered. Firstly, the Canadian state did not consider South Asian women’s independent migration as desirable and the men in the community were only concerned with the migration of their wives. Although some may suggest that South Asian women did not migrate independently to Canada because of cultural beliefs that many South Asians held about women’s place in the home, which was true in many cases, this point is still contentious because it contradicts the reality of those women who migrated to areas like Trinidad and Tobago. Widows, sex workers, victims of domestic abuse, and women from poorer sectors of the economy in India moved to these colonies as independent migrants in search of a better life (Reddock, 2008). This discrepancy is evident in the British Parliament’s House of Commons debates on Emigration from India to the Crown Colonies and Protectorates, in which officials openly discussed the case of Indian widows and women of lower castes moving to British colonies. However, when the discussion shifted to Canadian immigration, women virtually disappeared from the conversation (House of Commons Debates, June 1910). This contrast portrays how race and gender combined as barriers in Canada to restrict South Asian women’s migration in accordance with the national project of establishing a ‘white man’s country’ (Gogia & Slade, 2011). The dominant Anglo-Canadian group realized that all women, whether they were independent migrants or dependents, would add to the South Asian population’s growth and formulate a sustainable ‘non-white’ community (Basran &
Bolaria, 2003; Dua, 2000; Johnston, 1998; Manhas, 2009). Therefore, the gendered and racist aspects of the immigration policy intersected to exclude South Asian women based on their reproductive ability.

Hartsock’s argument about the division of labour is imperative to build an understanding of the way that Anglo-Canadians viewed South Asian women and marginalized them (Hartsock, 1983). An examination of what type of labour and whose labour is valued demonstrates that gender formed a vital component in immigration requirements, which involved more than a racial hierarchy. For Canadian officials ‘white’ men’s labour held the greatest significance, followed by ‘white’ women’s reproductive labour, and last, racialized men’s labour (Basran & Bolaria, 2003; Buchignani, Indra, & Srivastava, 1985). Conversely, these officials feared racialized women’s reproductive labour (Bannerji, 2000; Dua, 2000; Habib, 2003). Reproductive labour refers to women’s ability to have children and conduct activities related to reproduction such as breastfeeding or childrearing as well as the unpaid household work that has historically allowed men within the capitalist system to work outside the home (Hamilton, 2005; Mies, 1986). Anglo-Canadians dreaded racialized women’s ability to reproduce because this would increase the populations of racialized communities (Dua, 2000). At this time, an increase in the immigrant population was regarded by Anglo-Canadians as the cause of moral degeneration and a threat to the racial homogeneity of the society that they had established, thus far (Valverde, 1992). In addition, this analysis demonstrates that patriarchy is perpetuated through various institutions such as the state’s immigration apparatus. Patriarchal discourses acknowledge women’s worth for their reproductive role as vital for the nation, yet their social, cultural, and gender colonization fails to guarantee an equal citizenship status for all women (Grewal, 1996). Moreover, the intersection of race and gender portrays how gendered discourses are deployed to exclude a particular group and underestimate their ‘worth’. As Dua explains, a profound debate emerged at this time, known as The Hindu Women’s Question, which both gendered and racialized South Asian women immigrants. She states,

Notably, the gendering of South Asian women as creators of ethnic communities paralleled the gendering of Anglo-Saxon women as reproducers of the nation. However, while the work of Anglo-Saxon women in reproducing the Canadian nation was to be valued, South Asian women were seen as a menace to that same nation—threatening
to spawn the kinds of communities that would imperil the nation-building project (Dua, 2000, p. 113).

Interestingly, first-wave feminists played a prominent role in perpetuating these beliefs to augment their role as mothers of the Anglo-Saxon race who could ‘save’ the inferior races by extending their influence over racialized women through greater political rights for themselves (Valverde, 1992). Hence, these feminists were complicit in patriarchal discourses that valued Anglo-Canadian women for their reproductive labour, while debasing South Asian women and discriminating against them.

Consequently, officials excluded South Asian women from Canada based on their biological ability to reproduce and the sustenance labour that they performed (Gogia & Slade, 2011). This evidence reinforces Thobani’s assertion that the Canadian state excluded racialized women from Canada by adopting two focal arguments: one, their racial inferiority would pollute the nation; and two, their reproductive labour threatened the ‘whiteness’ of Canadian society (2007). In addition, H.H. Stevens, who played a fundamental role in halting South Asian migration, argued, “If the privilege to bring in wives is allowed it will result in large numbers of women being brought in for immoral purposes under the guise of wives of Hindus here” (as cited in Agnew, 2003, p. 8). His statement reflects discriminatory notions about South Asians’ sexual conduct and practises. Writer Major Simonds made analogously uninformed remarks in the Victoria Daily Colonist on the question of ‘Hindu’ wives: “Polygamy is a part of the sociological conditions of the Hindu, so the question comes up as to whether all or only one or two wives of each person is to be admitted?” (as cited in Dua, 2000, p. 114). This was a common misunderstanding and Sundar Singh addressed it on several occasions, clarifying that Sikhs were a monogamous people (Hindu-Canadian, 1916; Singh S., 1911). However, discourses surrounding the morality of South Asian women served to racialize and ‘other’ them, creating a wall of difference between Anglo-Canadians and South Asian Canadians; it incited a panic among the Anglo-Canadian population about allowing the migration of ‘Hindu’ wives. Therefore, Anglo-Canadians prohibited South Asian women from entering Canada by utilizing an exclusionary criteria that viewed them through a gendered and racialized lens.
On the other hand, when South Asian men protested the ban on the migration of their wives, they also conveyed a gendered understanding of women’s importance as centered in their reproductive labour. T. D. Gupta states,

The men realized that without women and children, their community would remain temporary, lacking in stability and stripped of political and social rights in Canada. In this, there was a realization of the reproductive and maintenance role of women in society, which is the essence of gender ideology as it exists today. Women with their child-bearing and child-rearing functions are essential for the generation and daily regeneration of labor power (1994, p. 62).

Analogously, a pamphlet titled *India’s Appeal to Canada* identified the ban on wives and children as the most punitive restriction on South Asian men because it denied these loyal and hardworking subjects the ability to enjoy home-life (Hindu-Canadian, 1916). This line of argument portrays how the debate surrounding the migration of South Asian women revolved around the needs of men. For example, Sunder Singh stated, “But Christian Canada denies home-life, the birth right of each human being, by shutting out the wife of the Sikh, who is a fellow citizen of the empire” (as cited in Agnew, 2003, p. 8). These types of statements convey that South Asian women’s independent migration was not an issue for either Anglo-Canadians or South Asian men; rather, it was their role as wives and mothers that each group represented as either ‘dangerous or desirable’ (Dua, 2000). Of course, similar gendered ideas were imposed on various ‘white’ women who were considered undesirable subjects, such as working class women or ‘white’ women outside the dominant Protestant Anglo-Canadian group. Some argue that these categories of difference were constructed to distance working class, racialized, or ethnicized women from middle and upper class Anglo-Canadians, justifying unequal power relations between the dominant group and ‘others’ (Keough, 2005). Many early female activists led reform movements based on the idea that they would cleanse society by helping working class and immigrant women become civilized (Errington, 1993; Hamilton, 2005). Additionally, the few Anglo-Canadians that supported immigration of South Asian women utilized similarly gendered arguments. For example, Isabella Ross Broad wrote an appeal to the state to eliminate the ban on the migration of South Asian women by positing,
Our Creator has made woman queen of the home, where her influence can scarcely be over-estimated. The home is the unit of our civilization. To eliminate the home is like taking the soul from the body. We might say that the home lies at the basis of all true loyalty, social peace and national progress…When the Hindu comes to Canada he is not allowed to bring his wife and children (1913, pp. 15-16).

Thus, those who opposed the migration of South Asian men’s wives and their sympathizers both adopted gendered notions to further their arguments.

South Asian women also faced sexism within their own community after moving to Canada, which was a form of oppression embedded within cultural practises originating in South Asia at this time. Most of the first South Asian migrants were Sikhs and their religious tenets argued for the better treatment of women (Basran & Bolaria, 2003; Buchignani, Indra, & Srivastava, 1985; Gupta T. D., 1994; Singh N.-G. K., 2005). Various Sikh Gurus challenged cultural practises that degraded women in Punjab between the 15th and 18th centuries; they abolished the practise of sex-segregation in worship, female infanticide, sati, chund (the veiling of women) and the prohibition against widow remarriage (Basran & Bolaria, 2003). Yet, this did not encourage a great involvement of women in the public sphere and an ideology of separate spheres guided the lives of the first South Asian Canadian women (Brown, 2007; Manhas, 2009, Pooja, 2013). In addition, by the 20th century, some Sikhs had adopted a strong preference for male children, especially before coming to Canada (Guzder, 2009; Pooja, 2013; Simran, 2013). Their family structure was based on a patriarchal framework and a woman was expected to be socially and economically dependent on male kin such as her husband, father, or son (Dhillon, 2001; Naidoo, 1987). This pattern persisted in Canada and the community expected women to defer to male authority (Guzder, 2009; Kel, 2013). Most South Asian Canadian women remained homemakers and passed on cultural traditions to their children—women’s two main responsibilities in Sikh culture (Bains, 2009; Johnston, 2011; Manhas, 2009). One of the common grievances that many women held at the time was that they could not obtain a higher education before migrating (Atwal, 2009; Bains, 2009). Coming to Canada changed some of these expectations, especially for the young South Asian women born in Canada who obtained higher levels of education than their mothers. Migrant women also found a new form of autonomy because they had few people in their lives whose authority they were expected to defer
to, such as in-laws. However, they also lost the support network that they had experienced in South Asia. Of course, they still had to follow community based ideals of submissiveness and dependence and fulfill gender role expectations, such that autonomy was exercised within a limited range of options (Manhas, 2009). It is also imperative to note that most of their autonomy depended on the goodwill and perceptions of the men in their lives, so the level of sexism that the first South Asian women in Canada encountered varied. The status of South Asian Canadian women within their communities was complex because they managed to transgress some previously held cultural expectations based on changes within the new family and community structure, without openly challenging traditional gender roles.

2.4. The Shadows Follow: Legal, Social, and Cultural Constraints

Overall, historical sources confirm that at least seven South Asian women had migrated to Canada before 1919, despite the prohibition. Documents assert that three South Asian women—Mrs. Sunder Singh, Mrs. Teja Singh, and Mrs. Uday Ram Joshi—were present in Canada by 1910 (Buchignani, Indra, & Srivastava, 1985; Manhas, 2009). The four women who authorities allowed to enter as an ‘Act of Grace’—Mrs. Hira Singh, Harnam Kaur, Kartar Kaur, and Bishan Kaur Hundal—had also moved to Canada by 1913 (Agnew, 2003; Buchignani, Indra, & Srivastava, 1985; Manhas, 2009; Sharma, 1997). Broad’s pamphlet determines that Sarda Singh’s wife and child were allowed in Canada as an exception as well, so there may have been a total of eight women, excluding the children (1913), who were permitted to enter. Unfortunately, there are no accounts of these women’s lives, even though there is a reasonable amount of information available on most of their husbands. Nonetheless, these women’s experiences must have been severely constrained, since Anglo-Canadian women who held a higher status than theirs were still fighting to achieve basic citizenship rights (LeGates, 2001). Johnston has gathered some information about Harnam Kaur and Kartar Kaur in the Dictionary of Canadian Biography but it mainly outlines the details of their case and provides an overview of their migration stories (1998). Thus, racialized and gendered policies made South Asian women particularly vulnerable in Canada before the state officially allowed them to enter. However, their ability to exercise agency
should not be understated as will become evident through the accounts of women who arrived after immigration laws were modified.

In 1919, South Asian men’s vigorous attempts to convince the government to allow the migration of their wives and children finally succeeded (Johnston, 2011). Once again, this was a gendered and racialized policy that focused only on the wives and children of Asians (Habib, 2003). Authorities had to ensure that this new law was not publicized because anti-immigrant sentiments remained rampant among Anglo-Canadians, especially in British Columbia (Buchignani, Indra, & Srivastava, 1985; Johnston, 2011; Sharma, 1997). The Canadian government only changed the immigration policy because the growth of anti-British feelings in India was threatening the mother country’s hold on the colony. British authorities asked the Canadian government to adopt these modifications in order to appease Indians within Canada and those back home (Agnew, 2003; Gupta T. D., 1994). Canada was obliged to follow the agreement that Britain made between 1917 and 1919 at the Imperial War Conferences after its victory in World War I, which posited that members of the colonies who assisted Britain in the war effort would be allowed to bring their wives and children to other areas of the Empire (Habib, 2003; Manhas, 2009; Ralston, 1999). Yet, several immigration barriers were left in place that diminished the ability of most women and children to migrate to Canada. First, women had to provide proof of their marriage; second, their husbands had to live in an established residence; and third, an extensive amount of time was required for administrative work. Hence, only eleven women and nine children migrated between 1919 and 1923 (Buchignani, Indra, & Srivastava, 1985; Johnston, 1998; Manhas, 2009). Additionally, all immigrants had to undertake a medical examination when they arrived, which served as another barrier, restricting South Asian women’s entry (Johnston, 2011). This latter requirement caused a great amount of anxiety among some South Asian women because they knew that many Anglo-Canadians regarded Indians as an inferior and diseased people (Buchignani, Indra, & Srivastava, 1985; Hastings, 2008; House of Commons Debates, June 1910; Johnston, 2011). In 1924, authorities modified these procedures and a greater number of women arrived, but another immigration law instituted in 1930 prohibited the landing of Asiatic migrants (Basran & Bolaria, 2003). This policy, in addition to the Continuous Journey provision, halted migration from South Asia for a considerable period and many men
returned to Punjab. Nevertheless, the South Asian women who first migrated were fundamental to the establishment of a small, sustainable South Asian community in British Columbia.

South Asian women faced a substantial set of social and legal constraints in Canada. The legal system barely recognized Anglo-Canadian women’s rights at this time and it most certainly overlooked South Asian women’s rights. Moreover, some women’s organizations such as the National Council of Women in British Columbia, voted against the migration of South Asian women, despite the Ottawa council's support (Dua, 2000; Gupta T. D., 1994; Manhas, 2009). While many of these women believed that immigrants were taking away jobs in a period of recession, since financial concerns had precipitated much of the racial violence between South Asians and Canadians, many women were plainly racist and regarded South Asian people as a diseased and immoral group (Buchignani, Indra, & Srivastava, 1985; Manhas, 2009; Ralston, 1999). Hence, many elite women continued to exclude South Asian women from Canadian society. In fact, the efforts of many feminist groups, such as the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), to obtain the vote for themselves were centred on their ability to civilize Indian women and curtail the immigrant vote (Errington, 1993; LeGates, 2001; Valverde, 1992). Most Canadian women’s groups were hostile towards South Asian women, seeing them through the lens of imperialist interests. Still, South Asian women actually chose to remain confined within their homes as well. Pooja explains that when these women chose to enter the public sphere, they refrained from speaking Punjabi and worried about what Goray (whites) would think about them (2013). Eventually, these women gained the vote on April 2, 1947, alongside South Asian men (Agnew, 2003). In this policy, the federal government included a provision that the voter must be able to speak English or French, limiting the franchise to educated men; indeed, very few South Asian immigrants spoke English or French during this period, especially women (Buchignani, Indra, & Srivastava, 1985; Naidoo, 2003). Likewise, in some instances, the education system’s racist structure and inaccurate portrayal of South Asian cultural groups alienated these women and their children (Johnston, 2011). Overall, South Asians were denied full citizenship rights because they could not vote, attain employment, sponsor relatives, or obtain some types of services; they also faced segregation in areas such as movie theatres (Johnston, 2011). All of this affected South
Asian women’s experience of citizenship as subjects of the British Empire. South Asian women were denied the rights of citizenship until 1947—and even then, their experiences of citizenship were tempered by gender and race. But in the earlier study period, their day-to-day lives in Canada were particularly difficult.

The community’s inability to sponsor relatives isolated many women who were used to having an extended network of women complete household tasks collectively. Kel explains that her and her mother faced many hardships in Canada because they felt socially isolated. She hardly had anyone to share her feelings with as a child since her mother was busy taking care of her sick grandmother and siblings who suffered from a number of medical conditions (Kel, 2013). Likewise, Simran indicates that women rarely interacted with anyone in the public sphere and spoke to very few English-Canadians. Most South Asian women only met one another at the Gurdwara (Simran, 2013). This seclusion was particularly difficult for Jackur whose husband deserted her with two daughters (Giuliano, 2009). Traditionally, separation was regarded by many Punjabis as caused by the woman’s actions, so Jackur was blamed for and stigmatized by her husband’s absence (Bariana, 1997; Giuliano, 2009; Naidoo, 2003). Consequently, Jackur was forced to fend for herself in a hostile environment (Giuliano, 2009). Without family support, women in Canada had no one to turn to in extenuating circumstances such as desertion or domestic abuse (Kel, 2013; Sharma, 1997). In India, a woman had not only her parents but also her in-laws who might intervene or assist her (Badyal, 2003). Of course, this depended on each individual case; in-laws or parents may have chosen to isolate the woman instead of assisting her. In South Asia, if a husband deserted his wife, she would most commonly have returned to her parents’ home but that option was no longer available for a woman in Canada unless she moved back to India. There was no form of state-sponsored or community organized social assistance for victims of domestic abuse either (Kel, 2013; Simran, 2013). Generally, women’s social experience was constrained because strict immigration policies led to a deficit in the familial support that they enjoyed in Punjab, but these women’s networking skills based on old village ties from India would help them cope with this loss, which will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Moreover, this new society that South Asians constructed was also based on a gendered division of labour, supported by Indian cultural norms and Canadian beliefs.
Jaswant Kaur explicates, “The worlds of men and women were separated by sharply demarcated goals and duties. Feminine worlds and goals remained largely domestic while the masculine world dealt with the larger world outside of home” (Guzder, 2009). Traditional Indian notions of femininity undermined women by depicting them as dependants of men in the family and encouraged a protective attitude that was disempowering (Gupta T. D., 1994). Women were first dependent on their father, then their husbands, and later, their sons; they also had no rights to property (Dhillon, 2001; Nayar, 2012). Similarly, in regards to South Asian cultural beliefs, Shirwadkar states, “The construct of femininity emphasizes submissiveness, inferiority, being docile and dependent, and the importance of the patriarchal family” (2004, p. 862). The Canadian state reinforced this dependency by establishing immigration requirements that only allowed women to enter Canada as wives or daughters of men residing there. More importantly, these women relied on their husbands’ income for survival. They did not work outside of the home, as my narrators explain; Kel states, “No women worked in those days. I think it took quite a while before any women began finding paid employment outside of the home” (2013). Pooja similarly indicates,

And women stayed home. They kept house, brought up the children, and they made sure that they were home when their husbands returned from work. They made sure that they had tea ready for them right away. And there were no women with a paid job outside of the home (2013).

Both their statements reveal that women relied solely on men for financial support and portray the patriarchal assumptions that guided these women’s lives. Kel also explains that her mother had a tough time with her father, who went to India on the pretext of helping his children obtain medical care but got remarried instead (2013). She did not explain what happened to her mother after this point but she repeatedly mentioned that Indian men’s nature was dominating, while the women were afraid to seek help (Kel, 2013). Moreover, in the case of necessity, finding a paid job was exceedingly difficult. For instance, Jackur who raised her daughters alone, obtained employment at a Chinese farm (Giuliano, 2009). These circumstances were worsened by those who believed that women did not need an education because they would become homemakers; thus, many women had less than a primary education (Guzder, 2009).
Consequently, social and cultural perceptions tied South Asian Canadian women to the home and they remained solely dependent on their husbands with few alternatives.

Legal, social, and cultural restrictions all combined as a force that limited South Asian Canadian women’s citizenship experiences. For example, if no forms of legal aid were available for South Asian women to escape domestic abuse, social and cultural practises made it difficult to provide them with other options as well. Anglo-Canadian women had established some women’s groups that advocated for women’s rights but they excluded racialized women (LeGates, 2001). These organizations were primarily concerned with ‘white’, middle-class women’s suffrage, and they retreated after these women successfully achieved the vote (LeGates, 2001). Nevertheless, a few women such as Bessie Pullen-Burry, an adventure writer, and Isabella Ross Broad of the Presbyterian Church helped South Asian men advocate for the vote and the migration of their wives (Broad, 1913; Pullen-Burry, 1912). These were exceptional cases and their arguments often contained imperialist rhetoric about civilizing or Christianizing Indians. For example, Broad thought that it was important to institute these reforms because, “The heathen in India can say to the missionary, your message is not true, you treat the Hindus in your country unjustly” (as cited it Johnston, 2011, p. 42). Cultural beliefs would have halted the likelihood of South Asian women accepting social services because these are still considered to have a negative impact on one’s izzat (honour/respect) (Badyal, 2003; Bariana, 1997; Brown, 2007; Shirwadkar, 2004). South Asians’ conception of femininity was strongly intertwined with maintaining izzat; women were expected to uphold their honour by remaining virgins until marriage, so they were taught to stay away from men at a young age (Brown, 2007; Dhaddey, 2009; Dhillon, 2001; Rai H. K., 2009). Following these ideals, it was shameful for women to accept assistance from any organization or individual other than their husband, father, or son (Bariana, 1997; Nayar, 2012). As a result, separation was not a probable solution for these women because it would stigmatize them and their parents’ family (Giuliano, 2009). Bariana writes, “In the Punjab, an unsuccessful marriage is usually blamed on the female due to her perceived inability to adjust, obey and cater to the male’s elders and conduct the household duties” (1997, p. 197). The Canadian state did not provide childcare or welfare at this time for any women and only acknowledged South Asian women’s existence in relation to the men in their lives. Therefore, South Asian women faced
several cultural limitations in addition to legal and social constraints in Canada, which combined to keep them hidden in the shadows.

The Canadian government refused to acknowledge South Asian women’s citizenship status during the early part of the century and it was constrained in multiple ways. The legal apparatus regarded South Asian women as dependents of a ‘second-class’ immigrant group. Many South Asian women resided in Canada for years without formal legal status. All of these limitations were integral for the maintenance of a racially prejudiced and male-dominated state. Similarly, although South Asian men’s labour was valuable to the Canadian economy, the state denied them equal status and prohibited the migration of their families. Anglo-Canadians believed they were a superior race and valued ‘white’ women for their ability to reproduce this racial group, while they feared racialized women’s reproductive labour for challenging their state’s homogeneity. South Asian men had to fervently advocate for the right to have their wives join them in Canada, but even they regarded these women as subordinate to themselves. South Asian women’s independent migration was not considered possible, reflecting patriarchal social and cultural assumptions about women embedded in Canadian and South Asian societies. Eventually, Canadian authorities lifted the ban on the migration of the wives and children of South Asian men immigrants but legal, social, and cultural restrictions continued to marginalize them. The following chapter will examine how these women sought to counteract limitations that they faced within Canada.
3. **Moving out of the Shadows: South Asian Canadian Women Assert their Autonomy, 1919-1949**

South Asian women’s legal status was unique because, although as the wives of British subjects, they were entitled to the same privileges as Anglo-Canadian women, racialized and gendered citizenship criteria in Canada eradicated these rights. However, these women sought to move out of the shadows by pushing the boundaries of an unfair social, cultural, and legal apparatus that discriminated against them. They found ways to maintain control over various aspects of their lives and utilize their agency, while moving to Canada gave them the opportunity to adopt newer forms of autonomy. These women’s conception of themselves as Canadian citizens, despite a denial of formal status until 1947, illustrate the value that this legal status held for many immigrant women. Once again, I am analyzing citizenship as a concept that involved how individuals negotiated their position. I am incorporating the voices of women—views from ‘below’—that were seldom regarded as essential to the understanding of citizenship until very recently. Today, scholars regard how individuals experience the laws of the land (whose boundaries they reside within) as central to the concept of citizenship and assess how a denial of legal status serves a very particular purpose for the state (Stasiulus & Bakan, 2003). The Canadian state may not have viewed South Asian women as true Canadian citizens but South Asian women regarded themselves as active Canadian citizens. They also contributed to Canadian society in a way that would be regarded as good citizenship by contemporary standards; thus, they were somewhat in an anomalous position. This chapter will examine South Asian Canadian women’s use of their agency and autonomy to determine how they embraced key values associated with good citizenship—such as helping others, obeying laws, participating in the community, and accepting others’ differences—to secure a better position for themselves within Canada.
3.1. Cultural Autonomy

South Asian cultural and social values encouraged individuals to assist others, so in a new environment, this became the community’s strength and helped it thrive. The men were instrumental in helping one another find employment and the women enhanced this network (Buchignani, Indra, and Srivastava, 1985; Nayar, 2012; Pooja, 2013). For instance, Bishan Kaur and Kapoor were always ready to help others; they opened their home for newcomers before these migrants could find a place of their own in which to live (Johnston, 2011). K.K. Johal explains that her mother used to notify immigration officials when she had accommodation available to help Indian immigrants, free of charge (2009). Pooja expresses the logic that was sometimes behind this assistance:

If you were from a particular district in Punjab such as Ludhiana, Ferozepur, or Jalandhar, and I came from the same district, then I would think that I should help you. But if you were from the same village or anywhere closer, well then, you were family and I had to help you (2013).

Regional ties from Punjab formed an important bond among South Asian women. In addition, all three participants explained that helping others was a central component of their lives as well as their mothers’. When commenting on the overall experience, Pooja states, “The biggest thing was that people at that time went out of their way to help each other” (2013). Likewise, Kel illustrates this through a description of her mother’s life:

Well, my mother was a very quiet person, she did not talk much. She simply completed her chores but she helped everyone that she could help at that time. If somebody had to go someplace, she would be there for them. My mother went through a tough time with my dad (2013).

Despite facing hardships, these women continued to assist others, so this was a significant way that they chose to use their agency. On the other hand, Guzder’s mother and grandmother aided women who had alcoholic or abusive husbands (2009). Perhaps, assisting one another established an outlet for these women to express themselves and their beliefs, while living in a patriarchal society and gave them a sense of fulfillment; one can only speculate based on literature about helping others today (Austin, 2001; Meier & Stutzer, 2008; Wuthnow, 1991). More importantly, these women
made the decision to employ their energies towards the betterment of society. Hence, despite limited resources and numerous constraints, South Asian Canadian women used their agency to extend a helping hand towards others and acted as good citizens.

These women’s lives centred on the family and community, which formulated a refuge for them. Simran, Kel, and Pooja’s responses determine that their mothers’ daily activities revolved around their families and family events; this also protected them from the racist attitudes of Anglo-Canadians (2013). For example, most men had to cut their hair to obtain employment but women could maintain their hair in accordance with Sikh beliefs because they primarily stayed at home (Guzder, 2009). This coincides with the contentions of anti-racist feminists that South Asian Canadian women never opposed the sexism within their culture because racism erected a greater barrier in their lives; whereas their traditions, family, and community gave them a sense of identity as well as support (Bannerji, 2000; Gupta T. D., 1994). Guzder’s statement exemplifies this: “Family was highly valued in our cultural enclave and was juxtaposed beside the opening doors to a Canadian milieu where historical obstacles to minorities were largely denied” (2009, p. 139). Thus, the family and community provided an alternate sphere for these women that shielded them from overt racism within the public sphere.

Although separation from larger family units presented hardships for many women, it was also positive because it gave some women an opportunity to express greater autonomy. Traditionally, the Punjabi family structure can be hierarchical, so in-laws may dominate daughters-in-law, especially when they arrive as newlyweds. The heads of the household may make all the decisions affecting these women without asking their opinion and reinforce this subjugation through teasing, taunting, or violence (Bariana, 1997; Sodhi, 2002). In fact, Simran’s great grandmother gave her mother a hard time as a daughter-in-law (2013). However, Guzder’s grandmother was able to move away from the taunts of her extended network of in-laws by migrating to Canada, so the new family structure may have allowed some immigrant women to obtain a greater amount of autonomy (Guzder, 2009). These women had more choice in Canada and could make decisions concerning their own lives. For instance, Guzder states, “She [mother] learned to drive a car and manage the long absences of my father’s work, which fostered a transforming autonomy in her life” (2009, p. 142). Similarly, Dhaddey’s mother attended many family sponsored weddings because she had a lot of free time
and could make these decisions (2009). Weddings and other events in Canada allowed women to exercise a certain amount of agency and autonomy because they became the main women to carry on these traditions without other elder men and women to act as the emissaries of tradition. This is evident through Pooja’s narration about her mother:

At our wedding, the women were doing giddha and the men were not allowed there. Men and women never congregated together in these giddhas. But my husband somehow showed up there, so my mother saw him and decided to let him secretly watch. She said “aaja puth [come son]” and she let him look from outside of the window (2013).

Pooja’s mother’s example shows that this was one realm where women held a certain amount of agency in Canada. As a result, changes in the familial structure fashioned space for some women to resist cultural norms or adopt a greater decision-making role.

Furthermore, South Asian Canadian women may have lost the familial support to conduct larger household tasks but these women constructed new networks amongst themselves. By the 1920s, the presence of other South Asian women in regions such as Paldi or Fraser Mills reduced the alienation of women migrants. Pooja narrates how her mother collectively completed projects like making vardiya with her friends:

They would get together because it was a large task. Why go through all that trouble by yourself? They would get a big batch of dahl [lentil] and soak it, then they would grind it. They would all get together and have so much fun doing it. They would get these little kundian [hooks], which were made out of stone, and a koatna, which was a big long stick. They would use these to mash the lentil and spices together because there were no blenders at that time. They would sing and do fun things like tell jokes. They would make the patties and then put them out to dry. They usually did that in the summer when the weather was hot. After the patties were dry, they would divide them up amongst themselves. It was a project they all did together. They did the same with ladoos and other foods because you could not buy Indian foods. You had to be able to make it yourself, so they made ladoos and pakaudiyas for dahi. Thus, they did a lot of cooking and other fun things together (2013).

Berar also recalls that her mother and the rest of the women used to gather together to make quilts (2009). Moreover, women’s collective networks brought them closer to one another and strengthened old ties. For example, Kel credits her aunt for helping her overcome many problems that she encountered after marriage in Canada, which brought
them closer together (2013). Additionally, Dhaddey indicates that her family has maintained many of the friendships that her mother once began (2009). Pooja is in touch with the families of her parents’ friends as well (2013). Nonetheless, these women lived within very small South Asian communities, so loneliness was still part of their experience; but women in the same neighbourhood usually spoke to one another (Kel, 2013). As Kel explains, “There was about six, seven, or eight South Asian families in total. I think the smaller the community, the better it was because everyone got along with each other back then” (2013). Furthermore, if there were few South Asians in their area, then they socialized with other immigrants such as the Japanese and Chinese (Johnston, 2011; Kel, 2013). Hence, South Asian women’s ability to network and establish new relationships became one of the main ways that they collectively employed their agency to surmount social and cultural barriers.

South Asian Canadian women also expressed their agency through the retention of cultural activities. They continued to do giddha, which conveyed a multitude of feelings. These women organized traditional events where they would sing bolis (folk songs), play the dholki and dance (Puri, 2009). These celebrations were a major component of South Asian Canadian women’s lives and gave them another opportunity to utilize their agency, albeit within gendered limitations, as is evident through Pooja’s description of her mother:

She liked to dance giddha, cook, and be with her friends. They would have fun together. She was very good at giddha but in those days they would draw the purdhay (blinds) because the men were not supposed to watch them dance, so they would dance hidden inside the house (2013).

The Gurdwara became the second place where these women extended their influence through sewa (service); they would make rotis and complete other housekeeping activities (Kel, 2013; Pooja, 2013; Simran, 2013). Pooja portrays a strong tie between the communities and the existence of a large network drawn together by celebrations:

In Abbotsford we would celebrate Guru Nanak Dev Ji’s Birthday in November and we all used to go there. Everyone went to all these different ones. In Vancouver, it was Guru Gobind Singh Ji’s Birthday and I think in New Westminster it was Guru Arjun Dev Ji’s Birthday. The largest celebrations were held in Victoria for Vaisakh and everyone would attend those (2013).
Dhaddey and Berar both fondly recall attending the Vaisakhi celebrations in Victoria as well (2009). Kel did not remember taking part in any large events but she mentioned the Jodh Mela\textsuperscript{52} (2013). Furthermore, Simran indicates that the Gurdwara was the main place where women interacted. When I asked Simran if her mother liked Canada, she replied,

> Yes, I think the few women that lived in Canada had more fun here than in India. They would go to the temple for all of the celebrations and they cooked everything there. They would stay overnight, all five, six, seven women—how many there were at that time, and they would have fun as well as cook for the next day (2013).

Overall, South Asian women were able to use cultural forms of expression to create an alternate sphere for themselves within their own communities.

### 3.2. Adapting to Canadian Society

These women spent most of their time within the home but they still found ways to interact with the public sphere. For example, Dhan Kaur drove to her friends' homes and took them shopping every day (Johnston, 2011). Guzder's mother also asserted her autonomy through driving; she drove everywhere throughout Vancouver Island, despite her father's adverse reaction to her first accident (2009). For the 'daughters\textsuperscript{53} that grew up in Canada, driving was an important facet of autonomy as well. Simran's role in the Gurdwara specifically involved driving: "I was the driver whenever everyone got together. I would pick up the women, bring them to the Gurdwara, and then take them back home. I think I started driving when my daughter was born in 1956" (2013). Few women drove before this period but they found other means of transportation. Kel describes how they would all travel from one place to another: "Nobody had a vehicle at that time. There was a man from Vancouver who had a mattress and a truck, so we went in there. We would go to the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Avenue Temple and the other temple altogether in the truck" (2013). O'ree reveals that she and her mother would walk to town to do all of the shopping (2009). Additionally, women used streetcars to get around the city (Pooja, 2013; Simran, 2013). Hence, South Asian women’s ability to navigate their way through the public sphere,
both physically and symbolically, was constrained but they found ways to negotiate some independence within these circumstances.

More importantly, these women’s interaction with the public sphere involved a number of strategies, including the adoption of Canadian attire. Pooja describes this transition:

The women never wore Indian clothes: one, you could not get them, and two, they tried hard to adapt. My mom always wore dresses and so did most women, even some of the Anglo-Canadian women. They would wear it to maybe a bit past the knees but they all wore dresses. No women wore pants. The South Asian women still wore their *chunnis* [headscarves] with their dresses but when they went to town to do shopping or anything, they would put it in their neck like a scarf, keeping their head bare (2013).

But the wearing of Canadian attire was not always by choice, as Simran acknowledges:

The women hardly left the home, partly because the South Asian men would not let them step out of the house wearing a *salwar kameez*. When the husband went to the airport to pick up his wife, he would buy a dress and take it with him to the airport. When his wife arrived he would give it to her and tell her to first go change in the washroom and then come out (2013).

Her statement demonstrates that dressing like Anglo-Canadian women was imperative to enter the public sphere and it was not always a part of these women’s decision. Most men instructed their wives to throw away their traditional outfits on the journey to Canada (Johnston, 2011). Pooja also illustrates how people from outside the South Asian community reacted when they saw her wearing a *salwar kameez* for her wedding photographs,

I think everybody on the street stopped and looked at me when I was walking from the photographer’s studio to my car because they had never seen anyone wearing that type of outfit on Columbia Street. I rushed into my car and came home. It was a big thing. I think dress was very important and education, these things were necessary to become more modern (2013).
Thus, changes in attire were partly a reflection of an inability to obtain Indian clothes but it was also intertwined with a genuine desire to integrate within Canadian society. In addition, Pooja’s allusion to becoming more modern suggests that they regarded assimilation as necessary in some ways to integrate. Thus, adopting Canadian attire was an innovative way for South Asian Canadian women to enter the public sphere without attracting negative attention.

The narratives of these women suggest that some individuals may have stopped adhering to specific traditional notions that undermined women. Simran explains that gendered cultural expectations shifted from one generation to the next in her family. For example, her great grandmother had a preference for boy children:

My older sister was born in India and I was born in Canada. My uncle used to tell me that whenever they dressed me up in a white dress or any other outfit and enthusiastically showed my great grandmother, she would say, “pao pathii’ch, pao chullay’ch innu” [put her in the stove]. However, after my brother was born, they dressed him up to show my great grandmother and they said, “maa innu pathii’ch paa daiya aapa?” [Mom should we put him in the stove?], then she got mad at them and told them never to repeat it (Simran, 2013).

However, she reveals that her mother, father, aunts and uncles never differentiated between their children based on gender, which portraits a change in gendered beliefs (Simran, 2013). Likewise, Pooja’s parents did not hold a preference for sons, while some individuals in the community still preferred and favoured male children. She recalls,

Yes, I think there was a preference for sons but not in our house; my dad could not care less about having a boy. One time, something quite hilarious happened; someone came to our house and approached my dad in the garden. He said, “You have this nice house, and all this land but too bad you do not have a boy to inherit it”. My dad picked up his shovel and said, “You say that one more time and I will hit you with this shovel, get out of my yard”. However, I think gender mattered for other people, it was important to them (2013).

Kel affirms that there were benefits to being born a male because boys and men had more freedom (2013). On the other hand, many of the first Sikh and Hindu women that migrated to Canada were convinced by the men in their lives to adapt and actually embrace more freedom, although this may have been driven by Canadian realities. For
example, Bains writes, “[Nanna Ji] (maternal grandfather) urged my Nanni Ji (maternal grandmother) to wear dresses and appease the xenophobic attitudes of the host society, a strategy that reflected the pragmatic survival agenda of the Sikh community” (2009, p. 141). This can be regarded as assimilationist but it highlights these people's desire to succeed. In some cases, these strategies accompanied genuine desires for change. For instance, Bariana explains that her grandfather who migrated in 1903, “…openly promoted and esteemed the women in our home and made us feel self-sufficient, secure, confident, and contributing” (1997, p. 19). Moreover, Mahon’s father wanted all of the children to receive a well-rounded education, so he enrolled them for dance and music lessons (2009). Perhaps, things began to change for some women after migration, especially in terms of educational opportunities.

In addition, these women worked hard to become a part of this new country by learning English and embracing Canada as their home. South Asian Canadian women tried their best to learn English but it was a daunting task to accomplish without attending school (Mahon, 2009; Puri, 2009). However, they managed to learn enough to do shopping or complete minor errands (Berar, 2009; Johnston, 2011). If language was a barrier, they used their children as translators to interact with the outside world (Dhaddey, 2009). Pooja illustrates this:

Mother tried to speak with anyone who my dad brought home and she was very hospitable. In broken English, she would say, “Sit down, sit down, I make tea” but the hospitality was there. She was always smiling and laughing with them. I had to sometimes go to the doctor with her to interpret what he was saying and vice versa. It was funny because she used to say, “You don’t tell him everything”….She could not say Wilson, so she used to say Wirson, “Dr. Wirson, me sore, me sore, me sore”. Then he would say, “Okay, okay, and we’ll look after you”. She would always respond by saying “Okay”. She never knew what he was saying but she would still say okay (2013).

More importantly, these women taught their daughters to adopt Canadian society as their own and appreciate what this country has given them. For instance, O’ree states:

I am so proud of my parents and their achievements. I have realized that life must have been tough for my mother who left India at such a young age. She loves Canada and is very proud of her country. She has instilled in us a code of ethics by not taking advantage of the system since so
much comes to them through Health Care, pensions, etc. To her paying taxes is a good thing (2009, p. 86).

Hence, O’ree’s words show that these women understood the importance of Canada’s liberal welfare programs and held a sense of gratitude for these services. Pooja explained that there was no medical services plan (MSP) at that time but her family was lucky because they were friends with the doctor and he never charged them (2013). Perhaps, these women’s thankfulness came from the fact that they knew what life had been like before the state provided South Asians with any of these facilities. Kel, Pooja, and Simran all provided a positive account of their experience in Canada as well. Simran stated, “Well, I love Canada. I like to live here” (2013). Analogously, when asked what citizenship means to her, Pooja responded, “Well, I think it means a sense of belonging. When they sing “O Canada” I feel patriotic and I really sing; maybe because I am born here. I am not sure why but I feel a sense of belonging” (2013). Kel was less enthusiastic but she said living in Canada was alright. She also suggested that Canadian citizenship had benefits such as pension, medical care, and other forms of help, while denouncing migrants who abuse the system (2013). Therefore, South Asian women utilized multiple strategies to amalgamate within Canadian society, despite facing discrimination, and revealed a strong sense of pride as Canadians.

### 3.3. The Education System and South Asians

The majority of the first South Asian women (and men) to come to Canada had little or no formal education, but they saw it as essential for their children’s success. For example, Besant Kaur was often in touch with Sarjit and Jackie’s teachers (Johnston, 2011). Simran explains, “I think most parents were okay with their children receiving an education because they sent their kids to school, regardless of gender” (2013). Indeed, although some families thought it was unnecessary for women to acquire an education, most parents recognized it as vital (Dhaddey, 2009), especially if their children were to build future careers (O’ree, 2009). For instance, Besant Kaur wanted her daughters to become doctors (Johnston, 2011). Similarly, Puri’s father advised, “Get an education. We’re blind because we can’t read. Learn and become something” (2009, p. 58). Pendakur’s father also encouraged his children to train for their futures in Canada and
moved to Duncan so that his children could attend a better school (2009). However, some women, such as Kel and Simran, whose families sent them back to India for some time before returning to Canada, had their education interrupted. Yet, most South Asian young women partook in one of British Columbia’s main apparatuses, the public school system, which formed an important part of their citizenship experience and allowed them to assert their autonomy in the future.

Indeed, education was significant for the success of South Asian women born and raised in Canada. Interestingly, many South Asian women expressed that they did not feel a large amount of overt discrimination directed towards them in the education system, although the system itself favoured the dominant ‘white’ Christian group through its curriculum, holidays and celebrations, and rhythm of the school year. Kel states,

Our principal was very tough. I remember that once I was chewing gum because I forgot that I was not supposed to do that at school but I was scared to admit it. When the principal found out that it was me, I got in a lot of trouble because she was so strict. We had one schoolroom, which went from grade one to five. Moreover, children did not discriminate against one another the way they do now through bullying or calling each other Hindus, etc. Everybody was the same then, no one said anything negative to anyone (2013).

Nonetheless, some South Asian children faced discrimination within the school system but they challenged these ideas or created their own coping mechanisms. Sometimes the discrimination was based on ignorance regarding the way that South Asian cultural beliefs were presented. For example, when Sarjit’s teacher inaccurately described the practise of sati as a prominent custom among all Indians, Sarjit assertively opposed the interpretation by stating that her teacher had made a false assumption; in return, Sarjit received detention for her outspokenness (Johnston, 2011). The critique of sati to denounce South Asian cultural practises was widespread within sectors of Anglo-Canadian society. In fact, discourses about widow-burning and other ‘primitive’ practises were used by missionaries and Anglo women to claim that ‘Hindus’ were inferior, and that India required western intervention (Dalmia-Luderitz, 1992; Rai S. M., 2008; Valverde, 1992). Of course, the school curriculum consistently perpetuated these types of perceptions about South Asians that subordinated their cultural practises. On the other hand, education gave these women the skills necessary to participate in the public
sphere because they acquired the ability to speak fluent English. Pooja is a prominent member within the community today who has won numerous awards for her service but it was her educational background that strengthened her ability to become involved in public activities (2013). Likewise, Simran handled all of the duties related to their store, while her husband worked at other jobs, so her education and English-speaking skills allowed her to manage these affairs (2013). Some of these women received a higher education and entered professions such as nursing or teaching (Pendakur, 2009; Rai H. K., 2009). Thus, the women born and raised in Canada benefitted from the education system, which provided them with skills to better exercise some autonomy and enter the public sphere.

3.4. Financial Decision-Making

One of the common highlights in the narratives of the first South Asian Canadian women was shopping, which was an integral factor in creating autonomy because purchasing power generated a form of independence and enhanced these women’s ability to engage with the public sphere. For example, O’ree explains that her mother used to walk to town by herself to go shopping and bartered with the vegetable man (2009). Likewise, when Besant Kaur came to Canada she knew little English but she learned enough to do the shopping (Johnston, 2011). Pooja illustrates the importance of shopping in women’s experiences as immigrants as well:

It used to be 99 cents day at Woodward’s and all the women would get together to go to Vancouver because there was only one big location. This would occur once a month, so all of the women would go together on the streetcar. They bought bed sheets, pillows, socks, and anything else that was on for 99 cents. They did all the shopping very well and never complained that they had any problems. They fended for themselves quite nicely (2013).

This shows how they made financial decisions related to the home and developed their own budgeting practises. Similarly, Kel explains,

It was a great time, even though it was the depression, we had the ration, so everything went okay. You would take the ration and buy sugar or
butter with it but most of the families had cows, so they made their butter at home (2013).

Kel’s statement shows that these women kept track of certain finances related to their domestic duties as well. Consequently, shopping was more than a pastime; it was an assertion of autonomy that encompassed control over a specific form of financial decision-making.

The first South Asian women in Canada did not have careers but a few found ways to make an income out of necessity or to earn extra money; sometimes their children acted as helping hands in these circumstances. For instance, Parmar’s father died at a young age but her mother lacked the language skills required for a job, so her elder sister found employment to support the family (2009). By contrast, when Sidhu’s father passed away, her brothers had to obtain paid jobs at a young age to support their family. Intriguingly, in both these cases, the mothers became the heads of the households (Parmar, 2009; Sidhu, 2009). They challenged the patriarchal framework of the family structures, even in the case where the mother was relying on sons for family income. In South Asian cultures, when a woman gives birth to a son, she begins to wield more power in the family, and as the son grows older, the mother possesses more autonomy because South Asian cultures teach children to respect their elders (Johal K. K., 2009; Johnston, 2011; Naidoo, 2003). This latter fact demonstrates that women would hold a greater amount of autonomy when a patriarch no longer existed within the family. Even women whose husbands were still living exercised some financial authority based on their husbands’ wishes—such as K. K. Johal, whose father wanted her mother to learn about finances and opened a separate bank account for her (2009). Likewise, Kapoor may have been the first South Asian Canadian man to designate a portion of his company’s shares for his wife (Johnston, 2011). In addition, K. K. Johal was one of the first South Asian Canadian women to start her own business by providing board to tenants in 1944 (2009). A few women also began berry-picking as a supplementary source of income to their husbands’ earnings or sold extra milk (Dhaddey, 2009). Therefore, utilizing their agency or autonomy to make financial decisions became vital for some of the first South Asian Canadian women.
Financial decision-making and paid employment formed a significant component of the lives of many of the first South Asian daughters as well. Sarjit and Jackie were the first South Asian Canadian women to become doctors (Johnston, 2011). Pooja also had a job, she explains:

I was the first Indian person to work at a well-known bank in New Westminster, or maybe all of BC for that matter. This was a big thing and everyone was talking about it. In fact, the men at the Gurdwara said it was a very happy day that someone from our people was working at the bank (2013).

This was significant for the community because it was still difficult for South Asians to find paid employment based on racist notions and discriminatory practices (Dhaddey, 2009). Additionally, Simran handled the family store and began working elsewhere after they closed it. She states,

I worked for a telegraph office after we closed our store. One of our daughters got married by then. I worked for Mr. T; you probably do not know him but most of our community did because he had a wholesale business. He opened up a store in Gastown where the steam clock is now, and it used to be in the corner; this is where I worked for a few years (2013).

Nevertheless, many of the first South Asian Canadian daughters were homemakers but they also participated in small activities to earn money such as berry-picking or selling homemade items (Dhaddey, 2009; Kel, 2013). Consequently, many South Asian women born in Canada had paid jobs and they acted as good citizens who made financial decisions in a more welcoming environment, despite a lack of legal recognition.

3.5. Political Involvement

Early South Asian Canadian women did not possess a legal citizen status, so they were unable to participate in the political process, yet they negotiated their position. Perhaps, the first women to challenge political constraints were Harnam Kaur and Kartar Kaur, who made the voyage to Canada, despite the restriction against their migration (Agnew, 2003; Buchignani, Indra, & Srivastava, 1985). Johnston affirms, “They intended
to establish the right of wives to join their husbands in Canada and their purpose was well advertised among Sikhs” (1998, para. 2). The two women who came on the Komagata Maru, Kishen Kaur Tumowal and Mrs. Raghunath should be recognized for the same reason (Canadian Sikh Heritage, 2011; SFU Library, 2011). However, most women that migrated in the period between 1919 and mid-century did not formally challenge the political system. Pooja mentions a notable exception:

There was one woman in Vancouver who was politically involved and her daughter lives in Victoria today. This woman was a bit of an activist but not in a bad sense. She used to get up and lecture in the Gurdwara. She would say that we should do this because this happened in India….She was good and she had a great voice (2013).

In addition, some held a keen interest in Indian politics, so they received updates from newspapers or their husbands (O’ree, 2009). Overall, none of the South Asian women were heavily active in politics during this period and their daughters stayed away from the political field as well. Still, Kel, Pooja, and Simran indicate that the vote was (and is) an important right but it was the only way that they remained connected to the political sphere (2013). Pooja explains her voting strategy:

Well politics just do not interest me that much but it is the person standing up for office that matters to me the most. Yes, I am interested to the point when I am going to vote and who should win. I usually know who the candidates are and what they have said or done in the political sphere, so that is how I operate (2013).

The first South Asian Canadian women seldom participated in formal political activities other than voting—a right that they only received after 1947—but they appreciated Canada as their adopted home, despite racial policies that excluded them from the political process.

3.6. Conclusion

The first South Asian Canadian women proved to be more than their husbands’ shadows and confronted many hardships, while establishing the roots of a durable community. These women utilized their autonomy to contribute to society, and although
they focused their attention on the South Asian community in Canada, this group forms a formidable part of the multicultural mosaic today. Consequently, they acted as good Canadian citizens, despite their marginalized status. They also negotiated their position within tough circumstances and adopted cultural forms of agency. These women built networks amongst themselves and collectively faced hardships. The new environment also allowed some women to transgress older cultural expectations without provoking community censure. They interacted with the public sphere by driving or taking streetcars and all of them adopted Canadian attire. Most importantly, they held a strong sense of pride as Canadians, even though they were not formally considered citizens until 1947. Much of this would persist for South Asian women that migrated after 1967 but this second group would hold a legal status that altered some of their experiences. Some changes within societal expectations and attitudes among South Asian Canadians also differentiated this second group’s experiences. Hence, Chapter 4 will discuss the challenges that South Asian Canadian Women faced after 1967 and demonstrate how Canadian society at large remained discriminatory, despite recognizing these women as equal citizens.

If we who are not white, and also women, have not yet seen that here we live in a prison, that we are doing time, then we are fools, playing unenjoyable games with ourselves. I won’t go so far, however, as to say that we deserve what we get (Srivastava, 1993, p. 121).

This poem by Srivastava captures the views of many South Asian women who felt entrapped by the racism that they encountered within Canada. In 1967, the Canadian government based immigration requirements on the Points System, which initiated the second phase of mass South Asian immigration. The adoption of these new policies led to a diversification among the types of South Asians that entered Canada (Agnew, 2003; Basran & Bolaria, 2003; O’Connell, 2000). For the first time, they began to migrate increasingly from regions outside of Punjab. This chapter will examine the period from 1967 to 1997 and highlight the modifications in policy that affected South Asian Canadian women’s citizenship experiences. There was a substantial demand for educated professionals in 1967 and the new immigration policy reflected this need. It eliminated racial quotas, setting education and employability skills as the key determinants for immigration (Basran & Bolaria, 2003; Gupta T. D., 1994). Nevertheless, these laws had an adverse impact on South Asian women, who remained ‘second-class’ citizens in many ways (Sharma, 1997). It is women’s stories, particularly their perspective, which help us to understand their encounters with Canada’s legal, social, and cultural structures because they illustrate how various barriers negatively shaped their experiences. Hartsock’s theoretical position of standpoint feminism is essential in arriving at a fuller understanding about the way that the structure of power and domination works (1983). Hartsock may have overlooked race in her critique and how various forces interact to dominate a group but her epistemological framework is useful to identify why South Asian Canadian women faced hardships during this era. These women’s own narratives of their daily lives display that the political structure, which
propagated inequitable immigration and citizenship policies, remained problematic in the late 20\textsuperscript{th} century, even though it appeared to eradicate racism and sexism. This chapter will demonstrate how South Asian women who moved to Canada after 1967 continued to face numerous legal, social, and cultural barriers. First, this chapter will provide an overview of the Points System and its effects. Second, it will examine the challenges that kept these women from attaining equal access to employment, social services, and education. Furthermore, this analysis will exhibit how the system continued to breed an underlying racialized and gendered ideology concealed by the rhetoric of multiculturalism.

4.1. Immigration and the Points System

The Points System of 1967 and 1976 introduced a milieu of change within Canada, altering immigration requirements and launching an era of alleged multiculturalism.\textsuperscript{55} Zaman explains the rationale behind Canadian immigration policies: “For Canada to compete in the global economy, immigration is absolutely essential in order to maintain a viable and competitive labour force. Canada lacks both a younger population that provides a cheap labour pool and a steady natural population growth that provides an abundance of labour” (2010, p. 2). Although this quote applies to the latter part of the century and the beginning of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, the federal government amended immigration requirements in 1967 as well because of a fundamental need for skilled professionals, which they sought to fulfill through immigration (Basran & Bolaria, 2003). Thus, immigration has been utilized to respond to a demand for various types of employment needs. Moreover, Canadian authorities attempted to abolish the criteria that excluded individuals based on race, gender, and class through the Points System (Gogia & Slade, 2011; Habib, 2003). Initially, these policies were modified in 1962, eliminating race as a basis for immigration but the new system was adopted in 1967 (Habib, 2003; Zaman, 2010). These changes marked a transition in Canadian history from previous attempts at creating a ‘white’ homogenous country to acknowledging the contributions of other groups and constructing a national agenda that advanced the institution of a multicultural mosaic (Rezai-Rashti, 1999). The 1967 policy emphasized education, training, and occupational skills, while eradicating requirements based on race or ethnicity (Agnew, 2003; Basran & Bolaria, 2003; Gogia & Slade, 2011; Gupta T.
D., 1994; Habib, 2003). Following this initial modification, the Prime Minister of Canada implemented the Multicultural Policy in 1971 (Nayar, 2012). In this period, Canada reconstructed its image as a fair and unbiased nation; it reinvented a past, conveniently forgetting its cruel treatment of racialized groups, notably Aboriginal peoples (Lawrence, 2002; Thobani, 2007). From 1967 to 1997, the immigration department adopted a series of reforms, which hypothetically advanced the Points System’s inclusiveness (Gogia & Slade, 2011). This system remained relatively the same between 1967 and 1997 with minor changes that had little impact on its overall structure (Agnew, 2003; Gogia & Slade, 2011; Habib, 2003). Nevertheless, the large shift towards neoliberalism from the 1980s onwards is imperative to note because it has had several negative implications for new immigrants such as the loss of a security net; in fact, neoliberalism has created a greater number of disparities among people (Stasiulus & Bakan, 2003). In addition, Bannerji (2000), Thobani (2007), and Razack (2002) suggest that multiculturalism conveniently sidelined Aboriginal claims for justice as victims of state sponsored violence and racism, although this may not have been the main intention of the government at the time. Equivalently, this policy undermined the demands of Quebec separatists by celebrating all of the cultural groups present in Canada (Bannerji, 2000). The federal government may have also embraced these changes as a response to racialized individuals’ increasing strength as a political constituency and public opinion’s shift in favour of these changes (Johnston, 1984). Hence, multiculturalism could kill two birds with one stone, while improving the chances of a federal election victory.

Nevertheless, these interpretations of the motives behind the new immigration requirements may be somewhat cynical, for the system benefitted some groups. Johnston states, “In 1967, Asians were placed on the same footing as all other residents of Canada — able to sponsor or nominate relatives of any degree” (1984, p. 14). Thus, families of racialized groups could finally reunite (Habib, 2003). Most migrants came to Canada under the family-class sponsor category during this era and South Asians formed a significant component (Basran & Bolaria, 2003; Gogia & Slade, 2011; Zaman, 2010). The modifications that allowed refugees to enter Canada have also assisted many individuals who were searching for asylum, even though this could be limited and sexist in character (Vineberg, 2011). In theory, policy changes provided racialized individuals with legal support to challenge discrimination. It gave thousands of
immigrants the opportunity to start a new life, and many individuals such as Radha, Inderjeet, and Trisha are thankful to be here, despite encountering many hardships (2013). Overall, these policies altered the tone of the Canadian state, which now sounded much more sympathetic towards racialized groups, despite its previous discriminatory attitude towards them.

In addition, the composition of the South Asian population altered immensely between 1967 and 1997. At the beginning, Punjabis predominated, having to reunite with their extended families (Basran & Bolaria, 2003). Nevertheless, the focus on skills provided other South Asian groups the opportunity to enter, but this category remained dominated by Indians either from Punjab or other Indian provinces for most of the 1970s, which magnified through the 1980s and 1990s (Basran and Bolaria, 2003; Buchignani, 1987; Gogia and Slade, 2011). India was one of the top two source countries for immigration to Canada in 1983, 1986-1988, 1993, and 1995-1997 (Gogia and Slade, 2011). Larger groups of South Asians from other nations such as Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka mainly entered Canada in the 1990s (Trisha, 2013; Zaman, 2006). According to Statistics Canada, 8,483 Indians entered Canada as landed immigrants in 1980, while 76 came from Bangladesh, 10 from Nepal, 881 from Pakistan, and 144 from Sri Lanka (Employment and Immigration Canada, 1982). In 1990, these figures rose to 12,572 from India, 603 from Bangladesh, 22 from Nepal, 2,138 from Pakistan, and 3,430 from Sri Lanka (Employment and Immigration Canada, 1991). Hence, by 1997, the South Asian community had diversified, and as more South Asians made Canada their home, it became a well-settled branch of the South Asian diaspora.

Many South Asian women migrated to Canada during this second period but few came under the Points System as primary applicants. A closer analysis of this discrepancy reveals that the criteria of this system were male oriented. T. D. Gupta elaborates:

Such criteria as education, employability in “open occupations,” and knowledge of English/French and other similar factors render ineligible most immigrant women, particularly from the working classes and from the so-called Third World countries. The Points System is an example of systemic racism and sexism since it adversely affects women of color who apply for immigration into Canada (1994, p. 64).
Zaman indicates that an emphasis on skilled labour within the Canadian immigration system has marginalized women from peripheral countries, leading to the commodification of their labour (2006). The system has denigrated racialized women’s skills and accredited those abilities that have historically been men’s, yet it has claimed to provide equal opportunities. S. Rai’s concept of whose knowledge is valued and how, clearly exhibits that men’s knowledge, particularly from the developed world, is valued over women’s, a perception that has been apparent within the Points System (2008). The double standards espoused by these policies have also been evident through the feminization of the care and domestic sector (Stasiulis and Bakan, 2003). The feminization of these sectors refers to the concentration of women (often racialized women) in these areas because most Canadians have regarded them as more appropriate for jobs related to traditional concepts of women’s work (Hamilton, 2005; Stasiulis & Bakan, 2003). It is in this field that racialized women have been recognized, but those skills have been assigned a low value. Within the purview of the Points System, employment in the care or domestic sector has not been considered a valid occupation for migration as a primary applicant or to obtain citizenship, despite the need for these workers. Simultaneous to this denial of citizenship, women within the care and domestic sector have often been underpaid, abused, and susceptible to threats of deportation (Gogia and Slade, 2011; Habib, 2003; Stasiulis and Bakan, 2003; Zaman, 2006). However, these patterns have influenced South Asian women less in comparison to other racialized women and most South Asian women have migrated as dependents.

Furthermore, a gendered ideology continued to underline immigration patterns in the later period among South Asian Canadian women based on social and cultural perceptions. For example, Ralston explains,

Sexist ideology has constructed all women, by implication, and South Asian immigrant women in particular, as breeders of the next generation. Their gender role is defined as social reproduction not economic production. In point of fact, few married South Asian women with high qualifications enter as the principal applicant, even though Canadian immigration law, regulations and practice now permit them to be the principal applicant of a family (1991, p. 6).

Ralston distinguishes how social views perpetuate gendered beliefs but it is important to note that any inclusive policy should consider these factors and examine how it will affect
marginalized groups after it is implemented. Thus, the Points System failed to evaluate how society’s gendered assumptions may influence immigration patterns, and as a result, this system has neglected women. Trisha and Radha’s migration stories disclose the relevance of Ralston’s statement. Both of these highly educated women were sponsored into Canada by their husbands and they did not make the decision to migrate themselves (Radha, 2013; Trisha, 2013). Radha explains:

We came to Canada through the Points System. My husband is a civil engineer from Bangladesh, so he applied to migrate to Canada and we got it….My husband was the principal applicant and we accompanied him as dependents….It was my husband’s decision to migrate because I did not want to move to Canada. He said, “Let’s go and see how it is, otherwise we can always move back to Bangladesh if we do not like it there” (2013).

Radha has a Master of Arts degree and work experience from Bangladesh, yet she migrated as a secondary applicant (2013). Similarly, Trisha entered Canada as a dependent because she married a Nepalese-Canadian. She states:

Before coming to Canada, I grew up quite privileged. I went to a good school and my parents worked hard for that. It was me and my two younger brothers. We all received a strong education and my experience with my family was good. I graduated from college and moved to Canada after my marriage. I never thought that I would leave Nepal; too bad I got married because it is the only reason I migrated. I never thought that it was important for me to get away from where I was just because I was a woman (2013).

The immigration law that allowed women to apply as principal applicants was modified in 1974, yet it remained male oriented by alluding to the ‘breadwinner’ with language such as ‘labour-destined’ member of family (Ralston, 1991). This apparently gender neutral language was in reality male oriented because global trends explicate that men were still considered family breadwinners, which undermined women’s opportunities and status (Hamilton, 2005; LeGates, 2011). Immigration patterns and requirements reflected the persistence of sexism and racism as ideologies that dominated legal policies and social understandings. Additionally, racism strengthened with the growth of this community in Canada; Buchignani observes, “The result was two-fold: the rise of anti-South Asian prejudice and discrimination and the perceptions of South Asian settlement as a social
problem” (1987, p. 157). All of these factors would present a set of difficulties for South Asian women to surpass over the next 30 years. Hence, the majority of South Asian women continued to migrate to Canada as dependents during this period and remained citizens who received second-class treatment.

4.2. South Asian Women in the Workplace

The restrictions that Canadian society placed on South Asian women extended beyond secondary treatment to limiting their employment. When South Asian women migrated in the early part of the century, some had begun to find paid employment and this became much more acceptable within the South Asian community in the latter decades of the century. In some cases, it was necessary for the family’s survival (Basran & Bolaria, 2003). However, many employers refused to recognize these women’s credentials and discriminated against them (Zaman, 2006). Radha’s case depicts these challenges:

There are too many hardships when you first come and employment is another problem. Finding work was tough. I tried to find a simple job in X or Y but I could not even get that. I dropped off an application at all of these fast food restaurants. At X, they asked me if I have experience working in Canada, well how would I? Some of them asked me if I had training in a particular field. It is a simple job at X; I had enough English and the skills for that job but I could not get it. Then I decided that I would first get Canadian experience, so I went back to school (2013).

Radha’s experience portrays the types of excuses that employers utilized to reject South Asian applicants, demonstrating more subtle workings of racism on the ground. According to a study that Basran and Bolaria conducted, 15 percent of the respondents did not have a job because employers refused to accept their credentials (Basran & Bolaria, 2003). For instance, Inderjeet had a Bachelor of Arts degree from India and she worked as an assistant computer programmer in Chandigarh, Punjab, yet she could only find employment in sectors for which she was overqualified in Canada (2013). George and Ramkissoon also determined that the women they interviewed had higher levels of education than their Canadian-born counterparts but they were concentrated in positions below less qualified Canadians (1998). They were underrepresented and
underemployed; in fact, employers sometimes interpreted these women’s reserved behaviour as an indifference towards furthering their careers (Ghosh, 1994). Women with graduate degrees and well-paying jobs in their country of origin were most disappointed because they could not find an equivalent job to their previous position (Ralston, 1991; Zaman, 2006). Inderjeet discusses the frustration that this has caused:

In the beginning, the biggest challenge that educated people feel, and I did as well, is that your education value turns into nil. Before migrating, you have a dream world; you think that even though you are going to a different country everything will be hunky dory. The reality check is not there before you move to another country. Employment is a major issue because your education level is not recognized, so you are bound to do the odd jobs. New immigrants that come from a society divided into classes like India feel that these are degrading jobs. This bothers them a lot; their education is devalued and they have to do those jobs to survive that they think are demeaning. This is why you will see a different kind of frustration in new immigrants. They are not proud of their paid job but they are doing it, so even if they are mopping the floor they will tell you that they are the manager (2013).

Zaman indicates that immigrant women often accepted jobs well below their credentials because they required Canadian experience to re-establish their careers, but in reality, they remained concentrated in this sector for the rest of their lives (2006). When these women obtained employment they often faced racism from clients, customers, or colleagues. Trisha shared the story of a male customer who frequently came to the shop and always waited for her to leave before he asked for help. One day, he wanted to speak with the manager but when he found out that Trisha was the manager, he left. After this incident, she realized that the man did not want to interact with her, so she asked someone else to assist him whenever he was there (Trisha, 2013). Trisha identified this incident as a racist encounter, while discussing how racism is prevalent within society but often very quiet. These types of encounters became regular occurrences for some South Asian women, indicating ongoing discrimination in the workplace (Balagopal, 1999; Ghosh, 1994). Additionally, many women who became frustrated with this discrimination began working within the South Asian community instead to overcome this problem (Balagopal, 1999; Bannerji, 1993). Overall, South Asian Canadian women encountered several difficulties in the employment field because
their credentials were devalued and covert forms of discrimination continued to marginalize them.

Racism within the employment sector coalesced with gendered expectations that the South Asian community held from South Asian women and made it difficult for them to escape the low wage sector. Social limitations equally affected South Asian Canadian women’s experiences within the employment field. Many South Asian women worked in the cleaning, janitorial, clerical, managerial, or sales fields, despite higher levels of education, because they did not have time to upgrade their skills, since they were responsible for conducting most of the household duties (Ghosh, 1994; Gupta T. D., 1994). For example, Radha could have become a teacher if she had gone back to school but her household responsibilities hindered her ability to accomplish this. She explains,

My kids were small at that time and I needed a job, so I did not have the time to go to class. Taking care of the kids is time consuming and we did not have that much money because we had taken some loans from the bank. My husband was also upgrading, so I wanted him to focus on his work, instead of worry about all of these other things (Radha, 2013).

Hence, women faced the dual burden of employment and housework, which feminists have labelled the double duty day or ‘second shift’ (Balagopal, 1999; Hoschild & MacHung, 1989). S. Gupta states, “The ‘double-duty day’ is a phenomena common to the vast majority of women who work outside the home or have a career within the home in addition to being wives and mothers regardless of cultural, racial, or national boundaries” (1999, p. 31). Radha’s example exhibits the gendered nature of household duties in the South Asian community:

Yes, I do all of the cooking. My husband feels like cooking occasionally, so he does it then, but 90 percent of the time, I am the one who cooks. There are many family responsibilities and as South Asian women, we take care of the household duties; that is our job. I do all of the cleaning, laundry, mopping, and washing dishes. I also buy the grocery and take care of the garden. There is always a lot to do in the garden as well such as pull out weeds, water the plants, and tons of other things (2013).

In some instances, South Asian women’s lack of English-speaking skills impeded their ability to find work but the basis for rejection by employers was often discriminatory,
based on women’s ‘foreign accents’ as was evident in Radha’s case. This problem was predominant among South Asian men as well. Inderjeet explicates:

No, it was harder for the immigrant, it does not matter if you are a male or a female; it is here that gender does not work. It is harder for everybody. However, if you are committed, you are positive, well then you will definitely make it. I remember that in my age group almost everyone had a degree from Punjab. I saw doctors driving taxis, engineers driving taxis, not all of them upgraded their education and that has created a different dilemma that is going on with them in their lives. Underachievement may become a big issue for them, causing mental problems or negatively affecting their drinking habits. My own broadcasting experience has led me to believe that this is one of the greatest contributing factors of violence within the home (2013).

Inderjeet appears to dismiss gender differentials in discrimination, but she goes on to illustrate one very important gendered element of migration experiences: men’s frustration from underachievement may have led to increased domestic violence, and this certainly had implications for South Asian women as victims of abuse. Some studies verify this point, demonstrating that South Asian women and their children have been vulnerable to this type of male abuse (Badyal, 2003; Shirwadkar, 2004). This explanation is simplistic and the issue has to be regarded with more complexity, particularly how a patriarchal culture has influenced this type of extreme male domination over women and children, and in some cases, even normalised. Additionally, Radha conveys that Canadian society, especially in relation to the employment field, is also male oriented and ignores the complications within women’s lives, as a result, she believes that there has been a difference in immigration experiences based on gender. She affirms:

It is different. Men have less responsibility, so they are more relaxed when they have to find a job. There are many boundaries for us women. For South Asian women it is always about the family first but it is easier for men. For example, when I came, my husband could attend classes but I had to take care of the home, so men have the ability to focus on their studies (Radha, 2013).

Thus, several barriers deterred South Asian women from obtaining a substantial position within the paid workforce and succeeding in other aspects of Canadian society, which also involved gendered assumptions existent within their own community.
4.3. Sexism Within the South Asian Canadian Community

While the South Asian Canadian community protected South Asian women from racism within the mainstream community, it also marginalized them based on sexist assumptions about being female. Sexism was a prominent component of South Asian Canadian women’s lives because of the gendered beliefs that their community held and this acted as another barrier to their employability, education, and access to social services. During this era, South Asian Canadian women continued to be viewed primarily as homemakers and caretakers even though they worked in paid positions outside of the home (George & Ramkissoon, 1998; Naidoo, 2003). This is evident in the responses of my narrators, who explained that they were still responsible for completing the majority of the household and childcare duties (Kel, 2013; Pooja, 2013; Radha, 2013; Simran, 2013). This society also placed a strong emphasis on respecting and serving elders but caregiving was mainly the women’s duty (Bariana, 1997; Harrison, Spitzer, Neufeld, Hughes, & Stewart, 2003). However, most of my narrators were reluctant to label these cultural practises as a form of sexism and regarded gendered responsibilities as a regular component of their lives. Kel and Inderjeet were the only women who spoke openly and critically about sexism within the community. Kel denounced the high status and power that South Asian men held in comparison to women (2013). Traditional beliefs also dictated that women must remain virgins until marriage, and failing to comply with these expectations could have led to a loss of honour for the woman and her family (Bariana, 1997; Gupta T. D., 1994). They were also encouraged to maintain a passive nature but these notions continued to change over this period. Inderjeet explains the complexity behind these gender relations:

My views about boys and girls are totally different. Many South Asian people say that they do not like girls and that is the reason that girls do not have the same benefits as the boys. I do not agree with this interpretation. In our community we love girls. The only problem is the social structure. If something bad happens to your girl child, her life will be over and this fear scares most parents. You may forgive her mistake but the social structure will not excuse it. Thus, it is difficult for any parent to accept these circumstances and see their child suffering day and night. That is why parents always say, “Don’t do it! Don’t go there!” In South Asian families they say, “Don’t! Don’t! Don’t!” too much to their daughters because of this fear. But it is tough for the boys as well because they have to live up to this community’s expectations. They have to survive the
competition and fulfill familial obligations; it is not like the mainstream Canadian system where you can put your parents in a residential care facility after a certain age. No, your parents are there forever and it is the son’s duty to take care of them (2013).

Inderjeet’s response shows that some parents controlled their daughters and expected them to adhere to specific traditional beliefs about gender because they knew that the consequences for non-compliance could be severe for their daughters in this community. There is also an emphasis within this community to retain cultural beliefs and reject assimilation, particularly among Punjabis (Brown, 2007). Nevertheless, Sodhi asserts that some parents allowed their daughters to date and make decisions about their own bodies, developing bicultural identities instead of rejecting Canadian social norms as a whole (2002). Still, sexist attitudes have been deeply ingrained among many South Asians and South Asian Canadians, as evidenced by their strong preference for sons as well as the growth of practices like dowry (Gupta T. D., 1994; Shirwadkar, 2004; Sodhi, 2002). Inderjeet shared her own story about being treated differently from her brother:

Of course it was a different experience being a girl child! I am now around the age of 55 but this was a big issue when I was younger. I was the third girl in the family, so it was a big problem for me. I asked my mother a couple of times why I did not get the same affection and love from her as my siblings and she told me that I was an unwanted child. I was an unwanted child, plus a girl, so it was not an easy life for me but somehow my father loved me a lot and my brother did too. I had to face many obstacles but I decided that it does not matter what is happening in my life or what the social structure demands from me as a woman. I knew I had to survive, and not only survive, but overcome all of these obstacles to accomplish something in life (2013).

This strong preference for sons was the main reason that many South Asian Canadian women activists opposed the introduction of sex-selective technologies in the 1990s; they believed that the use of these technologies would increase instances of female feticide within their community (Purewal, 2010). Moreover, a married woman’s status within her family increased if she gave birth to a son (Sodhi, 2002). Growing rates of son preference may have been related to dowry rates that continued to increase as well (Gupta T. D., 1994). The South Asian community in Canada was a class-based society, so giving a large dowry to the groom’s family was considered vital to maintain status (Bariana, 1997; Gupta T. D., 1994; Shirwadkar, 2004). Practises like dowry and
preference for sons have degraded South Asian Canadian women who were considered an economic burden based on these traditions. In addition, domestic violence became a serious concern for many women, although countless organizations emerged to assist women (Ghosh, 1994; Kel, 2013; Shirwadkar, 2004). Divorce was also discouraged and it could be an ostracizing experience; Shirwadkar explains:

A woman who takes the matter to the public domain is often criticized and loses the support of her community, especially in the middle and upper classes. One divorced woman interviewed for the study observed that she could not socialize with the community members nor could she attend the community gatherings to celebrate cultural-religious functions (2004, p. 869).

This stigma associated with divorce discouraged many women from leaving abusive relationships (Badyal, 2003; BariAna, 1997). Nevertheless, Ghosh notes that higher rates of domestic violence at this time were not only applicable to the South Asian Canadian community but all women (1994). Overall, gendered perceptions among the South Asian community made life difficult for South Asian women and they had to find a balance between all of these expectations, while encountering challenges as migrant women.

4.4. Access to Social Services

Canadian citizenship is renowned for granting access to a range of social services but South Asian women have been unable to enjoy these rights entirely. In the 1970s, as dependents, these women were unable to claim social benefits without their sponsors and could be deported (Ghosh, 1994). This policy created over-dependence on the sponsor and failed to acknowledge that a dependent might need to claim benefits on her own, especially in cases of abuse or neglect (Ghosh, 1994; Habib, 2003). The 1976 Act required individuals sponsoring a dependent and those being sponsored to abide by the rules of the ten-year sponsorship agreement, which ensured that a sponsor would take financial responsibility for the 'dependent' for this period of time (Habib, 2003). The time that a dependent must live with their sponsor after becoming a permanent resident has now been decreased to two years but these types of attitudes, which reinforced a migrant’s dependency on a sponsor have lingered from the 1970s to
today, as evident through the *Sponsorship Breakdown Booklet* issued in 2009. The ambiguity of the way that social support is described within the sponsorship booklet—“You must agree to try and support yourself and to ask your sponsor for help before you go to the government for support”—deterred women from seeking government assistance (Shelton, 2009, p. 4). This type of dependency created a difficult situation for women in abusive relationships, particularly South Asian women because they were less likely to release information that could jeopardize their family’s izzat.63 Yet, the system required them to provide detailed accounts of abuse to be able to end a sponsorship agreement without being deported. Many South Asian women in abusive relationships felt trapped because of the social stigma associated with disclosure and the fear of deportation (Badyal, 2003; Zaman, 2006). Moreover, most immigrant women’s concentration in low-wage labour meant that they were unable to access services such as extended health care, sick leave, or Employment Insurance (EI) (Zaman, 2006). Those who arrived as refugees also faced challenges in terms of state sponsored assistance; they had few health benefits and they were ineligible for settlement services (George & Ramkissoon, 1998). Moreover, South Asian women appeared less comfortable asking for social assistance, even if they were eligible, because of negative social and/or cultural assumptions within the South Asian community. As Shirwadkar explains,

> Women tend to face the dilemma of losing their community status and support network if they leave their husband’s house. Going to shelters or transition houses and then public housing means a woman has to move away from her community. This presents an additional setback to Indian women who are heavily dependent on their community and seek a network of immigrants from their home country (2004, p. 875).

Although Shirwadkar’s description refers to Indian women, it is relevant to circumstances faced by South Asian women more broadly. Furthermore, some South Asian women did not know about these programs and language barriers made this assistance inaccessible as well (George and Ramkissoon, 1998; Ghosh, 1994). For example, Inderjeet states:

> Actually, I was not aware of it…When I first came, a Canadian friend that helped me out taught me two things: one, always help others when you can, and two, never take welfare because your life will be over after that. I
want to correct this statement; when you need social assistance, take it but do not sit on it. You need the help for a few months about two, four, six months, then take it but get up, move, and start contributing to the system again. Do not sit on it, otherwise your life will be gone (2013).

Although, Inderjeet’s views denote that welfare was a possible temporary solution for someone in need, they also demonstrate the negative attitude towards welfare that existed not only among South Asians but within Canadian society in general. Both Radha and Trisha indicate that they never utilized or required social services either (2013). Therefore, social assistance was not an acceptable or even attainable form of support for many South Asian women immigrants because of a number of social, cultural, and legal factors; access to social services remained a privilege for Canadian-born citizens and independent class migrants, mainly men.

4.5. Changes in Education

Ignorance about different cultures within the education system decreased in this study period but the effects of these changes remained limited in scope. The Multiculturalism Act embraced diversity and schools were one of the principal areas where this change became evident (Agnew, 2003). Nonetheless, as Handa argues, during the 1990s multiculturalism in schools was limited to one-day celebrations; she labels this ‘show and tell multiculturalism’ (2003). Rezai-Rashti also indicates that multiculturalism within the education system was additive and restricted to specific events. She argues that multiculturalism should have been integrated within the school system in a more inclusive manner and interwoven into everyday educational activities to become an effective policy (1999). Likewise, Bannerji and Ng (1993) confer that the education system, including academia, was both sexist and racist. In 1993, Bannerji boldly asserted, “Our [racialized women’s] presence so far in the intellectual or academic world has been a token one, a component in ritual references to gender, race, and class” (p. xiv). Smith also noted in the early 1990s the operation of race and gender in progress through the ranks at the post-secondary level: “In colleges and universities women may make up as many as half the instructional staff hired on a sessional (temporary) basis, but as we go up the hierarchy to the level of full professors, the proportion of women diminishes radically. And throughout, the vast, vast majority of both sexes are white”
(1991, p. 2). Consequently, the education system failed to adopt multiculturalism as a tool to eliminate racism; rather it simply hid discrimination and made it appear that this 'problem' had been resolved. More importantly, the education system was hostile in terms of recognizing South Asian women’s credentials, as previously discussed. These programs failed to accredit South Asian women with the level of education that they had acquired in their country of origin, and they established upgrading protocols that were too complex. This structure overlooked the hardships in their lives and it did not take into account that they were responsible for most of the household duties. Once again, a male oriented framework dominated the education system and ignored problems particular to all women. Additionally, most institutions assumed that the education these women completed in their country of origin was inferior (Stasiulus and Bakan, 2003; Sweetman, 2004). Even though the state had softened the tone of the discrimination it had espoused before 1971, it remained in less overt ways.

4.6. The First Entrants Versus the ‘Points Women’

Overall, South Asian Canadian women’s citizenship experiences altered extensively during the second period of South Asian migration in comparison to those of the first women that made Canada their home. They achieved a legal status in 1947 and they could migrate as principal applicants after 1974 (Ralston, 1991). Furthermore, the state declared discrimination against South Asian women illegal based on their race and/or gender. Nevertheless, there remained a gap between policy and practise as men continued to dominate the principal applicant category, which was associated with both South Asian culture and mainstream Canadian culture. Multiculturalism mainly served as a political strategy and a necessity based on changing circumstances within Canada. Perhaps, the greatest change ensued from social and cultural developments, which allowed women to work outside of the home (Balagopal, 1999; Basran & Bolaria, 2003). Women were also encouraged to obtain a higher education (Ghosh, 1994). On the other hand, the majority of the barriers that the women who had first migrated to Canada faced continued to exist in newer forms. If South Asian women now earned an income, the dual burden of work and household duties emerged. It was equally difficult for them to obtain jobs that corresponded with their level of education. Although the federal and provincial governments opened borders for professional migrants, many South Asian
women, even those with training, still arrived as dependents. If greater government services were instituted to support Canadians in need, these women remained unable to benefit from them. Essentially, the manner in which racism and sexism marginalized South Asian Canadian women’s citizenship experience had changed very little. Thus, some of the strategies that these women adopted to challenge legal, social, and cultural barriers resembled the methods employed by early South Asian Canadian women. The next chapter will demonstrate how South Asian women that migrated to Canada after 1967 utilized their agency and autonomy to escape barriers that marginalized their experience as Canadian citizens. It will explore how these women navigated their way well beyond the shadows that constrained their day-to-day experiences.

Chapter 4 opened with Srivastava’s poem, which compared South Asian women’s life in Canada to a prison based on the racism that they encountered in varying aspects of their lives after migrating to this country (1993). It demonstrated how changes in official policy simply masked the hardships that these women continued to experience as gendered and racialized others. Many employers refused to acknowledge their credentials and discrimination within the paid workforce predominated. Most women had to upgrade their education or they found themselves segregated within the low-wage labour sector. Yet, these women’s persistence and determination to succeed were similar to the perseverance of the women that arrived during the first era of South Asian migration. They utilized their agency to overcome problems that confronted them on a daily basis. By examining how South Asian Canadian women faced the shadows and attempted to escape Srivastava’s hypothetical ‘prison’, we can obtain an understanding of how racism and sexism are counteracted at an individual and collective level (Mitchell & Karaian, 2004).66 These women created innovative ways to negotiate their status by challenging and/or resisting barriers that marginalized them. Some of these strategies replicated the social and cultural methods that the initial South Asian migrants adopted to improve their position. The extensive network of South Asians that solidified over this period assisted many women who arrived as newcomers. Cultural and social perceptions also gradually transformed, while women’s employment had a positive impact on their status within the household (Badyal, 2003). These women worked hard to attain a higher level of education, find employment, and establish networks to share various forms of assistance. This chapter will explore how South Asian Canadian women utilized their agency and autonomy between 1967 and 1997 to overcome legal, social, and cultural barriers that hindered their citizenship experiences.
5.1. Social and Cultural Changes

First, it is imperative to briefly contextualize these women’s experiences and identify the social and cultural changes that distinguished their experience from South Asian women who migrated in the early part of the century. By 1949, some South Asian women had begun finding paid employment outside of the home, a shift that had become more acceptable among South Asians by 1967 (Pooja, 2013; Simran, 2013). The mainstream feminist movement at this time began challenging middle class values that urged women to stay in the home and take care of their children as well (Hamilton, 2005). Most Anglo-Canadian women realized that they had to obtain a paid job to make ends meet but dominant rhetoric continued to insist that men should provide the main household income, justifying women’s segregation into low-wage and part-time employment sectors (Hamilton, 2005; LeGates, 2001). Analogously, South Asian countries such as India encouraged women to remain within the home and complete an integral task for the nation by raising good citizens (Rai S. M., 2008). Moreover, nationalist rhetoric in the wake of the partition of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh imposed very precise notions about motherhood, language, and nationhood on women’s bodies (Ayres, 2009; Rai S. M., 2008). As a result, some members of the South Asian community attempted to follow these principles in Canada after migrating and had reservations about women’s employment as well as education (Bariana, 1997). For example, when K. K. Johal was moving away to attend university, three elderly men from her community came to speak with her father because they believed that she had already obtained enough education. They also thought that moving away from home would provide an opportunity for her to become promiscuous; however, her father disagreed (2009). This portrays that gender norms were shifting in the new community, and women were able to challenge more restrictive notions of their place. In addition, financial concerns precipitated the necessity for South Asian women to find paid employment inside or outside of the home, which empowered many women (George and Ramkissoon, 1998; Zaman, 2006). Basran and Bolaria concur that South Asian women’s growing financial independence transformed into a greater decision-making role within the home. They state, “Employment gives female household members economic security and resources to influence decision-making; their employment status also heightens their awareness of gender inequality” (Basran and Bolaria, 2003, p. 197).
Likewise, Badyal argues that paid employment allowed some women to adopt a greater decision-making role in their families than their in-laws’, providing them with social capital that undermined the traditional pattern among many South Asian families (2003). Second-generation South Asian Canadian women also acquired better jobs because they obtained a Canadian education. The mandatory education system meant that most received at least a high school education (Johal R. S., 2002). Once again, this provided women with social capital and South Asian Canadians continued to regard education as a valuable asset for a successful career (Bariana, 1997; Johal R. S., 2002). Consequently, economic concerns and changes within living standards led to an increasing involvement of South Asian Canadian women in the paid workforce, which gave them a greater sense of autonomy.

A greater sense of autonomy was not only related to paid employment and changes in living standards but the growth of the South Asian community within Canada as well. This community’s growing numbers led to an increased sense of self-confidence and altered some of the assimilationist practises that early South Asian immigrants had adopted. Chapter 2 illustrated how many South Asian women felt uncomfortable wearing traditional clothing in the public sphere before 1949, but by the late 1990s, these attitudes had shifted (Handa, 2003; Pooja, 2013). From personal experience, I remember the anomaly of seeing a turbaned man for the first time in Surrey as a four-year old child. I had never seen anyone wear a turban except in the pictures of Sikh Gurus. One day, when I was leaving a store with my cousin, I saw a turbaned man and began shouting “Babaji! [God!]”, and my cousin pulled me away. When I came home, I told everyone that we had seen God that day, and they laughed when they realized what had happened; but they were overjoyed to hear about the turbaned man in public. This personal account illustrates how rare it was to see anyone wearing a turban, since countless Sikhs cut their hair after migrating to Canada, as did the men in my family. Inderjeet described the significance of seeing a turbaned person in Canada as well,
get close to Canadian people and make friends with them, then things start to change (2013).

Handa opens her book by sharing a similar incident about her excitement as a child when she saw another South Asian driving by her mother in 1968 (2003). She indicates that her mother and the stranger exchanged nods, creating a special moment of mutual acknowledgment (2003). Handa remembers how rare it was to see another South Asian at that time, unlike today, when a vast number of South Asians populate Toronto (2003). Furthermore, at the time that I entered elementary school, my mother and her friends were still refraining from wearing Indian attire in the public sphere, but as the Indian population grew, they openly began wearing traditional clothing to go shopping; the growing numbers of South Asians helped them feel comfortable. Nevertheless, these advances were nominal because it was still socially unacceptable to wear traditional clothing to attend a public school or as an employee in a non-South Asian workplace (Handa, 2003). More importantly, dress caused considerable discord between South Asian parents and their daughters alongside other forms of contention over cultural beliefs (Bariana, 1997; Gupta T. D., 1994; Handa, 2003; Hirji, 2010; Naidoo, 2003; Johal R. S., 2002; Sodhi, 2002). In fact, disagreement among South Asian parents and their children regarding the retention of hijabs or turbans has received much public attention (Hirji, 2010). Scholars have adopted terms such as ‘culture clash’ and ‘generation gap’ to characterize these disputes (Bariana, 1997; Handa, 2003; Hirji, 2010; Johal R. S., 2002; Sodhi, 2002). Overall, the assimilationist pressure that early South Asian migrants had felt had been transformed in some ways but these changes still only established a contained form of cultural acceptance within Canadian society.

5.2. Education as an Escape

Most South Asians continued to view education as a way to obtain greater autonomy but variations among different groups persisted. Those with conservative beliefs still thought that women did not need a higher education because they would conduct household duties after marriage (Bariana, 1997; Sodhi, 2002). However, Bariana explains that most South Asians regarded education for South Asian women as a preferred quality because it enhanced their appeal as future wives and warranted
respect for them after marriage (1997). Thus, education could establish social capital for South Asian women. Both Naidoo (2003) and Sodhi’s (2002) studies determined that most parents wanted their daughters to achieve a higher education, so that they could become independent. In particular, Sikh families believed that education was necessary for social and academic mobility; Coward has found similar beliefs among Hindus (Basran and Bolaria, 2003; Coward, 2000). And McDonough discovered similar goals for daughters within the Muslim population: “Canadian Muslims coming from university backgrounds normally encourage higher education for their children” (2000, p. 186). It is important to note that religion is an inadequate way of measuring a specific group’s views on education; other factors—such as culture, region, class, gender, personal preference, or accessibility—may have had a greater impact. This was evident among the education experience of women in Nepal. In rural areas, many women walked long distances to collect water, a time-consuming duty that hindered their ability to achieve a better education (Wallace & Porter, 2010). On the other hand, Trisha lived in the capital city of Nepal, Kathmandu, and came from a relatively privileged class background with a supportive family, so she obtained a good education (2013). Trisha shares her views on education:

   Education is definitely the most important thing that you can receive. My mother used to say that we can give you everything but the best thing that we can give you is education because it is the only thing that will remain with you forever, nothing else (2013).

Furthermore, women with a higher education fared better than those who attained a lower level (Naidoo, 2003). A study conducted by Statistics Canada confirmed that the quality of education in an immigrant’s country of origin influences their employability in Canada (Sweetman, 2004). Consequently, education was vital for immigrants and it helped many succeed in a new environment, especially South Asian women.

   Most of these women viewed education as a tool to advance their position in society and it proved to be imperative in helping them to achieve greater independence. For instance, Bains states, “The deprivation of my grandmother, who had no choice in being a child bride, or my mother removed from school at early adolescence, increased the value of education as an appealing channel of autonomy, escape, and growth” (2009, p. 160). The importance of education for personal success was also evident in
the case of Radha who upgraded her education in Canada to acquire a better job. She elucidates:

Yes, I took some English classes in Canada for a few months and I went to college, so that I could speak enough English for a job; it was minimal training. I also upgraded there for my current job as a special education assistant. The job title that the Vancouver school board has given it is SSSW, which stands for school and student support worker. I wanted to enter the school system, so I upgraded to obtain this job....I do not know how we solved our problems but after I started working, it was fine. Slowly things got better. I think it is harder for everyone in the beginning but it becomes easier after you settle down (2013).

Consequently, South Asian Canadian women may have had multiple responsibilities but many, such as Radha and Inderjeet, upgraded their education to achieve their goals. Canada also provided some women with educational opportunities that they did not have in their home country by allowing them to migrate as students. For instance, Inderjeet affirms:

My educational experience has been wonderful. In fact, I am still interested in advancing my studies. I completed my master's degree in the Department of Fine Arts. I still remember that my books were about European art. I also remember how hard it was to find those books in the library in Punjab. First, you had to write your name down on a list to wait for a book, and then you were able to sign out the book when it was your turn. I always had a dream growing up that I wanted to see tons of books on European art or modern art. As a result, when I came to Montreal, I was very happy to see all of the books because I did not have to wait to sign them out. Number two, I was privileged to see the artwork from a different perspective (2013).

This statement demonstrates that Inderjeet appreciated the educational opportunity that she had been given in Canada and how it helped her achieve a stronger sense of autonomy. In addition, many South Asian women, born and raised in Canada, achieved a higher education and built a career for themselves, which reflects a degree of independence among them as well (Bariana, 1997; Sodhi, 2002). Therefore, South Asian Canadian women recognized that education could advance their position in society, so they utilized it to increase their autonomy and exceed the barriers that restricted their citizenship experiences.
Gender ideology in the South Asian community may have created concerns about South Asian women’s higher education, but education still functioned as an avenue for them to better utilize their agency and/or autonomy. For example, Inderjeet emphasized the importance of education throughout her interview and acknowledged it as a fundamental tool for women. She posits:

I am unsure what the definition of feminist is by your standards but I believe in one main thing; if you raise one educated woman in every family, then you are taking care of two families. This woman’s knowledge will benefit the house where she is born and the family that she will become a part of, after marriage. From day one, I believe that education is the most important factor in any woman’s life; it is vital for herself, for her family, and her extended families because she will have an impact on all of them. For example, in Punjabi we say, “kudi nu pardao, theh khandaan hi thar jauga [educate the daughter and the entire kin network will benefit from it]”. Hence, if you call that being a feminist, then yes, I was born as a feminist (2013).

Radha expresses similar thoughts:

Yes, education is very important and women need it even more than men. For example, if you want to check the history on the computer or anything like that you have to learn how to do that. The kids know more than us, so we have to stay up to date with them. Education is very important for women because they have to raise children and it will help them at every step of the way (2013).

Both of these narrators position women’s education within the family and link its significance to women’s gendered duties such as raising children. These views also coincide with the South Asian cultural perception that a greater education for women will increase their worth in the marriage market (Bariana, 1997; Naidoo, 2003; Sodhi, 2002). This emphasis on women’s primary role as mothers portrays continuity among the views of South Asian Canadian women from the first period of immigration to the second period. Although, gender ideology altered from depicting education as unnecessary for women to regarding it as beneficial, the rationale behind this change still imposed gendered expectations on South Asian women. Nonetheless, this has increased their autonomy and given them the ability to make educated decisions in their daily lives (Naidoo, 2003). As Trisha explains:
For women, education is absolutely essential….It is important because it makes you powerful, not in the sense that you can control someone, rather it makes you think in a different way from the way that people will tell you to think. You can control yourself, so that someone else is not controlling your mind. This does not mean that you have to obtain a paid job just to prove that you have an education; it simply means that you can use it anywhere in your daily life (2013).

Her statement summarizes how education’s influence for women can extend beyond employability or familial obligations to enhance their ability to think for themselves. This is a significant point because it defines how a woman may utilize her agency, especially in relation to the challenges that she individually encounters. Overall, education was highly esteemed among most South Asian Canadians, and regardless of gender ideology that framed the significance of women’s education in terms of their roles as mothers, it could still result in greater independence for women.

5.3. Overcoming Employment Barriers

South Asian Canadian women also utilized their autonomy to exceed barriers within the employment sector. Some women successfully achieved high skilled and professional jobs (Ralston, 1991). For most of these women, it was imperative to obtain paid employment, regardless of the type of position that they acquired. However, many had to overcome multiple constraints to simply achieve a minimum-wage job. Inderjeet describes her initial working experiences:

When I began working here, I only got the odd jobs and I could never choose. I was a student, so I took any position that I could get, including babysitting. However, I was always proud of the paid work that I did. I began broadcasting in 1989, which became my long-term career and I am a licensed real estate agent (2013).

Radha’s first form of employment was babysitting as well and she worked as an office assistant from home (2013). Likewise, Trisha states:

I worked at a department store for about a year and a half and after that, I worked at another store for approximately five years. This store opened a new location in Langley and I began working there before it was opened for the public. I was the frame shop manager for roughly four years, and
then I worked in their office until my husband was transferred to the United States (2013).

In all three cases, the training required for these women’s early paid positions fell well below the levels of education that they had achieved but obtaining the work and Canadian experience was an important first step. Others had to search for alternatives, such as self-employment or working for a family business, to overcome discriminatory barriers that limited their ability to find paid work in both the South Asian and Canadian communities (Balagopal, 1999; Gupta T. D., 1994; Zaman, 2006). These avenues to employment were similar to those followed by women that came during the first period of South Asian immigration (see Chapter 3). For example, Balagopal explains that she began her business at home because she wanted to surpass multiple barriers that impeded her employability (1999). Although self-employment often failed to complement these women’s education level and the burden of the ‘double-duty day’ often aggravated their situation when they were working from home, their refusal to accept hostile circumstances within the workplace was an assertion of autonomy (Gupta S., 1999). Balagopal discusses the frustration that women who worked at home often felt because they were expected to complete all their household duties on time, whether or not these tasks interfered with their paid work (1999). Still, some South Asian women were able to find some balance between paid and unpaid work, Radha worked as an office assistant from home but she regarded it as convenient because she could continue taking care of her children (2013). She answered emails for her boss and completed other tasks over the phone or online, and he would remunerate this work with a small salary. Radha’s perseverance exhibits how hard South Asian women have sometimes struggled to overcome several restrictions that hindered their paid work experience. In addition, some women have fought against unfair treatment in the workplace and engaged in strikes or protests (Gupta T. D., 1994). Likewise, T. D. Gupta asserts, “As people of color, they have resisted blatant and systemic racism, as in cases of differential treatment vis-a-vis white workers and name calling on the shop floor” (1994, p. 69). Moreover, Zaman affirms, “For immigrant women, having a job is one of the major sources of material security relieving them from reliance on their husbands/fathers/brothers’ financial support. Having a job also empowers immigrant women to negotiate with the adult male members in the family, resulting in a change in gender relations” (2006, p. 128). As my
narrators demonstrate, South Asian women were more than passive recipients of discrimination that they faced within the employment sector and they acted as agents adopting various strategies to acquire paid employment within the second phase of South Asian immigration to Canada.

South Asian Canadian women struggled to achieve better-paid employment opportunities and they worked considerably hard to achieve relevant experience for these jobs through volunteering. For instance, Zaman shares the narrative of Iqbal Jahan who migrated to Canada in 1974 and volunteered for two years at a school in order to obtain Canadian experience (2006). Eventually, Jahan acquired employment as a crosswalk guard and library worker based on this volunteer work; however, they were both low wage and part-time jobs (Zaman, 2006). She was unable to obtain a highly paid and secure position, but this example illustrates how these women sought to counteract barriers and attain better employment opportunities. Similarly, Radha indicates:

I started working in 1999. I completed the supervisor program first and started volunteering at the school. After this, I applied for the job as a supervisor and they gave it to me because I had experience but it was only for two and a half hours every day. Nonetheless, it worked with my schedule, so that I could pick up the kids. I did this for three years (2013).

At first glance, Radha’s case does not seem to exhibit any unusual barriers to work. However, Radha had held a paid job in Bangladesh as a tutor; yet employers ignored this fact and stipulated that she must have experience working in Canada (2013). In order to qualify for the same type of work in Canada, she had to first complete a Canadian program, which had a significant cost attached, and she had to volunteer her time to obtain ‘relevant experience’. Trisha also did volunteer work for some time after arriving in Canada and she explained that this was both necessary for her to obtain Canadian experience and it was a way for her to help new immigrants. She states:

I volunteered at the Immigration Services Society (ISS) for the first six months after I came here. We used to help other immigrants at that time and I worked at the library there….It is called the Immigration Service Society of BC (ISSBC) now (2013).

For many South Asian women, volunteering to obtain Canadian work experience was an unnecessary hurdle that delayed their entry into paid employment—a particularly difficult
situation for newly arriving migrants with few financial resources to restart their lives (Stasiulus and Bakan, 2003; Zaman, 2010). Unfortunately, any type of education, credentials, and work experience that they had obtained in their country of origin became obsolete when they moved to Canada. Nevertheless, South Asian Canadian women have shown momentous strength, utilized their autonomy to refute any claims that could be used to reject them a paid position, and acquired the relevant experience.

5.4. Assisting Others

While these women faced many of the hardships that their predecessors had encountered, they similarly struggled to remain active citizens by helping others. Numerous South Asian Canadian women extended their volunteerism beyond the activities required for them to obtain a paid position. For example, Radha states:

I am a volunteer at the Multicultural Helping House and I teach Bengali there….I also designed this program by applying the curriculum that I use at school to teach kids Bengali. For example, they use flash cards and all the other methods that we use to help students learn in a variety of ways. I trained the other teachers there as well (2013).

She regards all of this as a service and indicates that some of the paid work she does is also to assist others. She further notes:

I guess I have completed social services through the volunteer work that I have done. Some of it is paid but a very small amount, which equates to the bare minimum. I consider the work that I do with the Ministry of Education and the Helping Hands Society as social services. I am giving back to people and assisting them. I help disabled children as well. I am also part of another program to assist children who have to be removed from their house and placed with someone else, so that they can come stay with me. The government has approved my house for this program. For example, if your child has autism, it is hard for you to take care of them, and you want a break, the government will give you that break. They will send the child to my house for the weekend, Friday to Sunday, and they will be my responsibility for those three days. I will feed them, take them to the leisure centre, or help them with other things throughout the day. Their parents or someone in charge of their care will take them back on Sunday evening. I am a part-time respite worker and a foster mom as well. I recently received approval to become a foster mom, so I
will have a child placed with me and I will start taking care of them very soon (2013).

Hence, Radha’s desire to give back to the community has resulted in extensive paid and unpaid work within the social services sector. Likewise, spending time to help others was a duty for Inderjeet and an additive component of her passion towards her community; it was also an extension of her job as a radio talk show host. She speaks of this experience:

I completed countless hours of community counseling with women in regards to their relationship with their children, which was volunteer work. I would simply tell them that do not try to do something that will damage your child’s life. You only need to tell the child that this is how everything is and if you choose to make this decision, I do not agree with it, so you are responsible for it. You must take the onus for it and you must not hold any expectation of help from me afterwards. That is all you need to say, and if you change your mind, then go ahead because blood is always thicker than water (2013).

Thus, Inderjeet’s volunteer work was oriented towards her community and resolving the ‘clash’ between different cultural values and practises by advising women to adopt suitable parenting practises. This was a major issue during this period. Bariana shares the example of Reva, whose father consistently blamed her mother for failing to teach Reva traditional values, since this was regarded as the mother’s duty (1997). There are various examples of the pressures that many South Asian women felt raising their children amidst a set of conflicting values (Badyal, 2003; Bariana, 1997; Handa, 2003; Naidoo, 2003). Inderjeet understood these women’s concerns as the bearers of tradition and assisted them. Generally, many South Asian Canadian women took time from their busy schedules to help other people as a service to their community. For instance, Trisha states, “I used to volunteer and I want to volunteer again but we just moved back, so I have not been able to do any of that yet” (2013). This type of assistance became a part of South Asian Canadian women’s citizenship experience and a prominent way that they expressed their agency, increasing their autonomy through larger support networks.
5.5. Autonomy and Networking

Some South Asian Canadian women created networks to help others become autonomous and overcome their second-class position within Canada. Whereas, a few organizations acquired partial government funds to help women, other groups survived solely on community support and fundraising activities (Gupta T. D., 1999). The emergence of these groups coincided with the growth of neo-liberalism and privatization. The provincial government cut back on the subsidization of social services, so a need increased for private organizations to provide their own resources to fill the gap (Shirwadkar, 2004; Stasiulys and Bakan, 2003). In some cases, government funding for organizations was problematic as well because it forced these types of organizations to shift their agendas and become a component of the state’s apparatus during the 1970s and 1980s (Ng, 1996). Ng determines that in exchange for monetary compensation, some agencies in Toronto had to enter the labour market and build good relations with employers because employment and immigration bodies set new requirements (1996). These bodies expected results from organizations that conveyed how successfully the organization had secured employment for immigrant women but the problem with this system was that instead of assisting women, it began treating them like ‘commodities’ in the Canadian labour market (Gupta T. D., 1999; Ng, 1996). Additionally, South Asian women often felt excluded among larger women’s organizations and government-funded endeavours, so creating groups themselves oriented towards their community were vital to truly assist South Asian Canadian women (Gupta T. D., 1999; Shirwadkar, 2004; Zaman, 2006). As T. D. Gupta observes, “[These women] have a rich history of organizing community programs for self-education, self-help and greater independence” (1994, p. 69). These organizations reduced many women’s need for social services. Moreover, they produced an alternative space for South Asian women to move away from male-centered agendas of community associations and the sexism and racism prevalent within Canadian society. Manisha Singh notes:

It was the rigours of the immigrant experience, the burdens of their lives as women and exclusion from male-dominated community organizations and a white dominated women’s movement which first brought Raminder Dosanjh, Harjit Dhillon and Premchit Sripawa together in 1972…After so many discussions, Dosanjh, Dhillon and Sripawa created the India Mahila
Association—the first South Asian women’s organization in North America (as cited in Zaman, 2006, p. 137).

This statement highlights the racism, or the reluctance to pursue issues of race that persisted within the mainstream feminist movement in the 1970s (Valverde, 1992). The South Asian Women’s Centre (SAWC) from Toronto was another group that began assisting South Asian women. They articulated their main goal as, “Promoting access to full participation in society by addressing barriers to women’s equality such as underemployment, unemployment, violence prevention, language and training opportunities, poverty, access to housing and other issues faced by women” (South Asian Women's Centre, 2010, p. 4). Likewise, the Progressive Intercultural Community Services (PICS) in Surrey offered English-speaking classes, housing for battered women, and a wide-range of information for immigrants (PICS, 2012). Radha highlights the necessity of these endeavours:

I did not know that these types of services were available through different organizations when we arrived. Maybe that would have helped us, or it may help people who migrate today. I currently volunteer for helping hands and they provide multicultural services, so that is good….I think for new immigrants counseling or consulting is important. If these organizations have more information about specific jobs, then they can provide it to new immigrants and help them. For example, women pay more attention to family and it is hard for them to find a job, so organizations should specifically assist these women (2013).

Various other organizations such as the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, South Asian Family Association, India Mahila Association, South Asian Women’s Rights Organization, and Indo-Canadian Women’s Association had similar objectives (Canadian Council of Muslim Women, 2010; Indo-Canadian Women’s Association, 2012; Ralston, 2000; South Asian Family Association, 2013; South Asian Women's Rights Organization, 2012; Zaman, 2006). These organizations also sought to counteract the sexism within their own communities and openly spoke about many issues that women faced. Most of these groups have been concentrated in metropolitan areas, so rural regions have suffered a void, which requires further research. Nevertheless, these organizations show that South Asian women utilized their agency to seek assistance. Furthermore, the
women who led these organizations and activities exercised their autonomy to extend support to other women.

One strategy that many South Asian women’s groups adopted during the second period of immigration mirrored the approach of early migrant women who utilized social or cultural forms of agency and autonomy to overcome barriers. This is evident through Inderjeet’s description of her extensive involvement with South Asian Canadian women’s groups:

I have assisted almost all of the women’s organizations from day one. However, I was not formally a member of any group, since you cannot specifically attach yourself to one political party or organization as a part of the media. I was not in the respective group but I was always involved with them. From 1994 until 2000, I participated in activities organized by PICS and other women—oriented programs. The most famous of these endeavours was the teeyan. We used to bring out almost 20,000 Indo-Canadian women on one day to an arena and helped them forget the problems of day-to-day life. We would give them an opportunity to get together with other Indo-Canadian women (2013).

Her response exemplifies two major points: one, the considerable number of South Asian women’s groups in Canada, and two, the capacity for women-oriented events to build solidarity. The teeyan festival incorporates some underlying cultural perceptions about engaging women in a separate sphere but it also demonstrates use of women’s collective agency. Women sang bolis at these events, performed giddha, and participated in small competitions or games. Giddha is an expressive dance form that allows women to sing and dance openly about incidents that happen in their everyday lives. There were folk songs about various occasions, relationships, and socioeconomic factors. For example, some songs provided a sense of self-confidence such as haari naa malwaanay, ni tu haari na (do not ever lose, woman from the region Malwa). There were also songs about women confronting their mothers-in-law for reprimanding them or their husbands for drinking too much. However, some songs reflected traditional perceptions about women’s subordinate role according to Punjabi customs as well. This celebration and other traditional women-only activities replicated the cultural forms of agency that early South Asian migrant women possessed.
This trend was also evident among other South Asian groups such as the Nepal Cultural Society of BC (NCSBC). Trisha explains:

There was no women’s community association or anything before I moved to the United States because NCSBC at that time was very small and it was just growing. We used to do small activities back then but now it has grown so much that people do not know each other. Other than that, we now have the NCSBC women’s association. We organize women’s only parties but that is about it, so this is all that we have done so far (2013).

Her statement exhibits that some groups are oriented more towards conducting social events, rather than openly opposing the effects of male domination. Simply having a place to express their grievances or celebrating their successes and connecting with other women can be an empowering experience (Hamilton, 2005). Thus, the importance of these types of social gatherings should not be underestimated. More importantly, the motives behind organizing these activities may be altering female subordination, as in the case of the benefit dinner organized by the South Asian Women’s Community Centre (The Gazette, 1992). These types of events have raised money for a range of activities, such as social services for South Asian Canadian women. These fundraisers are an example of how South Asian Canadian women utilized their agency to collectively challenge societal expectations, while maintaining a cultural platform to execute a ‘respectable’ form of action. Overall, the multiplicity of these groups reveals that South Asian women’s citizenship experiences have been enhanced through their participation in organizations concerning civic, political, and cultural affairs.

In conclusion, the condition of South Asian Canadian women altered immensely between 1967 and 1997, as their experiences changed from those of their counterparts who first migrated to Canada. Modifications in immigration policies and legislation as well as the increasing diversity within Canada’s demographic profile after 1967 created a better environment for these women. Cultural and social advancements for South Asian Canadian women occurred but they also had limitations. Their greater financial independence was simultaneously accompanied by the burden of the double duty day, and assimilationist pressures sometimes formed an arena for discord between parents and their children. Nonetheless, this was a strong group of women and they used their agency to improve their position against many odds. These women worked hard to
achieve a higher education, attain employment, surpass cultural barriers, and build a support network. They spent countless hours volunteering and upgrading their education to obtain paid employment. Furthermore, they developed their own strategies to counteract challenges posed by a neoliberal state that cut back on government funding at both federal and provincial levels, so they established their own organizations for social support. They also continued to help others and built a sense of community among South Asian Canadians. Many women that migrated during this era also adopted individual tactics to overcome their secondary position. Through both methods, South Asian Canadian women negotiated a better status for themselves within the Canadian state, and within society at large. Zaman’s words describe this process: “It is clear that immigrant women act as agents of change and improve their situations, especially their work conditions, and at the same time challenge the pervasive sexism and racism in the wider society” (2006, p. 135). Consequently, the final chapter will evaluate some of the advancements that South Asian Canadian women made as citizens and examine what the future of these women may hold. It will analyze how these women regard racism and sexism as well as the ways in which they hope to bring about change. Lastly, it will consider a few lessons that the Canadian state should learn from these women’s experiences and briefly suggest a model for change that can benefit immigrant women.

This thesis has explored how South Asian Canadian women’s experience of citizenship changed by comparing the way that these women challenged legal, social, and cultural barriers during two periods, 1919-1949 and 1967-1997. They utilized their agency and autonomy to negotiate a better life for themselves during both phases of immigration, despite facing many hardships. During the early part of the century, South Asian women formed a more positive citizenship experience, socially and culturally, even without holding formal legal status as citizens. This experience evolved over time as they obtained legal recognition and various forms of rights that came with that standing. Although their ability to benefit from these privileges remained limited in many cases, they worked hard to combat these constraints. This final chapter will discuss South Asian Canadian women’s political involvement and highlight the contributions of South Asian Canadian female scholars who sought to improve the conditions of women in their respective communities from the 1990s onwards. Although, these women’s citizenship status has relatively improved over time, events such as the September 11th attacks of 2001 and ensuing security measures demonstrate that setbacks have occurred. Furthermore, the federal government has recently made modifications to family-class sponsorship that only allow the parents of recent citizens to visit for two years; this has ramifications for South Asian women of various ages and it will be discussed further in detail. Finally, this chapter will examine what the future of South Asian women in Canada may hold and present some recommendations to the state that could assist those living within its boundaries.
6.1. Canada and South Asia, Post-1997

Immense changes have swept over Canada and South Asia, since 1997, and affected attitudes regarding race and gender but they have produced mixed results in a neo-liberal context. These changing ideas are important to understand the group of immigrants that have come to Canada from South Asia during this period. Development projects have ensured higher education levels among women in countries such as Bangladesh, while Bollywood films have finally succeeded in centring movies on female characters in India (Asadullah & Chaudhury, 2009; Dore, 2012). Yet, major incidents within South Asia portray the continued subordination of women. For example, Bollywood actress Mallika Sherawat recently provoked controversy for overtly stating, “I think [India] is a very very regressive state for women and I stand by it!” (Sherawat, 2013). Sherawat was referring to multiple cases of rape and female feticide that occurred in 2012, which convey the hardships that women continued to face within this area. Many Indians’ opposition to her statement demonstrates another form of subordination that has been imposed on women by attempting to silence them when they speak about how they are disadvantaged. Thus, sexism persists as a prominent ideology in South Asia, even though many nations within this region have had influential female leaders like the late Benazir Bhutto (Pakistan), Begum Khaleda Zia (Bangladesh), Hina Rabbani Khar (Pakistan), Sheikh Hasina (Bangladesh), and Sonia Gandhi (India) (Ahmed, 2008; Anonymous, 2011; Mohiuddin, 2008; Skoda, 2004). Sexism still has a large impact on South Asian women and deters many of these women’s migration to Canada as primary applicants, and it also affects the experiences of South Asian women who move to Canada. Moreover, women in South Asia have been affected by the United States’ effort to increase support for the War on Terror by inflicting an image of backwardness and fundamentalist extremism on the Middle East and South Asian subcontinent (Gogia and Slade, 2011; Kelley and Trebilcock, 2010; Zaman, 2006). For instance, US drone attacks, rationalized by the discourse on terror, are a pervasive fact of life for many Pakistanis today, violating their basic human rights (Mazhar & Goraya, 2011). These types of circumstances have undoubtedly affected all women in the area and harmed them in fundamental ways, despite improvements in other realms of their lives.
The September 11th attacks of 2001 and their aftermath led to a shift in immigration policies and increased security measures within the northern hemisphere. Islamophobia—the fear of Islam—emerged as a widespread phenomenon that transformed into numerous hate crimes against Muslims as well as other people of colour (Hanniman, 2008). The fear of persecution for following their religious or cultural beliefs affected many women who wore hijabs, turbans, or veils (Hanniman, 2008; Thobani, 2007). During this era, Muslims and Sikhs or anyone who stereotypically appeared to have an Islamic background became susceptible to greater forms of discrimination, including violent attacks. However, the numbers of Muslims and South Asian Canadians rose because of Canada’s need for educated professionals, in spite of security measures that targeted these groups (Hanniman, 2008). Thus, security measures have mainly acted to scrutinize, degrade, and ‘other’ these people in comparison to Anglo-Canadians (Thobani, 2007). In addition, budget cuts in Canada have aggravated racialized women’s conditions by reducing important services such as health care facilities, offices for various government services (e.g., passport and visa), and some welfare programs (Stasiulus and Bakan, 2003; Zaman, 2006). Of course, these cuts have also affected a wider range of Canadians but the manner in which they influenced racialized women is necessary to bear in mind because these women faced cultural and social pressures to act as the primary caretakers of elders and children within the family who required these services the most (Harrison, Spitzer, Neufeld, Hughes, & Stewart, 2003). Nevertheless, South Asian women’s community networks have formed a strong bond of support to assist one another and confront racism (Zaman, 2006). Despite setbacks, South Asian Canadian women have increased their political activities by standing for public office and succeeding for the first time in Canadian history. These incongruent developments succinctly contextualize the period after 1997, and display the tone that has characterized this period leading to present day.

6.2. Political Involvement

Until this point, I chiefly examined citizenship experience as more than a legal and political status that involved the day-to-day negotiations of South Asian Canadian women but these women also made progress as citizens in the traditional sense. Chapter 3 demonstrated that most South Asian Canadian women appreciated the
opportunity to begin a new life in Canada, even though various legal policies had once openly discriminated against them. These women obtained the right to vote in 1947, which remained their predominant method of political participation (Kel, 2013; Pooja, 2013; Simran, 2013). It is still one of the focal ways that South Asian Canadian women remain connected to the state. For instance, Radha explains that she does not partake in any other political activities; she indicates, “I vote but I do not have an interest in politics. There is too much going on and I do not keep up with it” (2013). Likewise, Trisha indicates that the meaning of citizenship for her is associated with voting and she missed this right when she moved to the United States (2013). She further explicates,

I can vote, that is true, but it is actually nice to be a Canadian because people love Canadians. If you go out and travel, people like them more. People are friendlier to you....One time, we were travelling somewhere from the US and people thought that we were American citizens but when we explained that we are Canadians, they said, “Ooohh, you are Canadian, nice to meet you”. They were so happy to see us! I think it is because Canada is a more peaceful country and it does not have a standing army (Trisha, 2013).

Trisha’s response exhibits a sense of pride in being a Canadian citizen and this feeling is associated with the image of benevolence that Canada maintains worldwide. As a whole, these women showed their appreciation for acquiring formal citizenship and they all exercised their right to vote.

While their political activities were mainly community oriented, in areas where large concentrations of South Asians reside—such as Brampton, Ontario; Surrey, British Columbia (BC); and Toronto, Ontario—these women gained a political voice. In 2004, Nina Grewal from Port Kells, BC, and Ruby Dhalla from Brampton, Ontario became the two first Indian Members of Parliament (MP) (House of Commons, Nina Grewal, 2011; House of Commons, Ruby Dhalla, 2011). In the same year, Yasmin Ratansi from Don Valley East Toronto, Ontario, became the first Ismaili female MP (House of Commons, Yasmin Ratansi, 2011).74 These political victories have expanded to those from South Asian regions outside of India. In 2011, Rathika Sitsabaiesan was elected from Scarborough, Ontario, as the first Sri Lankan Tamil MP (Parliament of Canada, 2011). Likewise, in 2010, Salma Ataullahjan became the first female senator of Pakistani ancestry (Parliament of Canada, 2011). In 2013, BC had the greatest number of women
elected as Members of the Legislative Assembly in all of Canada, forming 34 percent of the total seats, but none were of South Asian origin (Huffington Post, 2013). Interestingly, quite a few South Asian women in BC ran for political office but none succeeded in this year. Inderjeet was a political candidate in 2013 as well. She describes her journey:

It was actually a very positive and wonderful experience for me, to be frank. Different political parties have approached me throughout my life but I am a single mother, so my child was always a priority. First, my son was in elementary school, and then he went to high school, so I kept delaying it. In addition, I strongly believed that being a mother had a time frame and the childhood of my son would never come back but I understood that I could start a political career at another time. Now he has completed high school, so I decided to step into the political arena. I was the candidate for a provincial political party. It was a wonderful and positive experience for me and it was something new. I enjoyed all aspects of it and it was a different world. The premier was very informative; she was also supportive; she herself being a female helped a lot. She is quite understanding, and we have the same concerns and we were both in broadcasting. I will not say that it is an easy field; rather it is quite tough. However, this is something for you, if you are passionate about people and want to do something for your community. I am not suggesting that others do not do something for people, they do it, but in a different way. This is something that I will enjoy and I have every intention to pursue (Inderjeet, 2013).

Inderjeet’s response is informative and reveals the gendered considerations that women still make in regards to childcare before entering any career, particularly the political field. Her case is also exceptional because she is a single parent and prominent member of the South Asian community, which is a rare combination. Single parents are still difficult to find among this group and this is a tough position to adopt for a woman but Inderjeet explains that she has overcome these types of challenges. Although, she was unable to secure an electoral victory in 2013, she remains an active member of a BC provincial party and aims to further her political career. Hence, South Asian Canadian women utilized their autonomy to confront multiple barriers that halted their ability to obtain a significant position within Canadian society. They are now more likely to vote, speak against government policies, and stand for political office.
6.3. Anti-Racist Feminist Scholars Speak

South Asian Canadian women’s struggle to obtain political representation gained momentum in the new millennium but anti-racist feminist scholars began challenging the hardships that South Asian women faced as early as the 1980s. Yet, most South Asian Canadian women were unwilling to speak about the racism and sexism that they had encountered until very recently. When I began my interviews, I did not intend to ask any particular questions about racism or sexism; rather I wanted participants to share what they felt comfortable discussing in accordance with the theoretical insights of oral history (Yow, 2007). Interestingly, one of the participants began her interview with the disclaimer that she would not speak about racism because she and her family never faced any form of racial discrimination. However, as the interview progressed, she made several statements that highlighted the prevalence of racism within their lives. Likewise, another participant did not share any negative experiences of racism during the interview but as soon as I stopped the recorder, she began speaking about various discriminatory incidents. These examples suggest apprehension among participants about associating their names with negative opinions in regards to the Canadian state or society. My findings support Bannerji and Handa’s claims that the rhetoric of multiculturalism has led many racialized groups to believe that the state has eradicated racism and established equality, eliminating the realm for dissonance (Bannerji, 1993; Handa, 2003). They are either scared to voice their concerns, or they have internalized the notion that racism only occurs in isolated incidents (Handa, 2003). More importantly, discourses of multiculturalism and diversity acknowledge cultural groups at the same time that they ‘other’ them (Bannerji, 2000; Gupta T. D., 1999; Handa, 2003; Ng, 1993; Thobani, 2007). Hence, the participants may have felt uneasy speaking about racism based on an understanding of their citizenship experiences as subordinate to the privileged group of ‘white’ Canadians because of the ‘rituals and rites’ that exalt the citizenship of the dominant group of ‘white’ Canadians (Thobani, 2007).

Gonick exemplifies a similar understanding among young Vietnamese and Chinese girls in grades five to eight who consider real Canadians as ‘white’, despite being born and raised in Canada (2000). By incorporating this understanding, it is evident that what the participants chose not to explicitly state depicts a sense of ‘otherness’; it displays the location of someone who cannot belong but has been granted the opportunity to reside in Canada. In fact, some
researchers argue that the stories a person chooses to leave out can exemplify as much as the experiences they reveal though their wishes should be respected (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011; Kindon, Pain, & Kesby, 2010; Reed, 2002). Thus, some South Asian Canadian women’s desire to remain silent or distance themselves from negative ideas about how racism impacts their lives may provide as much insight as their spoken narratives.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that my location and worldview have influenced these observations. When I was an undergraduate student, the ‘immigrant problem’ was a persistent theme in conservative Canadian political discourses. Neoliberal conservative views theorized that the entrance of various peoples posed a threat to the nation’s solidarity, suggesting that one particular group of people formed this nation: Anglo-Canadians; but this ideological framework may also have been adopted by individuals who were not Anglo-Canadian (McBride, 1997). I often found myself alienated, trying to argue against these discourses by conferring that Canada is a country made up of various immigrants. These ideas about immigrants as a ‘problem’ and immigrants as racialized individuals have been perpetuated by the media as well as political discussions on immigration policy. More importantly, most Canadians still believe the traditional historical narrative of Canada’s formation. They are familiar with limited descriptions of the history of the British and French pioneers who settled Canada, the fur trade, the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, and the ‘legitimate’ conquest of the Aboriginals (Gonick, 2000; Hamilton, 2006). Popular historical chronology has ‘forgotten’ that the state’s construction entailed the attempted genocide of various Aboriginal peoples; it involved deception, biological warfare, instigation of alcohol dependence, and the institution of the residential school system (Bannerji, 2000; Thobani, 2007).

Moreover, the adoption of multiculturalism in tandem with the discussion of the ‘immigrant problem’ effectively erased any state-based discrimination from public memory, while undermining the efforts of the first South Asian, Chinese, and Japanese migrants (Bannerji, 2000; Thobani, 2007). Although many academics have challenged the perception of an inclusive Canadian state and sought to provide a more accurate account of Canadian history, these myths have persisted in popular historical consciousness until today. This exposes the ongoing power inequities that reinforce the dominant narrative, despite the efforts of many academics to reveal a much more
complex story of Canada’s formation as a nation. Ultimately, this popular historical reconstruction has formulated the state as a benign entity, virtually impossible to criticize, while suppressing any voices of dissention.

On the other hand, many South Asian Canadian women are reluctant to associate themselves with feminism as well. There are disparate meanings associated with the term and most women are unfamiliar with the academic definition. This is understandable because many feminists also contest the term based on the number of definitions that exist (LeGates, 2001). In her study, Agnew explains why she did not ask her participants if they were feminists: “Many of my respondents would have felt uncomfortable had I asked them directly whether they were feminists” (1996, p. 7). As a researcher, I felt this uneasiness. Some participants assumed patriarchal relations as natural, even though they recognized the problems that this system posed. However, it is important to share their responses to exhibit the multivocality of their perspectives. Trisha explains:

I do not consider myself a feminist. Actually, I am not sure what it is when I think about it. I feel that they are extreme in what they think about women but I think my husband is more of a feminist than I am. I do not think I am a feminist: I just believe in equal rights (2013).

Analogously, Pooja states:

A feminist? Meaning that I should be catered to and everything for being a woman? No, not really. I do not consider myself a feminist. I am just an ordinary person. I do not think that I should say women should have this, women should have that; I think they are equal; you can do what you want. I am my own person and I am very independent. If I want to go anywhere or I do not have something, I am free to do whatever I want. My husband never says that you must do this or you cannot do that. He always says, “Do what makes you feel happy” (2013).

Consequently, both Pooja and Trisha viewed feminism as an extensive demand for women’s rights that extended well beyond their real needs. Radha provided a mixed response, stating, “Yes, but I do not know. No, not really. I am happy with my life now and achievement as a woman” (2013). Thus, Radha considered feminism irrelevant in relation to her current position in life. Inderjeet identified herself as a feminist because of her strong position in favour of women’s education, while Kel denounced the misogyny
prevalent among South Asians (2013). Simran also deemed the South Asian women’s movement as positive; she indicated that she watched activists speak on Indian television shows but she never attended any events that they held (2013). She also explained that Raminder Dosanjh, the wife of former premier Ujjal Dosanjh, played a key role in perpetrating this movement but many people despised her for articulating women’s concerns (2013). These voices convey a plurality of views among South Asian Canadian women on racism and sexism, revealing the context in which South Asian Canadian scholars sought to raise awareness.

The second wave of the mainstream feminist movement was at its height during the 1960s and 1970s but it failed to incorporate the problems that racialized women encountered. Black feminists as well as various racialized groups posited that this movement’s focus on gender oppression ignored the fact that racism formed a greater layer of subordination in their lives (Gupta T. D., 1999; Hamilton, 2006; LeGates, 2001). These women argued that the family formed a refuge for them in the face of racial discrimination, which the ‘white’ middle-class feminist movement overlooked (Dua, 1999; Hamilton, 2006). Proponents of intersectionality theory advanced this critique by arguing that varying types of oppressions exist and affect women diversely based on their location within multiple systems of power (Agnew, 2003; Hamilton, 2005). Consequently, South Asians have written a large amount of anti-racist, post-colonial, transnational, ecofeminist, Marxist, and poststructuralist feminist publications worldwide. Perhaps, the first South Asian publication that received widespread acknowledgment was Mohanty’s *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses* in 1991 (Agnew, 2003). The South Asian Canadian women’s movements have differed immensely from the mainstream feminist movement and they do not all associate themselves with feminism (as noted in Chapter 5). Yet, numerous South Asian Canadian women courageously evoked concerns about racism and sexism in Canadian society at a time when multiculturalism painted the illusion of a non-discriminatory state. Amita Handa, Enakshi Dua, Habiba Zaman, Himani Bannerji, Sherene Razack, Sunera Thobani, Tania Das Gupta, Vijay Agnew, and several other academics introduced South Asian Canadian women’s voices to Canadian feminist scholarship. Helen Ralston Josephine Naidoo, Ratna Ghosh, and Vanaja Dhruvarajan, also exposed how gender, race, and class combined as an oppressive force within the lives of South Asian Canadian women.
(Agnew, 2003). All of these scholars were the first to openly challenge their subordinate citizenship status as well as the sexism and racism that marginalized South Asian women within Canada.

These scholars had to overcome many barriers to articulate their concerns. For instance, Bannerji observed in 1993 how difficult it was for women of colour to find a publisher; she elucidates:

The intellectual and publishing establishments of Canada, including the universities, have put neither time nor money towards creating any space to promote or support our writings, especially non-fictional....In Canada, until recently, even the feminist presses and publications were bereft of our presence. And even now, with the exception of the reorganized Women's Press (Toronto), non-white women and men almost wholly rely on presses and publications of our own communities (p. xi).

Her words portray the discriminatory attitudes that hindered South Asian Canadian feminists’ ability to publish their work in the early 1990s. Ng and Bannerji also note the prejudice that racialized scholars encountered in the academic establishment in terms of obtaining permanent tenure track positions or moving up within the higher ranks of the university (1993). Furthermore, these women’s scholarly contributions reconceptualised notions of power, racism, sexism, and classism by counteracting those who urged them to choose one category of difference as the most integral determinant of their oppression (Ng, 1993). Their work has been momentous in challenging homogenous understandings of oppression within the feminist movement and improving the lives of South Asian Canadian women. Yet ironically, feminism has appeared too radical for many South Asian groups because it has challenged their cultural or religious beliefs. Conversations about sex and women’s rights in a male-dominated society that emphasized notions of respectability, virginity, honour, and passivity among women were taboo (Badyal, 2002; Bariana, 1997; Handa, 2003). Nevertheless, some of the earliest notions identifying women’s power have emerged from South Asia in the form of goddesses such as Lakshmi (goddess of wealth) and Shakti (goddess of power)—to name a few. Some women distinguish these as effective images that have helped them surpass challenges (Naidoo, 2003). Overall, South Asian Canadian scholars’ efforts influenced society; South Asian women’s groups today advocate for women’s rights, and in some cases, discuss issues related to sex.

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6.4. An Unforeseeable Future and Neo-Liberalism

Canada’s current immigration criteria has an underlying classist ideology, which assesses potential migrants’ value as financial assets to Canadian society by focusing on their employability skills and business propositions (Gogia and Slade, 2010; Stasiulus and Bakan, 2003; Zaman, 2010). This policy purports to recruit the most valuable immigrants by establishing education, specific occupations, and $10,833 worth of proof in funds for a single applicant, or $20,130 for a two-parent family with children, as necessary requirements (Gogia and Slade, 2010). These criteria reveal not only a male oriented framework (discussed in Chapter 4) but a classist criterion, which eliminates from consideration anyone who may have the education or skills to migrate, yet lacks the funds. Classism is most evident in the case of business immigrants who are essentially allowed to enter Canada because they possess a significant amount of money that might be invested in the Canadian economy (Gogia and Slade, 2011; Habib, 2003). The state has utilized the rhetoric of multiculturalism to accomplish similar goals. As Walton-Roberts asserts, “This policy trajectory becomes part of a neoliberal co-option of ethnic diversity that diminishes social programmes promoting inclusion and equality and prioritizes agendas that support the strategic incorporation of certain economic elites” (2011, p. 205). More importantly, the immigration minister’s modification of the family-class sponsorship program in 2012 introduced ageism as another impediment to the immigration of many individuals. He argues that the immigration policy now places “increased emphasis on younger migrants who are more likely to acquire valuable Canadian experience, are better positioned to adapt to changing labour market conditions, and who will spend a greater number of years contributing to Canada’s economy” (Pavlich, 2012, p. 1). Essentially, this new immigration policy is based on a hierarchical standard that ascribes a particular worth to each individual, and elder migrants hold little value under this rubric (McLaren, 2006). This policy halted the ability of parents or grandparents from South Asia to acquire citizenship in Canada, which they had been able to do before 2012; now they can only visit family members through the Super Visa program for up to two years (Government of Canada, 2014). Not surprisingly, there are critical effects that these policies will have on South Asian Canadian women.
A close analysis of the Super Visa Program unveils profound problems embedded in the state’s apparatus. South Asian Canadian parents and grandparents have formed a large segment of the labour sector that worked on farms and greenhouses (Singh H., 1987; Walia, 2010). Yet, the new immigration program appears to be based very much on the belief that senior citizens hold little worth because they mainly rely on an old age pension. Intriguingly, the case of British Columbia demonstrates that the province acquired a more vulnerable force willing to complete these tasks, so they no longer needed senior migrants for these duties.78 In 2004, British Columbia adopted the Seasonal Agricultural Worker’s Program (SAWP), following the lead of other Canadian provinces, which invited migrants, mainly from Mexico, to perform farm work seasonally (Kelley and Trebilcock, 2010; Walia, 2010). Thus, the provincial government avoids fulfilling any obligations towards these workers such as providing health care or pensions, by denying them citizenship status. Once again, this policy exemplifies an underlying classist ideology. As Stasiulus and Bakan explicate, “Denial of citizenship guarantees also intensifies class exploitation, creating pools of labour cheapened and made vulnerable to abuse by threats of deportation, and by pitting recent immigrants against poor and working class citizens” (2003, p. 14). In fact, farm work was one of the main jobs that most South Asian women first attained after migrating to Canada or in cases of economic necessity, so the SAWP reduced this opportunity for them. At the same time, this policy exploited workers who came from impoverished countries with few other options for survival. Moreover, if elders could not migrate to Canada, then the state avoided providing them with old age pension, health care, and other benefits. For South Asians these policy changes were problematic because their cultural values were based strongly on the inclusion of elders in family economies (Harrison, Hughes, Neufeld, Spitzer, & Stewart, 2003; Naidoo, 2003). This portrays how the Canadian immigration system ignored key values integral to various cultural groups and imposed the nuclear family model on all Canadians (Dua, 1999).

Likewise, the fact that parents or grandparents can only come for two years institutes the forced separation of families, which usually takes an emotional toll on these individuals. This also has specific implications for South Asian Canadian women who are culturally pressurized to conduct the majority of the household tasks (Radha, 2013). In the past, sponsoring mothers, or even fathers, alleviated some of this burden because
they helped take care of children, clean, cook, and in some cases, earned an income that contributed towards the financial well-being of their family (Buchignani, Indra, and Srivastava, 1985). Additionally, this policy will have a negative impact on both South Asian and Mexican women if we consider current global trends. Most migrant women send remittances back home rather than men because they feel obligated to support their families, so by refusing to allow their parents to migrate, this policy will likely increase women’s financial burden (Stasiulus and Bakan, 2003). Overall, after acknowledging the family reunification policies of 1919 and 1967 as crucial steps forward for South Asian women, it is unfortunate to conclude this thesis by depicting how these laws are slowly regressing.

The Canadian government’s adoption of neo-liberal policies at both the provincial and federal levels has led to cutbacks in services that negatively affect the most vulnerable sectors of the population, particularly women and senior citizens (Chappell & Funk, 2011; Hamilton, 2005). This is problematic for elderly women who statistically live longer than their husbands and must depend on others as their health deteriorates. Lai and Surood determined that long waiting lists and medical professionals’ inability to assist individuals in a timely fashion produced the main service barriers to health care for South Asian Canadian seniors, which were aggravated by cutbacks (2010). In addition, many of these seniors did not know how to advocate for change. Although, organizations such as the National Pensioners and Senior Citizens Federation exist, they are dominated by Anglo-Canadians, so language barriers, unawareness about these organizations, and a lack of accessible transportation impede their involvement in these groups (Karmali-Rawji, Kassim-Lakha, & Taylor, 1992; NPSCF, 2014). For example, Kel states, “Well, when they [a certain political party] phoned me for my vote, I told them that now you want my vote but when it comes to helping with the medical or anything else, you do nothing” (2013). She indicates her desire to influence political change but her approach will not lead to a solution. Her statement reminds me of an incident that occurred last year at the polling station. An elder ‘white’ man complained about cutbacks to healthcare and stated, “My party never wins but I try, what else can I really do?” This man and Kel both wanted to voice their concerns but lacked the opportunity. This also reveals how the interests of an elderly South Asian Canadian woman and senior ‘white’ man coalesced based on age, and perhaps, ability or class. For those individuals that
find it difficult to go to the polling station, it is much more challenging to lobby the
government at various jurisdictions through the regular avenues that have been created
by the ‘democratic’ state. Wendell explains that many people believe they will remain
able-bodied, overlooking the fact that sickness or old age or both will affect them over
time (1996). Aging ensures that many people will not stay able-bodied but the political
system is still largely inaccessible to these individuals. Whereas, those who identify as
disabled have developed groups to lobby the various levels of government, elderly South
Asian women have few options (Dossa, 2009). Nevertheless, a South Asian division was
recently added to the Canadian Association of Retired Persons in Surrey, so this may
become an outlet for some South Asian women as well as the Indo-Canadian Senior
Society (CARP, 2014; Surrey/Delta Indo Canadian Seniors Society, 2010). Additionally,
Dossa argues that the immigration system perpetuates disablism by focusing on
people’s productivity, instead of valuing their relationships and personal potential (2009).
These examples portray the importance of intersectionality as issues of ageism,
disablism, racism, sexism, and classism merge within immigration policies. This also
illustrates how negatively neo-liberalism affects people within these categories
(Hamilton, 2005; Stasiulus and Bakan, 2003; Zaman, 2006). The current political
structure does not accommodate their needs, nor does it connect with them (Lai &
Surood, 2010). Therefore, the state overlooks the concerns of a significant proportion of
the population through its neo-liberal framework, and it mainly views people in terms of
their economic value.

6.5. New Model

After analyzing the Canadian immigration system’s inadequacies and examining
how they affect South Asian Canadian women, I have developed recommendations to
alter some of the negative implications of the policy. Building on the perspectives of my
narrators, I have attempted to take an intersectional approach while composing these
suggestions, acknowledging that multivocality must be considered. The government
needs to develop an outreach program at both provincial and federal jurisdictions that
will collect information from marginalized groups such as new immigrant women or
senior citizens to formulate policies. Chiefly, the Canadian government’s neoliberal
attitude that values capital over other types of contributions to Canadian society, such as
taxes, paid work, volunteer work, housework, or any other form of labour that is required for the sustenance of the state and its citizens, needs to change significantly. These cuts have led to the deterioration of the health care system and the closure of residential care facilities, which means that more seniors have had to depend on their children (generally women) or professional caregivers (Chappell & Funk, 2011; Stasiulis and Bakan, 2005; Zaman, 2006). These caregivers have tended to be migrant women who suffer from poor economic circumstances and all of this has perpetuated the feminization of the care sector (Chappell & Funk, 2011; Stasiulis and Bakan, 2005; Zaman, 2006). Moreover, cuts in health care have affected all women because they are still more likely than men to take care of elders and children who require these services the most (Chappell & Funk, 2011; Hamilton, 2005; Stasiulis and Bakan, 2005; Zaman, 2006). Second, they have an impact on women’s ability to obtain pregnancy checkups, abortions, or basic health checkups (Hamilton, 2005). For instance, the hospital in Mission, BC, recently dealt with the cutbacks in health care provision by removing its maternity ward (Rock, 2010). A pregnant woman must now go to the Abbotsford hospital when she is in labour, which is half an hour away. If we think about the implications of these cutbacks for a single woman, the problem with this modification becomes magnified. The decision to remove the maternity ward demonstrates that policymakers ignored the gendered impact of this change and that financial concerns took priority over the health of women and newborn infants. Furthermore, as Armstrong explains, cutbacks in health care influenced nurses as well as patients. Many nurses felt that they could no longer care for their patients and quit because they failed to obtain satisfaction from their job (Armstrong, 2005). Hence, it is necessary for Canada’s provincial and federal governments to evaluate how cutbacks will affect individuals based on factors of difference and incorporate the opinion of marginalized individuals.

The current system needs to change and the state must begin thinking about all of the people that form this nation: citizens, immigrants, temporary workers, refugees, and undocumented migrants. Policies must stop valuing capital over people; the current immigration system is a key example of this discrepancy. Today’s political apparatus is elitist, sexist, ageist, racist, and discriminatory towards those who are disabled. This is an unfortunate fact, since people that face this type of discrimination are affected most by poverty. As the gap between rich and poor increases and more individuals fall
beneath the poverty line, the state must recognize that a very specific group is benefitting from neoliberalism (Stasiulus and Bakan, 2003). Business ventures may benefit the economy but if Canada’s economic situation is genuinely improving, then why are the conditions of many citizens declining? Maybe there is a possibility that the Canadian government could learn from the ‘third world’ whose feminist movements are considerably active and determined to resolve these types of disparities (Ferree & Tripp, 2006). Several developing states have adopted protocols, in which each new policy’s effect on women must be evaluated before it is implemented. They have also established gender budgets, which are dedicated to improving women’s lot (Ferree & Tripp, 2006; Rai S. M., 2008). Canada’s current immigration laws as well as other policies should evaluate their impact on people living within the nation’s boundaries based on forms of difference. The state should set up a commission that is dedicated to examining these issues, and propose amendments before any new laws are passed. Employment equity and pay equity legislation should be better implemented alongside an effort to change societal attitudes and educate others about why this legislation is necessary. Thus, addressing this issue may mean openly discussing discrimination, even though policies such as multiculturalism have worked to silence many people (Gupta T. D., 1999; Walton-Roberts, 2011). These suggestions are quite idealistic, but if societal change is required based on the types of values that the state holds, then the changes must be substantial. Therefore, the Canadian government must invest within its country and improve the conditions of all the people who live within its boundaries before cutting back on welfare measures and embracing neo-liberal ideals to conduct business with other nations.

6.6. Overview –Discussion on Women in the Shadows

South Asian Canadian women’s narratives reveal important insights that portray how legal, social, and cultural barriers affect marginalized individuals on a day-to-day basis in several ways. Their narratives convey significant points that have implications for multiple disciplines ranging from history, women’s studies, migration studies, citizenship studies, diaspora studies, sociology, to political science. Their voices are necessary to inform various sectors of governing bodies on how to address the problems with the current political and social structure as well as the establishment of new policies.
In fact, these women learned to incorporate their own views to enact social change and formed various types of organizations. They established South Asian women’s groups that gave other women from their community the means to recognize and assert their autonomy through English training, housing programs, employment services, and violence prevention programs. South Asian Canadian women successfully counteracted many limitations that they faced as immigrants in a foreign country. They utilized their agency to navigate their way around a system that marginalized them in several ways. At the beginning of the century, cultural forms of agency assisted them when they held few legal rights. However, as they obtained legal status in Canada, and policies shifted with time, the manner in which they negotiated their position altered as well. Many became active within the community or political sphere. South Asian women scholars opposed their second-class citizenship status and introduced racialized women’s concerns to feminist literature. Thus, South Asian Canadian women have walked a long way through the darkness of shadows to find the light that would lead them to success within Canada, over a century.

This thesis marks one hundred and four years of South Asian Canadian women’s documented presence in Canada and it is a tribute to their courage, dedication, and strength. They moved millions of miles away and made Canada their home with many odds against them. Yet, these women succeeded in building a community that has now grown to an enormous extent. The new millennium promised a new role for South Asian Canadian women within the political sphere. However, as this chapter has indicated, many advances for these women are now beginning to reverse as the neo-liberal policy framework continues to implement greater cutbacks. Most communities have to rely on private associations or groups for support, instead of seeking assistance from the government. The first to lose in these types of situations are disadvantaged groups; women tend to be largely affected based on these forms of difference. Then again, citizenship is a set of rights that are constantly, actively, collectively, and individually negotiated; in fact, they are never entirely achieved. Hopefully, South Asian Canadian women will remain active and compel the Canadian government to adopt policies at both provincial and federal levels that constantly assess the implications of new laws on those residing within their borders. In the meantime, South Asian Canadian women’s journey beyond the shadows will continue for the years to come.
Bani is a Punjabi word and respectful way of referring to verses written by the Sikh Gurus in the scriptures. Guru literally means teacher and it is the title used to distinguish the ten main teachers of the Sikh faith.

The first wave feminist movement was largely a western phenomenon that roughly began in the mid-19th century and ended in the early 20th century. During this era, women in the United States, Canada, and Europe fought to achieve suffrage and equality within legal structures. However, I am referring to the second wave feminist movement that launched after Beauvoir (1949) and Friedan’s (1963) books became a sensation in the west. This wave began with feminists encouraging women to build their careers and obtain a higher education. These feminists argued that the first wave feminists had failed to go ‘far enough’ and men continued to subordinate women. This movement spiralled in different directions as it affected the opinions of various women and led to the formation of separate feminist categories.

T. D. Gupta may also be considered a western feminist as a South Asian Canadian but at this point, I am referring to my earlier discussion on Beauvoir, Friedan, and Firestone as western feminists who initiated the second wave of the feminist movement.

At the beginning of the 20th century, both South Asians and Canadians regarded motherhood as an integral role within society. Feminists at this time utilized this role to advocate for the vote of middle and upper class Anglo-Canadian women (Errington, 1993). In general, Anglo-Canadians regarded motherhood as imperative for the construction of a ‘white’ man’s country (Dua, 2000). For South Asian Canadians, motherhood was essential for the establishment of a South Asian society and it held religious significance (Agnew, 2003; Dua, 2000).

Punjab is a region that expands across current day Northern India and Pakistan.

I am aware that I have used terms like ‘husband’ and ‘wife’ that can be contested. However, I have still employed them because they reflect the views of the South Asian Canadian community at the time and they portray how most individuals from this period regarded one another. Most of my participants referred to their husbands, not their partners, so this reveals an important component of their culture and understanding that was based on a heteronormative framework.

Bollywood is the Indian film industry located in Mumbai, India. This is one of the world’s largest film production establishments, which features films in Hindi with English subtitles. It has become a popular form of entertainment across numerous nations and these films are often dubbed in the language of the nation in which they are shown.

I have placed quotations around the word ‘progressive’ because it is often used to mean different things and associated with western ideas. I am using it to refer specifically to liberal minded ideas that support women’s empowerment.

I understand that Anglo-Canadian and ‘white’ Canadian are not the best terms to use because the main hegemonic group within Canada in the 20th century consisted of upper and middle class, ‘white’, Protestant men but I have utilized it for lack of a better way to distinguish this group. The dominant group incorporated Scottish-Canadians throughout different periods as well. Many individuals who may be regarded as ‘white’ Canadian or Anglo-Canadian lacked the same benefits as this dominant group. An ethnic hierarchy existed among groups that are bunched together under the category of ‘white’ today, so understandings of race and ethnicity have shifted based on time. These interpretations also depend on place, class, and context. For example, Keough explains that ethnicity is a process of ongoing negotiation that is used to differentiate one group from another and it cannot exist without the ‘other’; such was the
case among the English Protestants within the 1800s in Newfoundland who regarded the Irish Catholics as a “drunken, disorderly, and treacherous” group (2005). In fact, the Irish as well as many eastern and southern Europeans were considered unwanted immigrants in the late 19th century and the beginning of 20th century (Vineberg, 2011).

10 I have included quotation marks around the word ‘white’ to remind the reader that this is a problematic category. However, I am using it to refer to the dominant hegemonic group within Canada (see note 9).

11 If an Anglo-Canadian woman married a man from another country such as an Italian, then she would lose her status as a Canadian (Habib, 2003). However, Anglo-Canadian women obtained the right to vote in federal elections in 1918, whereas South Asian women did not receive this right until 1947. Anglo-Canadian women were also preferred immigrants and the government sponsored them into Canada on a number of occasions but this was not true for all ‘white’ Canadians.

12 Some women have also migrated independently through the Points System but they have still been subjected to a secondary status, which is further demonstrated in this thesis.

13 South Asian Canadian immigration at the beginning of the century was mainly concerned with the province of British Columbia. Nevertheless, discussions about allowing South Asians, including South Asian women, to enter Canada shifted from the provincial jurisdiction to federal authorities, and these extended to the British parliament as well. South Asian Canadian men tried to reach out to as many officials and people of influence that they could within various sectors of the Canadian and British governments, including those in India; they tried their best to pressure the Canadian government to allow the migration of their wives and children.

14 I am using the term ‘wives’ because early women all arrived as spouses of men residing in Canada, whether they came illegally or through legal means. This is not how I view these women’s roles but it is the way that the Canadian state, British authorities, and South Asian men regarded South Asian women at the time based on their relation to South Asian men. When the law allowed these women to enter Canada, this was also limited to the spouses of men residing there or their unmarried children.

15 There were a few exceptions during this period but the numbers of immigrants were inconsequential.

16 The terms ‘secondary citizenship status’ and ‘second-class citizenship’ do not denote a formal citizenship category, rather these terms reflect how South Asian women have experienced citizenship as a subordinate group in Canada. T. D. Gupta (1994), Stasiulis and Bakan (2003), Thobani (2007), and Zaman (2010) have utilized variations of these terms to describe the inferior nature of the experiences that racialized women have felt in Canada compared to Anglo-Canadians. Moreover, women like Parmar have used these terms to describe their own experiences (2009).

17 I have used the metaphor of the shadow consistently within this thesis to denote the negative social and cultural attitudes that are associated with femininity in both South Asian and mainstream Canadian culture as well as the legal barriers that have halted South Asian Canadian women’s ability to acquire a position that is equal to Anglo Canadian men.

18 I have used the word ‘ordinary’ to refer to those who are not involved in political or administrative decisions. However, I have used quotations around it because I believe that every individual has something important to contribute to society.

19 There are numerous racial incidents that have occurred in Canadian history such as the subjugation of Aboriginal peoples, Japanese internment during World War II, the deportation
of the Komagata Maru (discussed later), and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1923 (this act banned the migration of new immigrants from China).

20 In this work, I am mainly analyzing intersections of race and gender but I am not extensively engaging with intersection theory.

21 Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji’s progressive teachings on improving women’s lives were furthered by the Sikh Gurus that followed him. The British are given credit for abolishing sati (custom of women burning themselves on their husband’s funeral pyre) and purdah (veil). However, Guru Amar Das Ji, the third guru, abolished all of these customs in the early 16th century. Nonetheless, most Sikhs today have departed away from teachings that promote gender equality and culturally re-instituted gendered differences between ‘men’ and ‘women’ (Singh N.-G. K., 2004).

22 I have utilized the word ‘mainstream’ throughout this paper to denote the practices of the majority of the population, which is ‘white’ Canadian. However, I understand that this term is flawed and it conveys a convoluted image of what should perhaps be recognized as dominant ‘white’ Canadian culture. This term hides the racial implications behind its use, which portray ‘white’ Canadian culture as the norm and ‘others’ racialized groups (Gonick, 2000).

23 I have written that men have often categorized women as their shadows but I would like to note that many women have supported these subordinate roles for women as well (LeGates, 2011). Among many Punjabi women that moved to Canada during the second period of immigration, they also helped recreate and reproduce discourses about femininity that suggested women should remain subordinate to men (Bariana, 1997).

24 This reproduces ideas about women remaining subordinate to their husbands, only doing work for them, and finding happiness in their happiness. These ideas have been reinforced in South Asia for centuries through the mythological examples of Sita and Sati or Pativrata (a belief in Hinduism that a wife should abide by the rules that her husband sets). Sita, the wife of Lord Rama, and Sati, the consort of Lord Shiva, are both examples of Pativrata in other words women who devoted their lives to their husbands (Dalmia-Lüderitz, 1992; Naidoo, 2003).

25 Although, this thesis cannot present the respondents’ complete interviews, several agreed to allow their stories to be made available through SFU’s Summit Repository and can be accessed at summit.sfu.ca.

26 Whenever the government is mentioned in regards to South Asian immigration, scholars have not always differentiated between the federal and provincial governments (Agnew, 2003; Gupta T. D., 1994; Manhas, 2009). Nevertheless, discussions about allowing South Asians to enter Canada shifted from the provincial jurisdiction to federal authorities, and these extended to the British parliament as well, which may explain why it is not always specified. Additionally, South Asian Canadian men tried to reach out to many people of influence related to the various forms of Canadian, British, or Indian governments who could pressurize immigration officials in Canada to allow the migration of their wives and children. Nevertheless, most cases on immigration at the beginning of the century were resolved by the Minister of the Interior who was under the jurisdiction of the federal government (Buchignani, Indra, & Srivastava, 1985).

27 King Edward VII’s coronation was a flamboyant event and soldiers from all over the empire were brought to the United Kingdom to partake in the celebrations. He acceded his mother, Queen Victoria, as King of the United Kingdom and the British Dominions as well as the Emperor of India.

28 The small quarters that the lumber mill owners constructed for the men were cramped spaces with many men living in one.
The South Asian community sent more than one contingent of community leaders to Ottawa to appeal for the vote and the migration of South Asian men’s wives, while they also continued to lobby the government in British Columbia (Buchignani, Indra, & Srivastava, 1985; Johnston, 2011; Sharma, 1997).

The First War of Indian Independence (also known as the Indian Mutiny of 1857 or Sepoy Rebellion) began on May 10, 1857 when Indian soldiers within the army of the East India Company rebelled. Many factors led to the rebellion. One, Indian soldiers discovered that the gun cartridges, which they opened with their mouths were greased with cow and pig fat. The soldiers, who were either Muslim and forbidden from eating pig, or Hindu and forbidden from eating cow, believed that this was a ploy to Christianize them. There were several other factors that led to this uprising and created a hostile political climate. The British instated a number of harsh land policies and denied the titles held by native princes and Mughal leaders. The British declared Bahadur Shah II as the last Mughal Emperor and refused to acknowledge Nana Sahib as the leader of the Mughals. The rebellion began in Meerut and continued to escalate in other areas such as Bihar, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh. Many princes from Punjab supported the East India Company, while the South remained quiet (Indian Mutiny, 2013). At a point, the revolt also incorporated the struggle of Oudh’s queen, Lakshmibai, popularly known as the Rani (queen) of Jhansi. The Rani adopted a son because she did not have a living child of her own but the British refused to consider him a rightful heir after her husband passed away, so she initiated a patriotic effort to expel the British from India. All of these struggles intersected and continued for a year but the revolt culminated with the fall of Gwalior in June of 1858 (Chakravarty, 2005).

Ghadar means revolution. This movement began in 1913 with the establishment of the Hindustani Association in California. It remained connected with Indians in Vancouver and a newspaper was published to gain support throughout North America. There were a number of leading revolutionaries in Vancouver such as Bhag Singh, Balwant Singh, Hussain Rahim, and Mit Singh Pandori. These revolutionaries urged Indians to go back home and begin the revolt as soon as World War I broke out but they lacked a decisive plan. Numerous men returned to India in 1914 without any guidance or necessary weapons. Moreover, the British were aware of their plans and arrested most revolutionaries immediately at the ports (Singh J., 1982).

Hira Singh’s wife’s name is not mentioned anywhere and she is called Mrs. Hira Singh in all of the accounts that I could find.

Baj Baj (also written as Budge Budge) is a port in Kolkata, India.

The caste system in India is a structure with ancient roots that differentiates between people based on their profession. The Hindu lawgiver, Manu, instituted a law code that established castes in relation to one’s profession between 200 B.C. and 100 A.D. The highest castes were those belonging to religious families, Brahmans, or warriors, Kshatriyas, and this hierarchy descended to agriculturalists, landowners, or business people who were known as Vaishnavas. Below the Vaishnavas were the Shudras who had to serve those above them. There were also people below this system who were considered untouchables and they were known as the scheduled castes. According to this system, if a person was born in a lower caste family then god predestined them for this type of life based on the actions that they committed in their past birth (Naidoo, 2003; Stevenson, 2003).

At this time, the hegemonic group in Canada was concerned about controlling various forms of sexuality more broadly and the apprehension about polygamy was related to this larger project. The government was struggling to halt polygamous practises among indigenous peoples and Mormons. Moreover, several anti-prostitution campaigns transpired in an effort to control ‘immoral’ forms of sexuality.
Independent migration for women at this time was out of the question for South Asian men and Anglo-Canadians. They would have both regarded this as undesirable and dangerous for women because it could potentially lead to prostitution. While Anglo-Canadians would have seen this as a moral threat to their society, South Asian men would have regarded it as dangerous for the women migrating. Early South Asian male migrants mainly had a middle class background and they came from Punjab, although they may have faced some economic losses back home, they held middle class values. Women among this group were expected to stay at home and depend on the men. Thus, the case of independent migration for women would have been an unthinkable proposition for the early male South Asian migrants. Furthermore, even women among the lower classes who migrated to Trinidad and Tobago, did of their own accord, and had often fought or broken ties with the men in their families to begin a new life for themselves. They also migrated from other regions of India such as Delhi, Allahabad, Fyzabad, Agra, Mathura, and Banares. The situation in these states was different from Punjab. The position of other colonies such as the West Indies was distinct from Canada as well because they were recruiting indentured labour, so they allowed women to enter, despite the attitudes that South Asian men may have held (Reddock, 2008).

This is not to say that all Hindu or Muslim groups subordinated women and only Sikhs valued them. Both these religious groups also recognized women for their roles as mothers but depending on the area, community, and culture, specific customs may have developed that subordinated them. The Sikh religion emerged within Punjab and sought to counter some of the negative associations that were made with women in this specific area but this also regressed over time in many ways (Basran & Bolaria, 2003; Singh N.-G. K., 2005).

Sati was a practice in which a woman whose husband died, committed suicide by throwing herself into his funeral pyre. This action was sometimes community induced, and in other cases, a choice that a woman made on her own. Nevertheless, many South Asian feminists have contested the practise’s apparently voluntary aspect because they argue that a woman’s decision of self-immolation has to be analyzed in relation to each case’s social, cultural, and religious circumstances. They also argue that women’s socialization is a key factor in this decision and the glorification ascribed to a woman who becomes a sati (Sugirtharajah, 2001). It was prominent among some Hindu groups but uncommon among others, and rare among Sikhs or Buddhists. In fact, the popularity of this practise increased after the British attempted to control it (Dalmia-Lüderitz, 1992).

It is difficult to determine whether this was a separate case or one that I already mentioned. Many individuals had changed their names within legal records a number of times because they entered Canada as illegal immigrants. After they got caught, they would change their name and move back to Canada, pretending to be someone else. This has caused some confusion for historians trying to piece these stories together (Buchignani, Indra, & Srivastava, 1985; Johnston, 2011).

Sunder Singh and Teja Singh had been trained at the India House in London and along with Bhag Singh and Balwant Singh they were prominent community activists; Uday Ram Joshi was an interpreter-contractor (Buchignani, Indra, & Srivastava, 1985; Manhas, 2009; SFU Library, 2011).

It was originally Indians who migrated to British colonies that instigated the movement for Indian independence and the British were well aware of this fact, so they thought that appeasing Indians in Canada would also ease the revolutionary sentiments in India (Buchignani, Indra, & Srivastava, 1985).

The published literature has used agency and autonomy interchangeably because of their close relationship in terms of exerting individual liberty. However, there are some sources that differentiate between these two terms. Solomon describes autonomy as the decision-making...
capacity of an individual as a rational agent (2000). A lack of oppression is often associated with autonomous decision-making; it involves recognition of personal freedom and one’s ability to exert an amount of influence. She describes agency as “the ability to make reasonable choices” with few options at one’s disposal, so their decision-making capacity is constrained to a certain extent (Solomon, 2000). However, one may utilize their agency through resistance, which involves both active and subtle acts that can be either formal or informal (Zaman, 2012).

A hierarchical family structure did not exist among all South Asian families but this was a common pattern that persisted among many. This situation could quickly alter if a daughter-in-law gave birth to a son, which would augment her status within the home (Shirwadkar, 2004).

Giddha is one of the five traditional dance forms done in Punjab. Only women perform this dance, which tells stories about their lives. Giddha is done on folk songs called Bolis. In a colourful fashion, Bolis mention the good and bad realities of these women’s lives.

Vardiya are small brown lentil patties that are used in other foods to enhance the flavour. They are usually spicy and eaten in yogurt, lentil soup, or some other dishes.

Laddoos are small spherical yellow sweets made out of flour and sugar.

Pakaudiyas are very small fried pieces made of chickpea flour, which are added to yogurt. These have a salty flavour and beige colour.

Dahi is plain yogurt but Punjabis often eat it salted with a number of spices such as black pepper and red chilli as well as other ingredients like pakaudiya, vardiyan, mint, or bananas. There is also an appetizer called chaat, which is made with a mix of these ingredients in yogurt and includes other foods such as chickpeas, pieces of potatoes, onions, etc.

A dholki is a small brown drum, which is held in one’s lap. It is played with both hands with one hand on either side of the drum.

Rotis are round shaped chapattis made of different types of flour but plain rotis are made of stoneground wholemeal flour.

Vaisakhi is the name of the harvest in Punjab and it is celebrated as a seasonal event. However, it is also the day that the tenth Sikh teacher, Guru Gobind Singh Ji instituted the Sikh Faith. It is widely celebrated around the world where a large number of Sikhs reside. Guru Gobind Singh Ji formalized the religion and baptised his followers on April 13, 1699. Although, Sikhs had existed for several hundred years at this time, no other Guru separated Sikhism as a religion. The tenth Guru established the Five K’s that baptised Sikhs must have: Kesh (unshorn hair), Kara (steel or iron bracelet), Kanga (small wooden comb), Kashera (shorts worn as an undergarment), and the Kirpan (dagger). All of these articles held their own significance and the religion was meant to create a group of people willing to fight for justice. The Mughals had been attacking Punjabis and forcing them to convert to Islam, before the first Guru’s appearance in 1469; they murdered hundreds, while abducting and raping the women. Punjabis began enduring abuse at the hands of the Mughals after continuously losing to them. However, the sixth Sikh teacher, Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji decided that Sikhs would stop heeding to the Mughals and the tenth Guru fervently furthered this tradition. Many argue that the Five K’s were created so that Sikhs would be prepared to fight the Mughals at any time when they attacked (Basran & Bolaria, 2003; Buchignani, Indra, & Srivastava, 1985; Singh N.-G. K., 2005).

The Jodh Mela is a Sikh event that commemorates the death of the tenth Guru’s two youngest sons, Baba Zorawar Singh Ji and Baba Fateh Singh Ji. They are remembered as the youngest martyrs of the Sikh faith at ages nine and six. They were brutally murdered by the Mughal Governor of Sirhind, Wazir Khan, for refusing to convert to Islam (Basran & Bolaria,
2003; Singh N.-G.K., 2005). This event is observed for a week in December, usually beginning around the 21st.

53 I have purposely utilized the word 'daughter,' even though I understand that its use may be contested because it conveys the gendered understanding and expectations that many South Asian parents held in regards to female children (Handa, 2003).

54 A salwar kameez is traditional attire worn mainly by Punjabis but also other South Asians. It includes baggy pants (salwar) with a long tunic top (kameez) and a head scarf (chunni).

55 The 1966 White Paper made a number of suggestions on modifying immigration. These suggestions were incorporated into the Immigration Act of 1967. The 1967 Points System revoked any racial or ethnic criteria from immigration requirements and established skills as the main qualifier. These new regulations evaluated potential migrants' significance by assigning a score to them based on their age, education, training, demand of their occupational skills, ability to speak English or French, number of interview points assigned to them by an immigration official, arranged employment, and the employment opportunities that were available in the area that they planned to move (Kelley and Trebilcock, 2010). It also instituted the same sponsorship privileges for all immigrants, regardless of their country of origin. However, women were not allowed to migrate as principal applicants until 1974, so gender distinctions were not abolished until this year.

56 Some would argue that these hierarchical distinctions have deliberately established differences among racialized groups, so that they do not work together and remain rivals (Bannerji, 2000; Thobani, 2007).

57 Traditionally, in Canada and South Asia, men were encouraged to obtain an education more than women. In fact, there was a time when women were not allowed to attend school (LeGates, 2005). This is still true in some areas of South Asia where women may be discouraged or unable to attend school for a variety of reasons. In this way, the focus on education diverts the ability of many women to migrate. A similar situation exists with many occupations that are 'in demand' such as engineering or professions related to science. Nonetheless, South Asian women may possess various skills that they use in their daily lives; they may be expert accountants, have important knowledge about farming or other fields, and even conduct business such as street vending. However, this knowledge fails to be accompanied by a degree, so it holds little value in the eyes of the Canadian government. Moreover, 'women-centred' values such as caring and nurturing are ignored from this type of criteria.

58 S. Rai argues that women often have greater knowledge about particular facts such as indigenous knowledge regarding seed production and herbal treatments but there is no value ascribed to this type of knowledge. She exemplifies this through the way that international patents have worked where power is extracted from poor ‘third world’ women who utilize plants such as the neem tree for medicinal purposes into the hands of predominantly male scientists from the developed world. Furthermore, she provides numerous examples of western female inventors whose contributions have been overlooked by the scientific establishment; this exhibits prejudicial conceptions of women’s work/knowledge and portrays how women’s knowledge is ignored and devalued (Rai S.M., 2008).

59 These women are considered temporary workers but they do have chances of eventually obtaining citizenship, particularly through endeavours such as the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP).

60 Reserved behaviour is a highly-esteemed attribute for women in many South Asian cultures (Ghosh, 1994).
Changes in cultural expectations among South Asians may depend on the generation of the family that has been residing in Canada. For example, subsequent generations appear to conform to ‘mainstream’ Canadian standards more than the first or second generations. For example, H. K. Rai whose family was one of the first South Asian immigrant families in Canada explains that by the 1960s, some parents allowed their daughters to date other men from their community but this contrasted the situation of many South Asian women whose families migrated in the 1960s (2009).

The bride’s father gave a dowry to the husband’s family because the father was supposedly indebted to the groom’s family for taking the burden of his daughter off his shoulders (Bariana, 1997).

Bariana writes, “In the Punjab, an unsuccessful marriage is usually blamed on the female due to her perceived inability to adjust, obey and cater to the male’s elders and conduct the household duties” (1997, p. 197). A similar idea has dominated perceptions of domestic abuse among certain groups who believe that the woman has done something to instigate the abuse. In the past, divorce and abuse could both dishonour the woman’s family in some areas (Badyal, 2003; Bariana, 1997; Sodhi, 2002).

The main difference between education systems of various countries can be a debatable topic. It can often depend on specific universities or colleges within countries. For example, India’s engineering program is well known for its level of difficulty, especially the institutions in Delhi. However, the problem is that when people from ‘good’ institutions come to Canada, their credentials are not accepted when they may possess strong skills in their field. In the nursing profession, there are very few differences among many ‘third-world’ countries and they are mainly based on the types of equipment used or other factors that could be addressed without repeating an extensive program (Stasiulus and Bakan, 2003).

Arat-Koc (1999), Habib (2003), and Stasiulus and Bakan (2003) determine that the views of individual immigration officers have had a large impact on who becomes the principal applicant and the sponsor. These officers are more likely to identify men as the principal applicants and the ‘wives’ as dependents.

The heading Facing the Shadows may appear to suggest that South Asian Canadian women overcame all of the challenges that they encountered within Canada but this should not be interpreted in such a simplistic manner. Rather the complexities of women’s lives and the continuities or discontinuities that various barriers introduced within women’s lives have to be considered. Thus, this chapter is about how women used their individual or collective agency to improve their position within Canada, despite facing numerous constraints.

Canada is a liberal welfare state that provides a number of services such as health care and education to its citizens. Canada’s education is mandatory and varies based on the province or territory, which set the main standards for education. In most cases, children have to begin education at the age of four or five and continue until they are 15 or 16, depending on the province or territory (Government of Canada, 2012).

South Asia is composed of many countries and there are regions in each country that contain a group of individuals with ideologically conservative beliefs. For example, in India there are progressive areas where women are actively encouraged to obtain an education and paid jobs, yet there are other regions where they are discouraged to find paid employment outside of the home or obtain a higher education (Sudha & Irudaya, 1999). There are also a number of right-wing, religiously staunch political parties that reign supreme over some areas of South Asia or factions of illegal gangs that discourage female emancipation.
There is lots of water in Nepal but access to clean water is lacking in a number of areas. There are irrigation systems set in place to resolve the issue but women still have to walk long distances to obtain water.

The term ‘culture clash’ denotes the differences between the cultural practises of two groups, generally the east and west, and how they may conflict with one another (Handa, 2003). In this case, it refers to the clash between South Asian cultural practises and expectations held by parents, which may oppose their children’s inclination towards mainstream Canadian cultural practises (Badyal, 2003; Bariana, 1997; Handa, 2003).

The Teeyan, Mela Teeyan Da, or Teeyan Teej Diya is a seasonal festival that marks the beginning of the monsoon and it literally translates as daughters, the celebration of daughters, or daughters of the monsoon.

NDTV (New Delhi Television) covered numerous cases of rape in India and Pakistan in 2013, particularly after the Delhi Gang Rape case of December 2012 (NDTV, 2014). The large numbers of these instances are a gruelling reminder of female subordination and violence against women (Roychowdhury, 2013).

Benazir Bhutto was the Chairperson of the Pakistan People’s Party from 1982-2007. She served as Prime Minister of Pakistan from 1988-1990 and 1993-1996, and then, as the leader of the official opposition from 1996-1999. She was assassinated in 2007 at the time of another upcoming election, and the person responsible for her death remains unknown. Whereas, some members of Al-Qaeda took responsibility for the attack, her family has contested this affirmation, and the court established an arrest warrant for the President at the time, General Pervez Musharraf in connection with the attack. Begum Khaleda Zia is the leader of the Bangladesh National Party and she served as Prime Minister from 1991-1996 and 2001 to 2006. Currently, she is the leader of the official opposition. Hina Rabbanni Khar served as the Foreign Minister of Pakistan from 2011 to 2013 and she is a part of the Pakistan People’s Party. She is an economist who served in various sectors of Pakistan’s government before she obtained this position. Sheikh Hasina is the current Prime Minister of Bangladesh and she has served in this position since 2009. She was also Prime Minister from 1996-2001. Hasina is a part of the Awami League Party, the opposing party to that of Khaleda Zia. Sonia Gandhi was the President of India’s ruling party in 2004, the National Congress of India but after her party won the election, she appointed Dr. Manmohan Singh as Prime Minister instead of taking the position herself. Opposing parties, particularly Sushma Swaraj, contested Gandhi’s appointment as Prime Minister because she was born in a foreign country. The Supreme Court of India denied Swaraj’s claim as a valid infringement of the law but Gandhi decided not to take the position of Prime Minister.

Ismailis are closely associated with the Shi’a sect of Islam and their ancestors mainly came from India or Pakistan.

Thobani defines rituals and rites as more than celebrations of national allegiance such as raising flags or reciting the national anthem. She explains that these also incorporate practises that question the presence of racialized individuals and ‘other’ them as a result such as consistent questioning of racialized individuals. For example, where are they really from? Do they speak English? Why do they wear turbans? Furthermore, she explains that these types of incidents are often considered isolated but that hides their repetitive and ritualized nature. These kinds of perceptions are passed on from generation to generation and they persist (Thobani, 2007).

It is important to state that these are my observations, and remind the reader of my own location, which influences my opinion. I tend to feel uncomfortable making observations that digress from the main conversation in an interview because I understand the power or authority that I may have as a researcher. However, I have decided to incorporate the oral
history interviews with these women in the archives to provide an alternative to the excerpts or interpretations that I have included in this piece (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011; Riordan, 2004).

77 The so-called conquest of aboriginal peoples involved a long history, besides the ‘fair’ battles and wars that popular Canadian historical interpretations have invoked. The use of small pox as biological warfare, which was dispersed through blankets to the Iroquois is seldom mentioned and neither is the alcohol dependence, which was initiated among many aboriginal peoples by the British. Moreover, the treaties drafted after these battles involved just as much deception as these previous tactics. In many cases, aboriginals preserved information about treaties that they signed through oral history accounts, whereas the British wrote them down in a language that many aboriginals at that time did not understand and both accounts do not match. The British version has been validated in most cases. Over the years, many aboriginals have contested this practise and succeeded in challenging the state in some situations (Rioordan, 2004).

78 The immigration minister’s words suggest that they want people who will spend their lives working in Canada and contributing to the economy, rather than seniors who may contribute to the system in many other integral ways.

79 I am in no way suggesting that the disparities among people in Canada are wider than those in the third-world. Rather, I am suggesting the use of some strategies that have worked in other areas of the world to eliminate growing differences among people in Canada.

80 A gender budget is a significant amount of financial resources that are set aside by the government to decrease gender disparities.
References


Harrison, M., Spitzer, D., Neufeld, A., Hughes, K., & Stewart, M. (2003). Caregiving in transnational context: "My wings have been cut; Where can I fly?". *Gender and Society*, 267-286.


Hindu-Canadian, C. (1916). *India's appeal to Canada, or, an account of Hindu immigration to the dominion*. Toronto: Canada India Committee.


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Appendices
# Appendix A. Participant Demographic Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Religious Background</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Occupation (before retirement)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inderjeet</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Sikh</td>
<td>Master of Fine Arts</td>
<td>Politician/Realtor/Broadcaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kel</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Sikh</td>
<td>Grade 7</td>
<td>Homemaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pooja</td>
<td></td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Sikh</td>
<td>2 years of College</td>
<td>Bank Teller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Participant did not want to disclose age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radha</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>Master of Arts (Psychology)</td>
<td>School and Student Support Worker (SSSW)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simran</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Sikh</td>
<td>Grade 12</td>
<td>Store Clerk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trisha</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts (English and Sociology)</td>
<td>Frame Shop Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Certificate in Tourism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B. Recruitment Letter

Rishma Johal
MA Student
Simon Fraser University

Dear Prospective Participant,

Thank you for showing interest in my study, "Moving Beyond the Citizen's Shadow: South Asian Canadian Women's Agency". My name is Rishma Johal and I am a Master of Arts student at Simon Fraser University in the Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Department. The study that I am writing to you about is an oral history project for my thesis. I will be conducting a total of six interviews with women of South Asian descent who are living in Canada. I am inviting you to participate in this study because I would like to know how specific Canadian immigration policies have affected you as a South Asian woman.

The purpose of this research is to explore how South Asian Canadian women's citizenship experience has changed over time. I would like to analyze how South Asian Canadian women have challenged various legal, social, and cultural constraints during two different periods. Thus, this is a comparative study that examines the effects of two immigration policies: one from 1919, and the second from 1967.

You may be eligible for this study if you are over the age of thirty and migrated to Canada between 1919 and 1949, or between 1967 and 1997. You may have migrated from any one of the following South Asian countries: Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and the Maldives. You may also have migrated from any one of these countries to another country before moving to Canada, so there is no restriction on which country/countries this/these may have been.

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be required to participate in an oral interview of approximately two hours in length. The interview will be scheduled for completion in September. The interview will be open-ended and conversational. You will be free to withdraw from the interview or place restrictions on the use of the material at any time up to the completion of my thesis. You may be asked to do a follow-up interview of approximately 1 hour in length but you may refuse to do this.

It is important for you to know that this letter is not to tell you to join this study. It is your decision. Your participation is voluntary and please note that this is not a paid project. If you are interested in participating or require more information, please call Rishma. I thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Rishma Johal
Appendix C. Recruitment Advertisement

Participants Needed

I am recruiting women of South Asian descent, over the age of thirty, for a study titled, "Moving Beyond the Citizen’s Shadow: South Asian Canadian Women’s Agency". I am looking to interview women who migrated to Canada between 1919 and 1949 or between 1967 and 1997. I will be conducting a total of six interviews. This is a comparative study that examines the effects of two citizenship policies on South Asian Canadian women’s citizenship experience: one from 1919, and the second from 1967. I am an MA student and completing a thesis on how South Asian Canadian women have challenged various legal, social, and cultural constraints. These interviews will form the oral history component of my thesis. Please note that this is not a paid project. If you are interested in participating or require more information, please call Rishma.
Appendix D. Questionnaire

Research Questions

1. Could you please tell me a bit about yourself and your experiences before coming to Canada?
   What was your experience (education, living, family lives, friends, community) in your country of origin?
   Do you think that gender (being girl/woman) was an important factor before coming to Canada?
   Do you consider gender (being girl/woman) is not an important factor in Canada?

2. When did you arrive in Canada? Year, Month and so on
   What was your immigration status when you first migrated to Canada?
   Principal applicant, spouse, dependent, migrant worker, student, permanent resident/landed immigrant, refugee, visitor, other. Please circle one.
   How long did it take to get your citizenship? 3 years, 4 years, 5 years, 6, 7, 8, 9 or more years?
   Tell me about your experience of getting Canadian citizenship? Do you have any positive and negative experience?

3. Do you belong to any religious group? If yes, what faith do you believe in?
   Do you practice religion in any way?
   Do you participate in any religious services or events? Tell me about that—the name and the nature of events and services.

4. Are you single, married, or?
   How old were you when you were married?
   Do you have children? How many children do you have? Gender of children?
   Do you have any preference for boy child or girl child? Why do you have this preference? What are the benefits and disadvantages of having boy or girl child?
5. Did you go to school?
   What level of education did you complete in your country of origin?
   Did you go to school in Canada? Tell me about your educational experience in Canada.

6. How would you describe your experience in Canada?
   What were your expectations about Canada?
   What were your experiences—both positive and negative—when you did migrate to Canada?
   How did you solve your difficulties—family, education/training, employment, community life—in Canada?

7. What did a typical day in your life look like when you first arrived in Canada?
   What was society like at that time in Canada?
   What is your native/first language? Do you speak more than one language? If yes, what are those languages?
   Did/do you speak to many English-speaking Canadians?
   Do you socialize with English-speaking Canadians? (Such as, going out for coffee, tea, drinks, lunch, dinner)
   Did/do you socialize with your community people? Tell me about your socialization (the nature and extent) with the community.

8. Did you have a paid job inside or outside of the home after your migration?
   Tell me about your paid job experience in Canada.
   Did you have a paid job in your country of origin?
   Do you do household chores?
   Tell me about your activities/responsibilities/duties at home. Which activities do you like the most? Which activities do you like the least?

9. What were some of your hobbies when you migrated to Canada? Did you pursue your hobbies? Why or Why not?
   If you participated in community events, how were you involved?—as a volunteer, as a member, as an organizer or so on.
   Tell me about the nature of your participation in community events?
10. What were some of the challenges you faced when you migrated to Canada? What were the most difficult challenges? Kindly tell me at least three. Did your experiences significantly change over the next 10 years? What are those changes? Tell me about those changes with examples.

11. Have you ever required social services or been eligible to obtain them, whether you utilized this assistance or not? Tell me about the nature of social services that are available to you.

12. What does citizenship mean to you? What are the benefits of being a Canadian?

13. Tell me about your experiences of Canadian citizenship. How long did it take to get Citizenship? 3 years, 4 or 5 or 10 years or more than that? How do you feel about yourself as a South Asian woman who immigrated to Canada? Do you feel settled here? (Such as, identity, nationality, language, residency, or citizenship) Do you think that men have different or same experiences? Tell me about your opinion. Any example or experience?

14. What are your thoughts about having education? Do you think that education is important for younger women? Why or why not?

15. Do you participate in any political activities such as voting, petitioning, lobbying the government? Municipal, Provincial and Federal? Can you remember any interesting story/experience about political activities? Do you consider yourself politically active? Why or why not? Have you ever been a candidate or member of a political party? If yes, what is that?

16. Are you part of a union? Have you ever participated in any labour disputes? Tell me your experience or opinion regarding unions.
17. Have you been a member of any women’s group or community organization? If, so, could you describe your role? Tell me about your experience. Do you know about any women’s group or community organizations?

18. Do you consider yourself a feminist? What you think about a feminist? Do you know any feminist? Are you familiar with any type of women’s movement? If yes, tell me about that.

19. Have you attended any community initiatives focused on South Asian women or received any type of service from these groups? (English programs, employment, training, housing, etc.) If so, what is your opinion about women’s groups in Vancouver?

20. Do you think the experience of South Asian women who arrived in 1919 (sponsored by husbands) and in 1967 (sponsored by their husbands) may be different compared to your experience? What are the differences? What are the similarities?

21. What do you think the future of South Asian women in Canada will hold, especially concerning new immigrants? Do you consider that South Asian new immigrants will face more or less difficulties than you faced? What are those? Tell me about the nature of difficulties with examples.

22. Do you have any questions, comments, or concerns you would like to address? Is there anything you would like to add? Please feel free to add or to propose your opinion.
Appendix E.  Supplementary Audio Files

Description:
The accompanying audio files are the oral history interviews conducted with Pooja, Simran, Kel, and Inderjeet. They provide extensive information about these women’s lives and convey some of the experiences that South Asian women faced after migrating to Canada. Pooja, Simran, and Kel were all born in Canada and their mothers migrated to Canada between 1919 and 1949. Inderjeet arrived during the second period of immigration. Please note that some information has been deleted from these interviews to protect participants’ identities.

Filenames:
Pooja.mp3
Kel.mp3
Simran.mp3
Inderjeet.mp3