The Social Organization of South Asian Immigrant Women's Mothering Work

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ABSTRACT

This book[1] examines the social organization of newcomer South Asian women's mothering work. It explicates the processes that contribute to South Asian women making changes to their mothering work after immigrating to Canada despite having reservations about the same. Data for the research that informs this book was collected through interviews with 20 South Asian immigrant mothers who were raising school aged children in Canada and had been in the country for less than five years. Eight key informant interviews were conducted with persons who engaged with immigrant families in their work on an ongoing basis for insights into how their work connected to the work of the South Asian mothers. Government policies, websites and newspaper reports also form important data sources for this study. Using Institutional Ethnography, the research shows the disjuncture between the mothering work of the South Asian immigrant woman and institutionally backed neoliberal discourses in Canada around mothering, schooling and immigrant employment. The research shows the manner in which the settlement experiences for South Asian immigrant women became stressful and complicated by the changes they needed to make to their lives to coordinate with these institutional discourses. The study explicates how the work of immigrant mother in the settlement process —in the home, in relation to the school, and in relation to her own employment —changes over time as she participates in social relations that require her to raise her children as autonomous responsible persons/citizens who can participate in a neoliberal economy characterised by precarious work. The book throws light on the complexity of settlement work for South Asian immigrant women and on the manner in which South Asian immigrant mothers' values/priorities in relation to raising children become subordinate to more dominant set of values driven by global neoliberal influences that stress autonomy. The research that informs this book has implications for the social work profession that is connected in many ways to the settlement experiences of immigrant women.

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[1] This book is based on the author's unpublished PhD dissertation titled "The Social Organization of South Asian Immigrant Women's Mothering in Canada.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

International migration is on the rise. In 2013 there were 232 million international migrants in the world, up 50% from the number of international migrants in 1990 (United Nations, 2013). International migration is closely associated with globalization (Castles, 2003) which in turn is associated with improved transportation, dissemination of information, and communications, all of which facilitate international migration (Wickramasekera, 2000). Globalization shapes international migration in specific ways, privileging certain kinds of migration while limiting others (Castles, 2003).

Canada has a long history of immigration, spanning over four centuries. This tradition, combined with the role of settlers in forming and creating Canada as we know it today, are reasons the country is often referred to as the "land of immigrants." In current times, immigrants continue to be a vital part of the Canadian fabric, their importance fuelled by the steady decline in Canada's fertility rate over the years combined with the continued demand for skilled labour in the country (Knowles, 2006; George, 2007). In recent times, immigration policy has been greatly impacted by globalization and neoliberalism (Arat-Koc, 1999; Dobrowsky, 2013; Root et al, 2014; Alboim & Cohl, 2012).[1] Dobrowsky (2013) informs us that neoliberalism's focus on short term economic benefits has shaped Canadian immigration policy in ways that

> (a) attract highly skilled immigrants; (b) expand low wage, temporary foreign worker programs; (c) diversify immigration "entry doors" and make some more flexible; (d) cut admission and settlement costs; (e) encourage settlement in less well-populated areas; (f) tighten border controls and crack down on undocumented migrants; (g) "change citizenship rules to reduce risks of undesired costs and unrealized benefits to the state"; and (h) "sell immigration to the Canadian public…through a

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[1] Neoliberalism is a political economic paradigm that emphasizes the ability of capitalism and free market economy to lead the social and economic well-being of populations.

policy rhetoric that emphasizes the hoped-for benefits of immigration
while downplaying risks and disappointing outcomes." (Simmons, 2010,
pp. 257–60) (p. 3)

Each year over 200,000 people migrate to Canada, a majority of whom
are economic migrants (CIC, 2015) selected on the basis of their ability to
contribute to Canada's economy. In recent decades, the profile of
immigrants coming to Canada has been changing. Along with the rest of
the world, Canada is witnessing the "feminization of migration," wherein
an increasing number of migrants are women. During the past two decades
female immigrants have outnumbered male immigrants entering Canada
each year (CIC, 2015). Also, there has been an increase in the number of
female immigrants entering the country each year as economic immigrants
or as spouses or dependents of economic class immigrants. Female
immigrants make up a fifth of the total female population in Canada (Chui,
2011). There is also a definite shift in the ethnic composition of persons
migrating to Canada in recent years. While early settlers to Canada were
predominantly from Britain and France, a majority of the immigrants in
the last decade or so have come from Asia. In Canada their ethnicity
(neither Aboriginal nor Caucasian) and their skin color (non-White) serve
to label them as "visible minorities." According to the National Household
Survey (Statistics Canada, 2013a), 6,264,800 people identified themselves
as a member of the "visible minority" population in 2011, making up
19.1% of the total population of Canada.

For the past decade, India and Pakistan have been among the top five
source countries for immigrants to Canada (CIC, 2015). These immigrants,
like many others, seek to escape violence/crime, pollution, overcrowding,
and unstable political climate in their countries of origin, and are attracted
to Canada's international reputation for its high standard of living,
tolerance for multiculturalism, low rates of crime and stable political
climate (Klein et al, 2009). South Asians — persons who can trace their
origins to India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh — are the
largest racialized minority group in the country. The National Household
Survey (2011) revealed that 1,567,400 persons reported being of South
Asian origin, making up 4% of the total Canadian population (Statistics
Canada, 2011). The population of South Asians is expected to grow to
anywhere between 3.2 to 4.1 million by the year 2031 (Statistics Canada,
2010a). The substantial presence and rapid growth of this minority group
make it an important population to understand in terms of their settlement
and integration-related experiences.

This study focuses on the mothering work of South Asian immigrant women as a way of understanding their settlement experiences and the manner in which these are socially organized. Immigrant South Asian women experience multiple oppressions both from within the South Asian community as well as on account of being a racialized minority group in Canada (Ahmad et al, 2009; George, 1998; George & Ramkissoon, 1998; Ralston, 1999). This chapter introduces Institutional Ethnography, the method I use to explore the mothering work of South Asian women, and locates me as the researcher within the research. It introduces the concept of immigrant settlement and reviews the academic literature on the needs and challenges of immigrants in the settlement period,[2] particularly in relation to finding meaningful employment, and on the manner in which settlement impacts families and parenting. The chapter concludes with situating social work within this field of research.

Institutional Ethnography and the Problematic of the Research

The impetus for this research emerges from my own personal experience and those of other immigrant women I know who have noticed a change in their parenting practices after immigrating to Canada, changes not always in harmony with what we know/feel to be good ways to parent. I use Institutional Ethnography (IE), a sociology and method of inquiry created by Dorothy Smith (1990, 2002, 2005, 2006) to attempt to explore these changes in parenting. IE is ideally situated to describe and explain a field of action. Immersed in the actualities of everyday life, it begins with an ethnographic description of the work done by persons in a particular space and then follows the institutionally-coordinated trail connecting their work to the work done by others. It shows how individual experience "comes to become dominated and shaped by forces outside of them and their purpose" (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 12). Institutional Ethnography has been found to be an effective methodology in exploring the way mothering work is shaped by interactions with various societal institutions (DeVault, 1991; Griffith & Smith, 2005; Griffith, 1984; Ingstrup, 2014) and so was considered an appropriate methodology to follow.

I interviewed South Asian immigrant women about their everyday experiences/work of mothering their children. Through these interviews, I

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[2] The literature reviewed in this chapter does not focus particularly on the unique settlement issues faced by refugee newcomers though refugees are included in many of the studies reviewed in the literature on immigrant settlement.

gathered a detailed account of their activities. Data gleaned through these interviews provided not only an understanding of the participants' experiences, but helped me understand the institutional fields that these experiences are located in, which could be further explored (McCoy, 2006).

Institutional Ethnographic research starts with identifying an experience that is "problematic" or the "discovery of a point of rupture" (Smith, 1987, p. 49). My interest in understanding the manner in which the mothering work of South Asian immigrants is shaped after migration emerges from the meeting point of my personal experiences of migration and my professional interest in issues related to vulnerable women, children and families. Like thousands of immigrants before us, my family immigrated to Canada attracted by its promises of equality and with dreams of better opportunities and lifestyle.[3] Like most other "economic immigrants" we met the requirements of a points system that rewarded us for our age, good health, proof of income, language ability, education and professional work experience. We left behind strong and stable roots—economic and social—with the willingness to establish new and equally strong roots in our new home. We understood that Canada welcomed immigrants like us and that the country and we had a lot to mutually offer each other.

Similar to other immigrants, my family had to learn and adjust to a place and culture that was very new. The process of re-starting our careers from scratch was time consuming, stressful and emotionally draining. Our child had to learn to cope with her loss of extended family while adjusting to a new environment, daycare and school. This was not an easy adjustment for a preschooler to make. My husband and I had to suddenly take full responsibility of parenting our child without the supports we had been accustomed to, in addition to all the other stressors we had. As is typical of most professional immigrants, my professional qualifications and years of work experience in India were considered irrelevant to the Canadian job market.

I enrolled in graduate school to re-qualify with a Canadian degree. While working as a research assistant in an agency that focused on child welfare in Canada, I learned that parenting practices in racialized minority and Aboriginal cultures often differed from what is considered "good parenting" in the majority population. I also learned that these differences (among other reasons) have historically resulted in intrusive child welfare

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[3] Section 15(1) of the Constitution Act 1982 states "Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability" (Government of Canada, 2015b, p. 3).

intervention in Canada. At this time, I started becoming aware of dissonance between some of the values surrounding raising children in Canada and the values of immigrant parents like myself. I learned of practices in Canada that appeared to be taken for granted but which most South Asian mothers I encountered found quite disturbing, such as making an infant sleep in a separate room at night or allowing a child to cry itself to sleep. Conversely, I came to understand that practices I used to take for granted or never thought to question (co-sleeping, or including children in all social activities of the parents, for example) were considered strange or undesirable by my non-immigrant colleagues. However, the marking of parenting differences did not occur on a level playing field. Mainstream discourses around mothering/parenting - stated or otherwise- permeate institutions and the larger community (Ochocka et al, 2001).

My own experiences and that of many others I know as immigrant parents have made me aware of the dissonance between our lived experiences and that of the wider discourse on parenting in Canadian society. Ochocka et al. (2001) report on a similar discrepancy faced by immigrant parents who participated in their research study:

> Most parents admitted that their methods, styles and attitudes towards parenting have undergone some major changes, to varying degrees, depending on their personal circumstances, individual experience, the age of their children and the duration of their stay in Canada. They admitted that they were consciously making changes without necessarily being in harmony with everything they knew and believed about the process of parenting. Some parents found it hard to reconcile their cultural ways of parenting with those of Canadians. Parents want their children to fit in, but they do not want them to act in the "Canadian" way. They also found it hard to raise kids traditionally, (according to their old culture), because all of the "Canadian" ways of parenting are supported by institutions and the community. (p. 36)

Like the participants of the study mentioned above, as immigrant parents we find ourselves making changes to our parenting in keeping with what is acceptable in Canadian society, subordinating our own belief systems. This research is about understanding this disjuncture that has appeared in our parenting practices, to understand "how things happen the way they do" (Deveau, 2009, p. 6). It is about exploring the social relations South Asian mothers are engaged in and the social organization of these relations.[4]

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[4] Social organization has been described as "the interplay of social relations, of people's ordinary activities being concerted and coordinated purposefully" (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 27).

The problematic is an inquiry into the organization of the everyday world of South Asian mothering work and the extra local relations this work is tied into (Smith, 2005). This framing of my research question as a problematic allows me to locate myself within it (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). I take up the inquiry into this problematic from the standpoint of South Asian mothers who are immersed in the actualities of parenting. Starting from such a standpoint "creates a point of entry into discovering the social that does not subordinate the knowing subject to objectified forms of knowledge of society or political economy" (Smith, 2005, p. 10). Thus, this research begins its exploration with the everyday parenting work of South Asian newcomer women in the settlement period, exploring the discourses they encounter in relation to parenting and the manner in which they participate or not in the same.[5] Such an exploration allows for an understanding of the manner in which the women's unique biographies as racialized, gendered, and classed newcomers to Canada shape their settlement experience.

"Visible Minority" Immigrants

The term "visible minorities" is defined within the Employment Equity Act as "persons, other than aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-White in colour" (Government of Canada, 1995, p.1), within the context of a proactive strategy for preventing employment discrimination. However, the term visible minority has received international censure for being racially discriminatory. The Canadian government has been criticized more than once by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on grounds that the term seems to indicate the primacy or standard of Whiteness in Canada in relation to which all others become termed visible (Derry, 2011).

The term immigrant has different implications and understandings that accompany it depending on legal definitions and social understandings of the term (Maraj Grahame, 1999). The legal definition of immigrant situates the individual concerned in relation to the state (Li, 2003). The Canadian Immigration and Refugee Protection Act 2001 differentiates between two broad categories of immigrants - permanent and temporary residents. Permanent residents include those persons who have entered the

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[5] Discourse is understood to be "relations coordinated by texts" (Smith, 2014, p. 227). Smith explains that discourses are "what we are part of and active in, including our local practices of thinking, writing and listening to what other participants have to say and reading texts, our own and others (p. 227).

country under either the economic class, the family class, or as refugees and who can apply for citizenship after a three year residency requirement is fulfilled; temporary residents include visitors and persons on work or student visas who do not have any claim to rights of a citizen. Further classifications exist within each of these broad categories.

Economic class immigrants include skilled workers, business immigrants, and provincial and territorial nominees. These are persons who have been selected into the country on the basis of the value that they bring to Canada through their educational or professional expertise or financial resources while family class immigrants are sponsored by their permanent resident or citizen family members. Li (2003) suggests that the terminology associated with the admission of different classes of immigrants into the country is indicative of the value and importance given to that class by the government. Economic immigrants are "selected" on the basis of education and skills they can contribute to Canada, and have access to social programs like pensions and Ontario Works similar to what Canadian citizens do (Graham, Swift & Delaney, 2008). Family class immigrants on the other hand are "admitted" based on their links to permanent residents and citizens of Canada. They have less access to social programs, and are dependent on their permanent resident/citizen sponsor for a stipulated time period after immigrating to Canada (Graham, Swift & Delaney, 2008). While the number of economic immigrants have long outweighed the number of immigrants selected under the family class, in the past few years the differences appear to be more marked, with an increasing priority given to economic immigrants. For example, while family class immigrants made up 43.9% of all immigrants entering the country in 1993, they made up 30.8% of the immigrants in 2013. The number of persons entering the country under the economic immigrant class increased from 41.2% in 1993 to 57.2% in 2013 (Government of Canada, 2015a). The recent changes in the regulations related to family class dependents in Canada has made it increasingly difficult for Canadian citizens and permanent residents to sponsor their parents or grandparents. The changes have also reduced the age of dependent children (CIC, 2013). The new regulations are seen as testimony to increasing neoliberal thinking about immigrants that equate their worth to their immediate and direct economic contribution to Canada (Root et al, 2014; Alboim & Cohl, 2012).

The most commonplace understanding of the concept of immigrant is what Li calls the "folklore version" (Li, 2003, p. 44) of the term. Immigrant is a socially constructed phenomenon that seeks to mark the person bearing the label as different from others. Critical scholars problematize the term immigrant, not as a value neutral legal classification but a social

construction of a category of persons as different from others (Griffith in Maraj Grahame, 1999; Ng, 1988; Bannerji, 2000; Das Gupta, 1999). Increasingly, in popular usage of the term, skin color seems to have become the basis for marking an immigrant (Li, 2003). The term immigrant brings to mind a very specific imagery: "a person who is of colour, has a non-dominant accent, wears a "different" dress or headgear, coupled with a working class occupation...even if they may be holding Canadian citizenship" while "White, English-speaking immigrants from the U.K or the U.S are immediately identified as "Canadians even though they may not hold Canadian citizenship" (Das Gupta, 1999, p. 190).

Ng (1988) points out that an "immigrant" comes into being through the individual's act of immigrating and entering certain market positions. She suggests, "...when we call someone an 'immigrant woman' we are in fact naming a process whereby this individual comes to be identified as an immigrant woman." (p. 15). These descriptions of the term bring to attention the conflation of the terms "immigrant" with "visible minority" and with ideas of "difference" (Das Gupta, 1999; Ng, 1988; Li, 2003; Bannerji, 2000). Anti-racist feminist scholars such as Thobani (2007) and Bannerji (2000) interrogate the terms "immigrant" and "visible minority" stating that this naming is a part of the differential citizenship accorded to people of colour in Canada. Such differential citizenship in turn can be seen as reasons why immigrants are blamed for many problems related to urban development such as overcrowding, a lack of jobs, and increased strain on social systems in urban areas (Li, 2003; Clark, 2013).

Immigrant Settlement

Immigrant settlement generally refers to the initial period of adjustment to Canada and includes tasks and processes that immigrants need to complete in the initial years in order to set down roots, such as securing employment and housing, enrolling children in schools, and acclimatizing to local surroundings and ways of living. Immigrant settlement is seen as an important component of the trajectory towards long term integration wherein the immigrant ideally participates as a full member in Canadian society. Settlement is viewed as related to the "initial and short-term transitional issues faced by newcomers" while integration is viewed as "an ongoing process of mutual accommodation between an individual and society" (CIC, 2012a, pg. 23). Settlement has also been conceptualized on a continuum, with acclimatization at one end, adaptation in the middle and integration at the other (CCR, 1998). Immigrant acclimatization is generally perceived as short term and distinct from integration, which "is

the longer term process through which newcomers become full and equal participants in all the various dimensions of society" (CCR, 1998, p. 7). As such, settlement could be viewed as the initial steps towards integration (George, 2007).

Settlement has been conceptualized as being comprised of stages such as the survival stage (need for language training, housing and employment), the learning stage (access to information and services and value clarification) and integration (accommodation) (DeCoito & Williams, 2000). It can be argued however, that these stages are non-linear and mutually dependent (CCR, 1998). For example, without access to information it is difficult for the immigrant to get access to employment or to secure housing. Research has also highlighted the need for information and orientation as a primary need of new immigrants (Sparks & Wolfson, 2001; George & Chaze, 2009a) that is required throughout the process of settlement and integration. A document highlighting best practices with immigrants and refugees (CCR, 1998) suggests indicators for immigrant settlement along four dimensions:

- Economic: The immigrant enters the job market and becomes financially independent;
- Social: The immigrant is able to establish diverse social networks;
- Cultural: There is adaptation of various aspects of lifestyle and
- Political: Indicated by active citizenship and voting.

Settlement Needs and Challenges

Before reviewing the literature on settlement needs and challenges, it is important to note the changing economic context within which immigrants are settling in Canada. Canada is known internationally for the safety it offers its citizens through its welfare policies. In recent times, this trend is changing and the past several decades have seen a steady increase in neoliberal policies. Neoliberalism is characterized by: a rejection of the principles of the welfare states (Arat Kot, 1999), a retrenchment of social protections by the government (Graham, Swift & Delaney, 2008; Navarro, 2007); deregulation of labour and financial markets (Navarro, 2007), and increased emphasis on efficiencies in government (Davis, 2007). As market competitiveness becomes the main goal, companies start developing new ways to increase flexibility which include cutting jobs and transferring the responsibility to find and keep work onto the workers (Standing, 2011; Ilcan, 2009). Coupled with deregulation of labour this leads to a climate of increased precariousness of work.

Since the 1990s, many Canadians have been involved in "non-standard work" (Vosko, Zukewich & Cranford, 2003). Non-standard work is defined as "employment situations that differ from the traditional model of a stable, full-time job" (Vosko, Zukewich & Cranford, 2003, p.1). A recent report on poverty and household well-being that draws on Statistics Canada data (PEPSO, 2013), informs us that precarious work has increased by 50% in the Greater Toronto Area in the past twenty years and that 20% of all those employed work in precarious forms of employment including contract work, temporary positions, and working irregular hours. In 2007-2008 Canada experienced a recession that impacted the employment of thousands of Canadians. While the unemployment rate in Canada has been steadily decreased since 2009, it is still 6.6% (Statistics Canada, 2014a).

Research with various immigrant groups informs us that the settlement needs of newcomers include the need for information and orientation to living in Canada, establishing community connections, securing affordable housing and employment, obtaining information on available services, and at times, language training (George, 2007). Newcomers need information related to: the educational system in Canada (Anisef et al, 2001); health and health care (Anisef & Murphy Kilbride, 2000); and Canadian culture, social systems and settlement services (George, Fong, Da and Chang, 2004). In a study on South Asian newcomer immigrant women (George & Chaze, 2009a), information about almost all aspects of living in Canada was found to be the most important settlement need: "There were major differences between their home countries and Canada related to weather, culture, values, resources and access to them, and ways of doing things, and information was required on how to deal with these differences" (p. 270).

Employment has also been recognized as an urgent need for immigrants, providing not only economic security and stability but also a sense of contribution and connection to the host society (CCR, 1998; Hum & Simpson, 2003). Being employed or not also has implications for the health and mental health of the immigrant (Aycan, & Berry, 1996; Asanin-Dean & Wilson, 2009; Friedland & Price, 2003; Kennedy & McDonald, 2006) and for relationships with others (Fieldman, 1996; George et al., 2012a).

Immigrants to Canada have poorer economic outcomes than native-born persons. Immigrants tend to earn less than their native-born counterparts (Li, 2000); they tend to have higher rates of unemployment and underemployment than native born persons (HRSDC, 2013); and, the gaps in employment rates continue even after a number of years in the country (Galarneau & Morissette, 2008). The underemployment of immigrants is a

recurring theme in the literature (Asanin Dean & Wilson, 2009; George et al, 2012a; Galarneau & Morissette, 2008).[6] Despite the high points awarded to economic immigrants for their education and work experience at the time of immigration, many immigrants are unable to secure jobs in their own fields and at a level commensurate to their skills and experience (Reitz, 2005; Sparks & Wolfson, 2001).

Research has demonstrated the association of underemployment with the deskilling of immigrants (Creese & Wiebe, 2012), poorer health and mental health (Aycan, & Berry, 1996; Asanin-Dean & Wilson, 2009; Friedland & Price, 2003; Kennedy & McDonald, 2006), lower sense of well-being and satisfaction with life (George et al, 2012a; Aycan & Berry; Friedland & Price), and the increased likelihood of immigrants leaving the country (Ho, 2010; George et al, 2012a). The barriers faced by immigrants in finding work often lead to them taking up low paid and/or skilled jobs outside their field of expertise/profession (George, 2007; Galanreau & Morissette, 2008) and their downward economic mobility (Slade, 2009) or "povertization" (Danso, 2007). The barriers to economic integration contribute to new immigrants being one of the five main groups to experience poverty in Canada (Hatfield, 2004 in Fleury, 2007). Shields et al (2011) analyzed the 2006 census data and found that the average rate of poverty based on Low Income Cut Off for immigrants in 2006 was 22% compared to 13.8% for Canadian-born persons. However, there were important intra group differences for immigrants, with more recent cohorts facing far more economic penalties compared to immigrants who had been in the country for a longer period of time. The authors suggest that possible reasons for these differences include the changing Canadian labour market and increasing precariousness of employment, greater competition for jobs, continued credential and employment barriers faced by newcomers and ethno racial employment discrimination (Shields et al, 2011).

Race and gender have been known to exacerbate settlement challenges. Racialized minority immigrants face more obstacles in employment outcomes than European immigrants or Canadian-born persons (Pendakur & Pendakur 1998, 2002; Banerjee, 2009; Teelucksingh & Galabuzi, 2005; Block & Galabuzi, 2011). Analyzing data from the Survey of Labour and

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[6] Underemployment can be seen as occurring when: the person works in a job that requires less formal education than the person has; the person works in a field outside of their field of formal training involuntarily; the person works in a job that requires lower level work skills than the person possesses; the person is engaged in precarious employment involuntarily and the persons earns 20% or less wages than s(he) earned in a previous job (Fieldman, 1996, p. 338).

Dynamics, Banerjee (2009) found that while nearly all newcomers to the country face an earning disadvantage, lower rates of return to their education and work experience contribute to racialized minorities continuing to face earning disadvantages, while immigrants of European origin are able to "catch up" earlier on in their careers (Banerjee, 2009). Being female, a racialized minority and a recent immigrant appears to intensify the income disadvantage. Recent immigrant women to Canada are more likely to be involved in part-time work than either native-born women or recently immigrated men (Chui, 2011). Newcomer racialized minority women are most likely of all groups of women to be to be employed in casual work for their main job (Fuller & Vosko, 2008). The median yearly income for recent immigrant women for a full time job in 2005 was found to be $11,300 less than that of Canadian-born women (Chui, 2011). While poverty rates for all immigrant women tend to be high, poverty rates for recent immigrants, most of whom are racialized minorities are even higher (Townson, 2005).

The literature provides three key factors as related to the difficulties immigrants face in the labour market: Lack of recognition of foreign credentials, language barriers and the requirement for Canadian experience. Each of these key factors is further discussed.

Foreign Credential Recognition

While economic immigrants are selected into the country on the basis of points awarded to them for their professional qualifications and experiences, these same credentials are often seen as inadequate by employers as well as by professional licensing bodies. There are many barriers in the recognition of the immigrants' foreign credentials including: challenges of professional bodies in responding to applicants from educational systems and occupational standards different from Canada; the difficulties immigrants have in getting reliable and complete information about regulatory requirements prior to immigrating; inflexibility of assessment processes; lack of resources on part of regulatory bodies to address the complexity of immigrants' foreign credentials (HRSDC, 2009), and the professional bodies' protectionism of their market position (Girard & Bauder, 2007).

Credential recognition and licensing is often the domain of professional self-regulatory bodies. While self-regulation of the profession has advantages in terms of its accountability to the public and potential for more flexibility, it also has disadvantages such as the potential to create exclusive groups of practitioners whose vested interests might be best

served by restricting entry into the profession (Roderick, 1990; Orme & Rennie, 2006). There may be differential outcomes of the credential assessment process based on whether the credentials were assessed by an educational institute or a professional body (George & Chaze, 2012). In some cases, the rules and processes around granting such recognition has been found to be ambiguous and dependent on the time, effort and skills of the evaluator (Esses et al, 2007).

Research suggests that the difficulties faced by immigrants getting their credentials recognized reflects the devaluation (Buzdugan & Halli, 2009; Bauder, 2003) or skill discounting (Esses et al, 2007; Alboim, Finnie & Meng, 2000) of immigrants' qualifications and experiences. Sweetman (2004) suggests that this might be a reflection of the lower professional standards that exist in some of these countries of origin. Esses et al (2007) challenge the continuing practice of the Canadian government to award equal points to educational qualifications from different countries in the light of Sweetman's analysis and suggest instead that racial prejudice might have a role to play in skill discounting. They suggest that as country of origin is inextricably linked with racialized minority status, there is a need to recognize the role of race and racialization in the push for foreign credential recognition (Esses et al). Alboim, Finnie & Meng's (2005) analysis of the Statistics Canada's Survey of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities (LSUDA) finds that immigrants skills are "heavily discounted in the Canadian labour market" (p. 11). They propose that while the role of prejudice towards foreign education cannot be ruled out, the problem is more likely to be one of Canadians being unable to judge the worth of foreign degrees.

Li (2003) points to the complexity introduced into the credential recognition process when gender, race, location of training and work experience "produce complicated interaction effects" (p. 33). It has been suggested that foreign training locations make it possible for employers to reject qualified racialized minority applicants without appearing to be prejudiced (Dietz et al, 2005 in Esses et al, 2007). In some studies, having a foreign credential has been found to have advantages to the immigrant, but only in cases where the immigrant is not a racialized minority or did not belong to a minority religion (Esses et al, 2007).

Institutional ethnographers who have studied immigrant skill devaluation (Shan, 2009, Ng & Shan, 2010) have focused on understanding processes behind such devaluation. Their research suggests that a "credential and certification recognition regime" (Shan, 2009) has created a market around the devaluation of the immigrant's foreign credential (Ng & Shan, 2010), and it serves the interest of patriarchal White society and the globalized

capitalist system to continue to construct immigrants and their qualifications as deficient as it produces immigrants into workers for gendered and racialized sectors (Ng, 1988; Maraj Grahame, 1998).

Language Barriers

A good knowledge of English and/or French is crucial for successfully settlement and a lack of proficiency in either of the two official languages is repeatedly stated as a reason for the labour market penalty faced by racialized minority immigrants (Schellenberg & Maheux, 2007). The immigrants' inability to communicate effectively in the official language has been associated with lower incomes (Boyd & Cao, 2009), poorer health outcomes (Ng, Pottie & Spitzer, 2011), limited access to services (Guruge et al, 2009), and in increased vulnerability to violence (Menjivar & Salcido, 2002).

Economic immigrants who enter the country are tested for language skills prior to entry. In 2013, for example, 66% of economic class immigrants knew English while an additional 19% knew both English and French (CIC, 2015). Persons who enter the country on family class or dependent visas do not have stringent language criteria as a determining factor for entry. The 2006 census showed just over 9% of newcomers to the country who reported that they spoke neither English nor French (Statistics Canada, 2009). Women immigrants tend to report lower language proficiency compared to men (Ng, Pottie & Spitzer, 2011) probably related to the fact that many more women enter under the family class than men (CIC, 2012a).

Though immigrants, and skilled immigrants in particular, are screened for language ability prior to entering the country, they are often seen as needing additional occupational specific language training before they can hope to be employed (Sparks & Wolfson, 2001). The Government of Canada has launched programs such as the Occupation-Specific Language Training and Enhanced Language Training (OCASI, 2013a) to help newcomers overcome these barriers.

A first language other than English and/or French has been known to increase the annual income of White, Canadian-born persons, but it has a detrimental effect on the annual income of racialized minority immigrants (Banerjee, 2009). Further, while both White and racialized minority newcomers who have a first language other than English suffer income penalties, the disadvantage is far greater for racialized minority immigrants (Banerjee).

Creese and Kambere (2003) posit that language proficiency also includes the notion of an "acceptable" accent. In their study with African immigrant women, they found that African women in Vancouver experienced language as a problem in their daily interactions despite having minimal/no difficulty with expression or comprehension. The researchers suggest this is because "An 'African English' accent signifies more than the content of verbal communication, it marks the speaker as immigrant, as African/Black, as female, in a landscape in which these are not privileged statuses." (p. 20). The researchers suggest that a foreign accent is a socially defined phenomenon and that persons with some accents (British, for example) may be awarded differential rewards compared to a person with another accent (e.g.: Jamaican). Similarly Munro (2003) notes that emphasizing the lack of suitability of the accent is another way of racializing immigrant bodies. Immigrant accents have been found to be the cause of negative hiring decisions, for stereotyping the immigrant based on the accent, and for discrimination or harassment on the job (Munro, 2003). Though they reiterate that accent can be a basis for discrimination, Derwing and Munro (2009) suggest that there is a difference in language comprehension (the listener's perception of ease of understanding an accent) and intelligibility (the listeners' actual comprehension of the accent) and suggest that immigrants might need to work on intelligibility to better succeed in the workplace.

Lack of Canadian Experience

While immigrants' professional work experience is merited in the immigration process, it is not recognized in the Canadian labour market. The lack of "Canadian work experience" is a hurdle faced by many immigrants in their search for employment in Canada (Sparks & Wolfson, 2001; Buzdugan & Halli 2009; Aycan & Berry, 1996; Sakamoto, Chin & Young, 2010). This requirement is difficult to overcome as it is challenging to get a job without first demonstrating Canadian experience—"a retroactive condition placed on newcomers, impossible to fulfill without first being part of the workforce" (Public Policy Forum in Liu, 2007, p. 10).

Sakamoto, Chin and Young's (2010) research suggests that the requirement for "Canadian experience" is more for tactic work knowledge, what is also called "soft skills" rather than "hard skills" in the Canadian workplace. Similarly, Liu (2007) informs us that the requirement for Canadian work experience is often viewed as proof that the applicant has the language skills and is able to perform in a Canadian work environment.

Lack of Canadian work experience then has the potential to suggest that to employers that immigrant might lack the skills or ability to perform in the Canadian context.

In 2013 the Ontario Human Rights Commission denounced the practice of requiring Canadian work experience as one that "raises human rights concern" and further named it as "prima facie discrimination" (OHRC, 2013, p. 1). Slade (2008) proposes that while the practice of requiring Canadian experience is undeniably discriminatory, the ideological framing of the concept "Canadian experience" points to deficits on the part of the immigrant. Based on an analysis of the print media on Canadian experience, Sakamoto et al (2013) suggest that the requirement of Canadian experience could be a form of "democratic racism"[7] that prevents Canadians from recognizing the difference between "genuine work requirements" and "racialized elements." (p. 22).

The requirement for Canadian experience has resulted in institutional solutions, such as co-op placements, offering volunteer work experience. The kind of Canadian work experience gained through such volunteering often has little or nothing to do with the immigrant's past field of work or expertise (George & Chaze, 2009b). Slade (2008) suggests that when irrelevant volunteer work becomes institutionalized through co-op placements, they "not only fail to address the needs of the immigrants but reinscribe unequal power relations based on race, ethnicity, gender, class and perpetuate notions of Canadian experience as something new immigrants need, and lack" (p. 39). However, even irrelevant volunteer work can be useful for immigrants to build their own networks that can be useful in finding future work and to gain an understanding of Canadian workplace culture and the development of soft skills (George et al, 2012b; George & Chaze, 2009b; Schugurensky, Slade & Luo, n.d; Tastsoglou, & Miedema, 2000). Networks have been found useful to immigrants in giving immigrants information about unadvertised job vacancies or in seeing to it that the immigrants' resumes got noticed by the correct people in the employing agency (George & Chaze, 2009b).

Impacts on Families

The literature on immigrant families describes the changes immigration and settlement bring to family relationships and parenting and the potential

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[7] "Democratic racism" is a term suggested by Henry and Tator (2005) to describe an ideology that allows for two conflicting sets of values - democratic principles and racisms coexist with each other.

negative consequences for the family as a result. Immigration is a stressful process (Tyyskä, 2007; Yakushko, 2009; Fong, 2004), impacting various aspects of the immigrant's life, including family relations (Anisef et al, 2001; Waters, 2009; Guruge et al, 2010a, 2010b.; Hynie, Guruge & Shakya, 2011) and parenting practices (Jain, 1999; Londhe, 2008; Tyyskä, 2007). The concept of acculturation (Krishnan & Berry, 1992) speaks to many of the changes immigrant families undergo on immigration. These include the changes related to adjusting to a new climate, biological changes associated with changes in diet, social changes associated with disruption of social networks, sudden changes to the political, economic and religious contexts of the immigrants, and psychological changes such as the need to change attitudes and values.

The acculturative stresses (Krishnan & Berry, 1992) associated with settlement have been known to have significant consequences for the mental health of immigrants (Ponzo et al., 2006; Kuo, Chong, & Joseph, 2008). The labour market experiences and economic hardship faced by immigrants have also been related to poor psychological health and lowered sense of wellbeing for some (Aycan, & Berry, 1996; Asanin-Dean & Wilson, 2009; Friedland & Price, 2003; Kennedy & McDonald, 2006; George et al, 2012a), which has implications for their parenting (Tyyskä, 2007). Men who are unable to fulfill their traditional roles as providers may feel a loss of identity and low self-esteem. The differential rates of acculturation of children and parents can exacerbate the tensions within the family (Tyyskä, 2007). Parents who have to rely on children for language translation on a day-to-day basis may find family roles are reversing, or that hierarchical relationships in the family become unbalanced (Anisef et al, 2001). While role reversal may not necessarily lead to negative outcomes in all immigrant families (Hynie et al, 2011), the realignment in parental authority, coupled with the stressors of balancing work and family responsibilities, have been known to add to increased tensions and stress in the family, impacting parenting (Tyyskä, 2007).

The stressors that accompany immigration and settlement have been known to increase the vulnerability of women and children in the family (Menjivar & Salcido, 2002; Vanderplaat, 2006; Tyyskä, 2007). Many immigrants leave behind the support of extended family members on whom they had traditionally relied (Tyyskä, 2007; Guruge et al, 2010b). At the same time, Canada is seeing diminishing public social support for all families (Graham, Swift and Delaney, 2008). The ideology of neoliberalism allows the state to intervene when it perceives that parents have failed to provide care and protection for their children, leading to a

reframing of child poverty as child neglect (McGrath, 1997). Immigrants with resources might prefer to sponsor relatives to live with them, but the process of sponsorship is lengthy and expensive. In 2011, the Government of Canada made changes to the family sponsorship program that included increasing the financial eligibility of persons sponsoring parents/grandparents to Canada and introducing the "supervisa" which allows parents/grandparents to visit their children/grandchildren in Canada for up to two years at a time (Government of Canada, n.d). The Ontario Council for Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI, 2013b) has criticized these changes as making parents/ grandparents' sponsorship more difficult and benefitting only rich immigrants. These changes prevent many of the informal/familial sources support arrangements that immigrants had relied on in the past. (OCASI, 2013b). Even if the family were able to sponsor family to help with parenting, these relatives may not be able to help much as they have to grapple with their own cultural conflicts (Tummala-Narra, 2004). As women are looked upon as carriers of culture and the chief agents of socialization, there can be added pressure on the woman to focus on the family after migration (Yakushko, 2009) including helping children retain their native language (Tummala-Narra, 2004) and culture.

Immigration- related stressors and the increased potential for interpersonal conflict within the family after migration can contribute to child welfare involvement (Stalker, Maiter & Alaggia, 2009; Alaggia & Maiter, 2009). Stalker, Maiter & Alaggia (2009) note that multiple stressors, like those faced by immigrant families, have a role to play in contributing to child maltreatment: "there is no one pathway to child maltreatment, rather, maltreatment occurs when stressors outweigh supports, and risks are greater than protective factors" (p. 30). Much of the child welfare literature stresses the relationship between poverty and child maltreatment (Gillham et al, 1998; Jaycox et al, 2002). In a study of South Asian immigrants involved with child welfare (Maiter et al, 2009), loneliness, financial and language struggles faced by newcomers were identified as contributing to situations that necessitated child welfare involvement. Immigrant families come to the attention of child welfare for reasons such as the use of corporal punishment (Bernhard, 2013) or domestic violence (Stalker, Maiter & Alaggia, 2009; Alaggia & Maiter, 2012). Child welfare involvement can also occur as a result of domestic violence, which in turn might be related to gendered cultural practices in immigrant families as well as acculturation related stresses (Alaggia and Maiter, 2012).

On immigration, women lose traditional sources of support that would have protected them against violence (Vanderplaat, 2006). Women may be