

**DOES WORKPLACE MATTER?  
IDENTITIES AND EXPERIENCES OF BANGLADESHI IMMIGRANT WOMEN  
OPERATING BUSINESSES IN TORONTO**

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation examines how the identities of Muslim Bangladeshi immigrant women who operate ethnic businesses in Toronto are related to their work locations. The notion of intersectionality provides an analytical terrain to recognize how Bangladeshi women's diverse identities shaped their pathways to ethnic businesses. By investigating how Bangladeshi women's identities are negotiated, constructed, and reflected through their home-based and non-H-B business activities in Toronto, this study emphasizes the implications of 'place' for identity construction and entrepreneurship experiences. The study aims to recognize the diverse roles of Bangladeshi women in places of production and social reproduction that go beyond essentialist assumptions regarding Muslim immigrant women's gender roles and the spatial patterns of their paid work. The goal is to recognize Muslim immigrant women's diverse entrepreneurial experiences, challenges and business strategies, which are often overlooked in the ethnic entrepreneurship literature. The study utilized complementary qualitative and quantitative methods that enabled me to investigate how place shapes Bangladeshi women's entrepreneurial experiences in Toronto. Using data from the 2006 census, I created a profile of Bangladeshi immigrants residing in the Toronto CMA to contextualize the entrepreneurial experiences of the Bangladeshi women who participated in the study. Conducting fieldwork in a Bangladeshi neighbourhood in Toronto, I collected qualitative data that capture the subjective experiences of ethnic entrepreneurship, including the coping strategies and negotiations of identities and gender roles from the perspectives of Bangladeshi women. The study demonstrates that in the face of downward social mobility in Toronto, Bangladeshi women's varied family roles and access to family resources, and their involvement with ethnic organizations lead to different pathways to businesses. Bangladeshi women's re-negotiation of gender, class, ethnic, racial and religious

identities and place specific experiences at their business locations shape the opportunities and barriers to start and operate businesses. The social construction of feminized home and masculinized workplace is challenged as well as re-enforced in the ways that two groups of women carry out and strategize their business activities. Adding a geographic perspective, the research argues that the intersecting identities of Bangladeshi women take form and meaning differently in different work locations.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

I want to open up this chapter by outlining the narratives of two Bangladeshi Muslim immigrant women whose shared and varied socio-economic integration experiences in Toronto inform the central arguments of this dissertation:

Nishat (Age 45-55), Came to Toronto in 1993

I got married when I was young, so I could not get a college degree. My husband was an army officer. He thought he would get a good job in Canada ... After coming here [Toronto] he did not get a 'good' [well paid] job, he tried for 2/3 years, and there was not much hope. He did not want to work in low paid occupations. Those who do not have a Canadian degree don't get a job here. My sons will get a job because they are studying here. Canada doesn't want us, Canada wants our children. Canadian government needs our children but doesn't care what we do and how we survive... I know Bangladeshi women who are educated, but didn't get any job here, how can I get a job here?

My husband and I finally decided to start a business. We started a clothing business. The clothing shop is here for 14 years but we got it 5 years ago. We had a different shop before. I am grateful to Allah because we survived, we gave a good life to our children ... sometimes sale is good and sometimes it is bad. I had an idea about this location and I figured out how much I can sell, but reality is different. I buy dresses from wholesale stores. I bought these dresses in 8-10 dollars and then I will sell them in 18-20 dollars, then I will have some profits otherwise, I won't be able to maintain the store ... It is difficult to manage a business and family. My kids didn't get much care from me, I could not spend time with them like the way other mothers do. So they learned how to be on their own ...

I really enjoy working in my store. Customers like the dresses I sell. Sometimes I tell them which color will look good on them and which size will be better for them. I give them compliments about their looks when they try on dresses. They ask me 'how do you know so much about western fashion'? They find it unusual because I wear a burqa<sup>1</sup>. Canadian women [she meant white women] think that I am backward because of my burqa. They think I don't know much about fashion but then when they talk to me they feel comfortable, and then they rely on my taste of fashion. Having comfortable relation with customers is important for a business, you know!

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<sup>1</sup> *Burqa* [a part of Islamic dress code] is an outer garment worn by Bangladeshi Muslim women to cover their head and body (see Halder 2012).

Yasmin (Age 25-35), Came to Toronto in 2006

I had a good job in Bangladesh, a managerial post. After coming here [Toronto] I sent lot of applications, didn't get any call for interview. After two years, I was interviewed in two places. They told me that they will call me but they did not. In one place they already hired people but still interviewed me. They told me they will call me when they need more workers. The fact is you have to have linkages with them. If I had known someone who is working there then I might get the job. They asked me if I have any friend or if I know anyone working there. I said 'no'. My English may be a reason, but I went to ESL in Oakridge and completed level 5.

Then I realized that I need to look for low paid jobs, jobs in fast food stores like Tim Hortons and McDonald's. Those places also want Canadian experience. So I worked for Neighbourhood Link for one year from the end of 2009 to 2010. I used to cook for seniors. I also worked voluntarily at a breakfast club here at Oakridge; I worked there for 3 months last year. I got Canadian experience but still I did not get a job at any fast food store, that's disappointing. I used to communicate with seniors at neighbourhood Link and they used to like me a lot, so my English is not that bad! ... At SAWRO [community organization] I did computer course, customer service and cash register course. Still no luck! ... When we prepared our papers, people in the Canadian embassy [in Bangladesh] didn't inform us about the job situation in Toronto. They told us many positive things about Toronto.

My husband is not working now, he is studying ... My family depends on my income ... I operate home-based catering and child care businesses. It is hard because it is not like regular jobs. I never thought of doing this before coming to Toronto. Back home [in Bangladesh] I used to spend lot of time in my office and in the field. I worked in an international organization; I had to visit different areas, now I spend lot of time in kitchen...my daughter doesn't like that I work in home. I My life in Bangladesh was so different, I used to arrange big parties in my home, for 30-40 people sometimes, there were maids to cook ... Now I dream to establish a restaurant [in Toronto], but it needs so much money, that I don't have. I don't earn much from these [home-based] businesses. I need to have a job [paid employment] then I will be able to save money for my own restaurant. That's why I am still looking for a job.

Despite differences in their educational attainment and work experiences, Nishat and Yasmin felt excluded from paid employment in Toronto. In response to employment barriers and financial insecurity they have created an alternative source of income by becoming self-employed. However, they took different pathways to entrepreneurship; while Yasmin started home-based businesses, Nishat opened a clothing store jointly with her husband. Their stories

indicate that their business experiences vary significantly and they interpret their business activities, gender roles and identities in different ways. Like Yasmin and Nishat, the identities and experiences of many Bangladeshi Muslim immigrant women who operate home-based and non-home-based (non-H-B) businesses in Toronto are contingent on the socially constructed meanings of home, work and workplace. Drawing on their narratives, this study highlights the complexity of Bangladeshi women's identities and how these identities and experiences are negotiated, constructed, and reflected through their home-based and non-H-B business activities in Toronto. In particular, this research investigates the implications of 'place' for identity construction and entrepreneurship experiences.

My interest in exploring the identities and experiences of Bangladeshi Muslim immigrant women who operate businesses in two locations: in the home and in formal workplaces is rooted in three contemporary debates. The first debate concerns the links between social construction of gender and visible minority<sup>2</sup> immigrant women's experiences in places of production and social reproduction<sup>3</sup>. The second debate is related to the contradictory views regarding the impact of Islamic gender principles and dress code on Muslim immigrant women's participation in paid work inside and outside the home. The third debate is about the characteristics of ethnic entrepreneurship and the roles of racialized immigrant women in ethnic businesses. I elaborate these debates in chapter two. Linking these three debates, my aim is to recognize the diverse roles of Bangladeshi women in places of production and social reproduction that go beyond essentialist assumptions regarding Muslim immigrant women's gender roles and the spatial

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<sup>2</sup> In Canada, visible minorities are defined by the Employment Equity Act, as persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in color (Hou and Picot 2004: 1).

<sup>3</sup> Social reproduction broadly refers to the social processes, structures, institutions, and social relationships. Social reproduction is primarily concerned with biological (conception to childbirth), generational (raising, training, and educating children) and daily reproduction (daily family care and household chores) (Folbre 2004). In this research social reproduction emphasizes unpaid care work and household work.

patterns of their paid work. Investigating the identities and diverse entrepreneurship experiences of Bangladeshi women, the research problematizes the assumed relationships between gender divisions and spatial divisions of paid and unpaid work.

In the sections that follow, I provide an introduction to the research problem, and briefly state the main theoretical concepts used to examine the relationships between place and identities revealed in the businesses operated by Bangladeshi women. This section is followed by a discussion of the research context. I then outline the research questions that guided my examination of Bangladeshi immigrant women's experiences in ethnic businesses. The subsequent section discusses several research contributions including how the analysis contributes to the geographical literature on the relations between identities, place and work, and expands socio-spatial analysis of immigrant women's identities and integration. The chapter concludes with a chapter-by-chapter outline of the dissertation.

### **1.1. Introduction to the Research Problem**

A growing literature emphasizes the settlement and socio-economic integration issues facing immigrant women<sup>4</sup> in Canada. Highlighted in the literature are the employment challenges that racialized immigrant women encounter and their diverse experiences in Canadian labour markets (Banerjee 2009; Gupta 2006; Agnew 1996; Hiebert 1997; Lightman and Gingrich 2013;

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<sup>4</sup> According to Statistics Canada immigrants are those who born outside of Canada and thus, they comprise the first generation. However, the label 'immigrant' has complex social meanings. White foreign-born people in Canada with European ancestry "are not seen as, nor do they see themselves as, immigrants, while others, based on their 'Third World' country origins, race, language ability and/or accent and their lower positions in the occupational hierarchy, are seen as, and see themselves as, immigrants regardless of their legal status" (Brigham and Walsh 2007: 156). In particular, immigrant women of color from developing countries, who do not have English or French language skills, are regarded as immigrant women by the state, employers and the community In this study, the term immigrant women indicates the 'first generation only' and immigrant women of color are regarded as racialized and visible minority immigrant women (Giles and Preston 1996).

Pendakur 2000; Reitz and Banerjee 2007; Schellenberg and Maheux 2007; Tastsoglou and Preston 2005; Preston and Man 1999). Although discourses of Canadian society valorize cultural pluralism, many scholars argue that Canada ‘tolerates rather than embraces differences’ as there are deepening economic and social divides in Canadian society between non-racialized and racialized/ethnicized populations (Fleras and Elliott 2002; Ghosh and Abdi 2004; Gupta 1999, 2009). There is widespread recognition that racialized immigrant women are likely to experience multiple exclusionary barriers in Canada’s labour market (Boyd 1990; Li 2000, 2001; Pendakur 2000; Man 2004; Agnew 1996). They are the victims of gender and racial discrimination, which Buzdugan and Halli (2009) termed a ‘double jeopardy’, that devalues their labour and maintains unequal access to the labour market compared to their male counterparts as well as non-racialized immigrants and native born Canadians of both sexes (Schellenberg and Maheux 2007; Townson 2003).

Institutional racism that devalues foreign education and work experiences channels racialized immigrants to poorly paid jobs (Guo 2009). Race also devalues women’s paid and unpaid work (Banerjee 2009; Agnew 1996; Reitz and Banerjee 2007; Tastsoglou and Preston 2005). Conventional gender ideologies grounded in the public/private binary<sup>5</sup> and gendered divisions of labour emphasizing the role of women as homemakers and supplementary income earners to support family needs affect women’s labour force participation in Canada (Tastsoglou and Preston 2005). Immigrant women of color are even more alienated from paid employment as they are constructed as passive immigrants, docile, subordinated and marginalized in their male

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<sup>5</sup> The private being used to refer to a sphere or spheres of social life in which intrusions and interference with freedom requires spatial justification, and the public to refer to a sphere or spheres regarded as more justifiably accessible (Okin 1998: 118). “... ‘public’ and ‘private’ are tricky and ambiguous concepts, which cannot simply be identified by reference to physical locations of home, neighbourhood, workplace, nor can they simply be mapped straight onto gender identities-although they also, of course, have strongly gendered implications (Edward and Ribbens 1998: 8).

dominated patriarchal society, who are not destined to participate in the labour market (Guo 2009, Man 2004; Dyck and McLaren 2004; Pinder 2002; Day and Brodsky 1998; Agnew1996). In particular, Muslim immigrant women are often portrayed as oppressed and subjugated by employers and co-workers (Dossa 2004).

The generalized assumptions about racialized immigrant women's identities have material consequences in the Canadian labour market. In 2011, the employment rate of visible minority immigrant women aged 15 and over was 54.8%, which was lower than the employment rates of Canadian born women (58.35%) but higher than the employment rate of non-visible minority immigrant women (46.1%) (Hudon 2015)<sup>6</sup>. There were wider gaps between the employment rates of visible minority immigrant women and men than their non-racialized counterparts (ibid). Immigrant women earned less than their Canadian born counterparts<sup>7</sup> in 2011. An income disparity is evident between visible and non-visible minority immigrant women. Data from the 2006 census show that although visible minority immigrant women's employment rate exceeded that of non-visible minority immigrant women, their median income was much lower than that of non-visible minority immigrant women<sup>8</sup>.

Numerous studies have found that visible minority immigrant women are disproportionately concentrated in unpaid, poorly paid, part-time and other forms of irregular and precarious jobs in Canada (Townson 2003; Hiebert 1997; Tastsoglou and Preston 2005). Their concentration in low-paid "secondary" employment re-enforces their lower class positions in Canadian society (Mojab 1999; Ng 1999). The labour market experiences of racialized immigrant women in Canada indicate that social identities such as gender, race, class, ethnicity,

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<sup>6</sup> Statistics Canada 2011 (<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-503-x/2015001/article/14315/t/tb117-eng.htm>)

<sup>7</sup> Immigrant women aged 15 and older who had worked full-time and for a full year had a median employment income of \$40,710, which was \$2,065 less than their Canadian-born peers (Hudon 2015).

<sup>8</sup> See Chapter 4, Table 4-7.

religion and other social categories of differences are not distinct entities that operate separately but must be conceptualized as intersecting, fluid and interrelated (Crenshaw 1989, 1991, 1994; Yuval-Davis 2006, 2010). Intersectionality allows researchers to recognize the multiple exclusionary processes experienced by racialized immigrant women in Canadian labour market (McDowell 2008; Tastsoglou and Preston 2005).

Research demonstrates that the gender identities of racialized immigrant women, have implications for the ways they socio-economically integrate in places of settlement (Agnew 2009; Mahler and Pessar 2006; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001, 1999). As feminist scholars have demonstrated, migration and settlement is a gendered process and how gender is constructed and implicated in household strategies is crucial in shaping women's ability to negotiate labour market challenges (Espiritu 2003; Mahler and Pessar 2006; Menjivar 2003; Mahalingam et al. 2008; Pessar 1999a, 1999b). Paid employment often has different implications for women and men living in the same immigrant household. The expected gender roles of women, particularly, the demands on women's reproductive labor in the home impinge on their ability to upgrade language and employment skills and pursue opportunities in the labour market (Salaff and Greve 2004; Menjivar 2003; Mahalingam et al. 2008). Women's access to job opportunities is significantly constrained by the spatial separation of home and workplace. As Tastsoglou and Preston (2005: 52) point out:

*“The time and effort involved in travelling to jobs and training that must be scheduled around the hours of child care and school discourage [many] women from participating in training programs, leaving them qualified only for low-wage jobs. Immigrant women who try to overcome spatial constraints by engaging in paid work at home find that unpaid domestic work often impinges on their paid employment, which is also poorly paid and insecure”.*

Researchers also outline how labour market barriers and reproductive responsibilities in the home encourage many visible minority immigrant women to engage in home-based work which blurs the spatial division between women's paid work and unpaid household chores (Maitra 2013; Leonard 2001; Giles and Preston 1996). However, women's association with domesticity reduces the social value of their home-based paid work. In this regard, Leach (1998, cited in Bernstein et al. 2001: 8) states:

*“Women's work in the home (paid and unpaid) and out of it takes on different and more ambiguous meanings than does the work of men, wherever it is performed. All work carried out by women in the home, whether paid or not, tends to be symbolically treated as if it were domestic labour.”*

Traditional gender ideologies regarding the spatial division of labour indicate that experiences of home and workplace differ between men and women (Leonard 2001). The ways in which visible minority immigrant women negotiate the socially assigned meanings of particular work and workplaces are crucial for an understanding of their labor market participation. Working at home and in formal workplace has different meanings for women from different class, race, ethnic and religious backgrounds and creates different social and material consequences for them (see Leonard 2001; Menjivar 2003; Dion and Dion 2001; Pratt 2004; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997, 2001; Giles and Preston 1996; Raghuram 2008; Kofman and Raghuram 2005). These observations lay the ground to recognize the diverse links between home and workplace for racialized immigrant women who engage in ethnic entrepreneurship.

A growing body of literature emphasizes women's participation in ethnic entrepreneurship in North America and Europe (Anthias and Mehta 2003; Dhaliwal 1998; Maitra 2013; Morokvasic 1991; Hillman 1999; Marshack 1994; Kwak 2003; Dallalfar 1994). Ethnic entrepreneurship refers to businesses that are owned or operated by immigrants and ethnic

minorities<sup>9</sup> (Lo 2006, 2009a). Highlighting the businesses operated by visible minority immigrant women, researchers demonstrate that these women are not passive victims of labour market barriers. Rather, they have created alternative pathways to deal with family financial crises by becoming self-employed. Their engagement in ethnic entrepreneurship is a means to challenge and avoid labour market discrimination, and gain autonomy and empowerment (Hillman 1999; Kwak 2003; Maitra 2013). Racialized immigrant women's entry into ethnic entrepreneurship - which is traditionally regarded as a masculine 'public' domain of production (Gunnerud 1997) - challenges conventional gender ideologies that often exclude women from any consideration in ethnic entrepreneurship studies (Kontos 2003; Hillman 1999; Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992; Zhou 1992). Empirical research reveals that racialized immigrant women operate businesses and their entrepreneurship pathways are not uniform. Rather, women experience various opportunities and barriers to start and operate ethnic businesses which are associated with and shaped by their identities, their business types<sup>10</sup> and business locations (Dhaliwal 1998; Dallalfar 1994; Maitra 2013). Expanding these findings, this research argues that the relationships between home and workplace significantly influence the ways in which women operate ethnic businesses in diverse locations.

The links between identities and the location of entrepreneurship is particularly significant for Muslim immigrant women whose physical mobility in 'public' places is restricted by Islamic principles (Mohammad 2005b). In Muslim societies, women's marginality in terms of educational achievement and labour market participation shapes gendered division of places and

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<sup>9</sup> I use ethnic and immigrant entrepreneurs synonymously to indicate the businesses owned and operated by immigrants and ethnic minority groups. The terms 'ethnic' and 'immigrant' entrepreneurs are used synonymously in the literature though not all immigrant entrepreneurs belong to ethnic minority groups and not all ethnic businesses are operated by immigrants. The distinction between immigrant and ethnic businesses are not prominent in the literature because in most cases ethnic and immigrant businesses overlap since the first generation of ethnic minorities tends to be more entrepreneurial than the second generation (Borjas 1986).

<sup>10</sup> Business types refer to types of services business operators provide (i.e.; restaurant, catering and child care).

‘regulation of access to it’ (Mohammad 2013: 1803). Mohammad (2013) argues that Muslim women’s religious practices are not static but historically contingent and place specific. The identity boundaries Muslim women draw are fluid and constantly changing, allowing them to (re)negotiate their presence in ‘public’ places.

While some researchers argue that religious restrictions render Muslim immigrant women invisible in ethnic businesses, others illustrate how they negotiate patriarchal and Islamic gender norms to operate ethnic businesses (Essers and Benschop 2009, Essers et al. 2010; Hillman 1999). Nevertheless, there is a dearth of research investigating the socio-economic contexts in which Muslim immigrant women enter into and operate diverse ethnic businesses and revealing how they negotiate the conventional ‘private’ and ‘public’ spatial binary when they operate businesses in the home and outside the home.

I ask how Muslim immigrant women negotiate gender/race/ethnic/religious identities when they operate business in the home which is considered traditionally as the domain of women’s unpaid household and care work and outside the home which is more often regarded as a masculine domain of production. The goal is to understand and recognize Muslim immigrant women’s diverse entrepreneurship experiences, challenges and business strategies, which are often overlooked in the ethnic entrepreneurship literature. This research argues that the socially constructed feminine and masculine connotations of work and workplace influence the ways that racialized immigrant women operate ethnic businesses (Anthias 2000, 2002; Anthias and Mehta 2003; Dallalgar 1994).

Drawing on narratives from Bangladeshi Muslim immigrant women who operate home-based and non-H-B businesses in Toronto, the research identifies the complex and differing ways they interpret their gender roles and identities in relation to entrepreneurship and unpaid

domestic work. Placing ‘workplace’ at the center of analysis, I demonstrate the relations between identities, place and ethnic entrepreneurship. Comparing the socio-spatial processes that shape the experiences of Bangladeshi women who operate ethnic businesses inside and outside the home, this research contributes to geographical analyses of Muslim immigrant women’s identities and their socio-economic integration in Canada.

## **1.2. Theoretical Context**

This research is framed by several critical concepts from feminist and geographic theories; namely identity, gendered spatial division of work, geographies of intersectionality, and spatializing ethnic entrepreneurship.

In psychological terms, identity refers to “awareness of self, self-image, self-reflection, and self-esteem” (Shields 2008: 301). Identity is also “emphasized as a quality that enables the expression of the individual’s authentic sense of self” (ibid). Identity is always ‘in process’, fluid and multiple, as there is no fixed notion of ‘self’ (Hall 2003; McDowell 1999, 2011b). Identities cannot be equated with social categories, such as gender, class and race (Lawler 2015). Social categories are socially constructed identity markers which can be affirmed, contested and ruptured “within the identity boundaries of the individual and/or collective subject” (Yuval-Davis 2010: 267; Lawler 2015). Identity constructions are active processes of self-identification. In this regard, Lawler (2015: 10) states that “identity categories inform (though they may not determine and they cannot sum up) people’s sense of themselves and how they view one another”. Drawing on this notion, social categories are conceptualized as ‘signifiers’ of Muslim Bangladeshi immigrant women’s identities in this research (Yuval-Davis 2010).

Construction of identities implies “a process of ‘becoming’, rather than a stable state” (Essers and Benschop 2009). Yuval-Davis (2010: 261) defines the construction of identities “as a mode of narrative, as a mode of performativity or as a dialogical practice”. In this research, I draw on narrative and performativity approaches to conceptualize identities<sup>11</sup>. The narrative approach conceives identities “as narratives, stories that people tell themselves and others about who they are, and who they are not, as well as who and how they would like to/should be” (Yuval-Davis 2010: 266). Identity narratives, which can be verbal and non-verbal (such as, dress, body images), are about perceptions of self (ibid). Narratives of identity explain rather than define who ‘one is’. The narrations of identities can reflect belonging and not belonging to particular social or identity categories (such as, gender, ethnic, racial, class, religious, national, cultural) (ibid). As such, identity narratives construct boundaries between self and ‘Others’.

Identity narratives reflect specific practices. According to Yuval-Davis (2010), Butler’s ‘performativity’ approach is crucial for understanding the associations between individuals’ narratives and their practices of identities (Yuval-Davis 2010; Lawler 2015). ‘Performativity’ describes how through repeated discourse and performance shaped by power relations within a particular social structure, identity categories are produced, affirmed and challenged (Butler 1990). Identities are performatively constituted; they are ‘done’ rather than ‘owned’ (Lawler 2015: 5). As such, identity narratives shape - and are shaped by - individuals’ actions and their experiences. I explore how identities “are made and unmade, claimed and rejected” by Bangladeshi women who operate home-based and non-H-B businesses.

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<sup>11</sup> The dialogical approach proposed by Yuval-Davis (2010) indicates how identities are constructed between individuals and within social relations through dialogues. This aspect is not explored in this research.

### **1.2.1. Gendered Spatial Division of Work**

Identities influence the ways men and women make sense of their paid work and unpaid work in workplace locations (McDowell 2015). In industrial societies, 'work' is understood in relation to gender and socio-spatial divides (McDowell 2015). Such gender-place interrelations are emphasized by feminist scholars in their analyses of the productive and social reproductive work of men and women (Marston 2000; Katz 2001; Gibson-Graham 2006; McDowell 1993; Whatmore 1991; Walby et al. 2012; Okin 1998; Valentine 1992). Production refers to the organization of goods and services through the market or through the public sector (Trovato and Grindstaff 1994). Unlike production, reproductive tasks such as caring and domestic work take place in the home and are usually done by women (Katz 2001). The conventional notion that women are responsible for social reproductive tasks in the home and men are responsible for production in public places is central to the binary divisions of public/private, workplace/home, men/women and production/social reproduction (Walton-Roberts 2008; Marston 2000). These binary divisions are deeply rooted in the social construction of gender performativity particularly regarding who should occupy specific places and who should be excluded from them (Butler 1990; Lawson 2007; Mallet 2004; Datta 2008).

Some scholars challenge conventional gender norms as these norms often exclude women from production and 'public' places and construct women as inferior to men by undermining the value of their productive and social reproductive work (see McDowell 1999, 2015; Walton-Roberts 2008). To challenge the binary gender-place divisions, scholars emphasize the ways in which norms of femininity and masculinity vary across space (McDowell 1999, Raghuram 2008; Marston 2000). Recent studies explore the gender roles of immigrant men and women to show how gender is constructed, maintained, legitimized and resisted in day to day

places (Raghuram 2008; Batnitzky et al. 2008; McDowell 2008; Rodó-de-Zárate 2014). Analysis of the gender roles of men and women in different migrant communities in the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States are central to the contemporary literature regarding diverse notions of femininity and masculinity. Feminist scholars explore the gender construction of immigrant women to illustrate how experiences of women vary across places and how those experiences relate to the social positionalities of women (McDowell 1999; Raghuram 2008; Pratt 2009; Meraj 2015; D'Addario 2012). My conversations with Bangladeshi women aim to reveal the fixed and fluid gender-place-work relations and intra-group differences in their experiences inside and outside the home to problematize the conventional relationships between gender divisions and spatial divisions.

### **1.2.2. Geographies of Intersectionality**

Intersectionality recognizes the simultaneous experiences of social categories in which individuals are the active agents in the construction and maintenance of such categories (Crenshaw 1989; Collins 2000; Warner 2008). Intersectionality implies that the power relations that are embedded in social relations of differences are interrelated and mutually constitutive and captures how gender relations are mediated by the unequal distribution of power along the lines of gender, class, race, ethnicity, religion and national origin (Crenshaw 1989; Yuval-Davis 2008; Collins 2000; Shields 2008). Intersectionality depicts the unity and differences/divisions across and within different social categories that signify the complexity and plurality in an individual's identity construction. An intersectional approach to gender provides a theoretical lens to analyze diverse gender-place-work relations associated with varied identities of women (Butler 1990; Shields 2008; McDowell 2008). In particular, intersectionality allows researchers to deconstruct

universal gender theories and analyze multiple dimensions of racialized immigrant women's identities and gender constructions (Mohanty 1991; Nagar 2002; Spivak 1999).

The ways in which individuals make sense of their gender, race and class identities are shaped by time, place and social contexts (Haraway 1991). The situated notion of intersectionality allows us to recognize how boundaries between self, us and them vary across places. As Shields (2008: 304) notes:

*“Identities are fluid in that they can change over time; at the same time, however, they are experienced as stable, giving the self a sense of continuity across time and location”.*

Spatializing intersectionality, feminist geographers unsettle the fixity of social identity categories by illustrating how intersections of multiple identities are constituted and become effective through the socio-spatial setting (Valentine 2007; McDowell 2008). They argue that intersectional identities are negotiated spatially and embedded in the socially constructed meaning of particular places. Individuals 'do' their identities through their actions in response to others' expectations and through internalizing and/or rejecting expected roles in particular settings (Butler 1990; Valentine 2007; Rodó-de-Zárate 2014). A situated notion of intersectional analysis illustrates how the significance of paid work for women's everyday lives varies depending on their social and spatial contexts (McDowell 2008). Drawing on the notion of 'situated intersectionality', I suggest that racialized immigrant women's gender roles and identities are shaped by the locations of their paid and unpaid work. Adding a geographic perspective, the research argues that the intersecting identities of Bangladeshi women take form and meaning differently in different work locations.

### 1.2.3. Spatializing Ethnic Entrepreneurship

Theoretical notions of ethnic entrepreneurship focus on three major social-spatial aspects to differentiate immigrant and ethnic minority operated businesses from generic businesses. The first aspect is the role of ethnicity, specifically ethnic-based resources, in facilitating the emergence of businesses (Aldrich and Waldinger 1990; Light 1972, 1984; Zhou 2004; Bonacich and Modell 1980; Li 1997). The second aspect emphasizes how the spatial concentration of immigrants and ethnic minorities in enclaves<sup>12</sup> and resulting spatial proximity among co-ethnics shape the functions of ethnic businesses (Aldrich and Waldinger 1990; Light 1972, 1984; Light and Bonacich 1988; Light et al. 1993; Lo 2009a). And the third aspect focuses on the socio-structural contexts and business strategies that shape market opportunities for goods and services provided by ethnic enterprises (Aldrich and Waldinger 1990; Lo 2009b; Gunnerud 1997; Kloosterman et al. 1999; Rath and Kloosterman 2000). These aspects almost exclusively focus on the experiences of men and emphasize how immigrants' ethnic identities influence their entrepreneurial activities.

Current research demonstrates that male-centred and ethnicity-based theories fail to recognize how multiple and intersectional identities and intra-group differences affect the opportunities and constraints that visible minority immigrants, specifically women, experience when operating ethnic businesses. As Valdez (2016: 2) states:

*“The primacy of ethnicity has hindered a consideration of other distinct dimensions of identity and collectivity, such as class or gender, and how they might combine with ethnicity to influence resource mobilization. After all, significant intra-ethnic group differences exist between men and*

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<sup>12</sup> Ideally, an ethnic enclave is a geographic area where a significant proportion of a specific ethnic group lives and establishes ethnic enterprises. However, there are debates about the definition and meaning of an ethnic enclave. Some scholars argue that ethnic entrepreneurs are not necessarily live and work in the same area. Thus, an ethnic enclave can be defined as a residential concentration or a business concentration of a particular ethnic group or a combination of both. In this study, ethnic enclave indicates a combination of residential concentration and ethnic enterprises (Portes and Jensen 1989: 930-931).

*women and the working-and middle- class that in some cases exceed the differences observed between ethnic groups”.*

Applying an intersectional approach, scholars problematize the assumption that ethnic minority groups are “uniformly characterized by a collectivist orientation” (Valdez 2016: 15; Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992).

Scholars also deconstruct the notion of ethnicity-based resources by separating family resources (i.e.; financial capital and family labour) from generic ethnic resources (i.e.; ethnic networks, ethnic institutions) arguing that the ways that individuals negotiate access to family resources and non-family ethnic resources to start and operate a business vary (see Valdez 2016; Anthias and Mehta 2003; Sanders and Nee 1996; Nee and Sanders 2001; Pio 2007). In particular, unequal power relations rooted in gender and class differences provide unequal opportunities for family members to access family resources (Anthias and Mehta 2003; Valdez 2016). Drawing on this notion, this study explores the identities and socio-economic contexts that shape Bangladeshi Muslim immigrant women’s access to family- and non-family ethnic- resources. Most importantly, the study calls for a geographical analysis of ethnic entrepreneurship to understand how resource mobilization, business strategies and market opportunities vary depending on the location of the businesses (see Lo 2009a, 2009b; Gunnerud 1997; Dallalfar 1994; Maitra 2013). By exploring the spatial aspects of ethnic businesses operated by Bangladeshi immigrant women, the study illustrates how identity, place and ethnic entrepreneurship are interrelated.

### **1.3. Research Context**

Bangladeshi immigrants living in Toronto- the major immigrant gateway city in Canada - are considered to be one of the most spatially clustered and impoverished ethnic groups (Ghosh

2005; 2007). Islam (1997) observed that many Bangladeshis identify constraints in the labour market as a major reason for feeling marginalized in Toronto. Research also shows that Bangladeshi women are less integrated in the formal labour market than their male counterparts and other immigrant women. Ethno-racial profiles in Toronto prepared by Ornstein (2006) based on 2001 data, show that the labour force participation rate of Bangladeshi women is lower (46%) than that of Bangladeshi men (76.4%). Their labour force participation rate is also lower than that of Canadian born women and other groups of visible minority women. The unemployment rate among Bangladeshi women is 20.9%, even though a large percentage of women (44.5%) have at least one university degree.

Studying the labour market integration of Bangladeshi immigrant women in Toronto, Akbar (2009), found that they face discrimination from potential employers and systemic barriers such as non-recognition of foreign credentials that channel them into poorly-paid jobs despite their university degrees and previous work experience. Responsibilities for child-care and domestic work often prevent many Bangladeshi women from upgrading their skills through language and employment training. In response to employment barriers, many Bangladeshi women start home-based businesses.

Bangladeshi women's involvement in home-based businesses is also acknowledged by Ghosh (2013), Maitra (2013) and Halder (2012). Halder (2012) suggests that Bangladeshi immigrant women in Toronto re-establish their gender roles by establishing catering businesses that sell food prepared in their homes. By cooking and serving food, women play their traditional roles as cooks within the immigrant Bangladeshi community. Ghosh (2005) describes the

institutional completeness of the largest Bangladeshi neighborhood<sup>13</sup> in Victoria Park and Danforth area in Toronto where various ethnic and religious institutions and ethnic businesses are located. Neither Toronto study investigates Bangladeshi women's home-based businesses in much detail or their experiences in non-home-based businesses. Several studies conducted in the UK also claim that Bangladeshi women are not involved in ethnic businesses located at home or outside the home. Ram et al. (2000) provide a Bangladeshi restaurant owner's statement who said:

*"She (has been) a housewife all the time. Most of the restaurateurs' wives have never worked and are housewives. This is common in the Bangladeshi community. We as a family and community-wise, we do not like our wives to work. That's how the family goes".*

The quote highlights the invisibility of Muslim Bangladeshi women's involvement in ethnic businesses, particularly those operating outside the home. This research problematizes homogenous views of Muslim Bangladeshi women's participation in ethnic businesses in much of the literature by investigating the spatiality of Bangladeshi Muslim women's entrepreneurial activities.

#### **1.4. Research Questions**

This study applies a geographic approach to intersectionality to examine how Muslim Bangladeshi immigrant women construct and negotiate their identities by drawing on the notion that places of production and reproduction, with their manifold relations and contested meanings, are always subjective, experiential and situated in context (Massey 2011). Placing workplace at the forefront of analysis, the study identifies how social identities take particular meanings at a location influenced by specific discourses and power relations. I argue that social meanings of

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<sup>13</sup> The terms 'neighbourhood' and 'enclave' are used synonymously in this research to indicate the largest Bangladeshi residential concentration in Toronto.

home and workplace may be simultaneously contested and essentialized to capture Bangladeshi women's varied entrepreneurial experiences (Rose 2016; Pierce et al. 2011). The central question in this research is: *How are the identities of Muslim Bangladeshi immigrant women who operate ethnic businesses in Toronto related to their work locations?* This study compares Bangladeshi women who operate businesses inside and outside the home. The research demonstrates that there is a reciprocal relationship between Bangladeshi women's identities and the locations of their business activities. Bangladeshi women's identities influence their involvement in home-based and non-H-B businesses and the social meanings attached to home and workplace also influence their identities. The interrelations between identities and workplace locations shape Bangladeshi women's entrepreneurial experiences in Toronto. Three sub questions are investigated:

1. What is the social context in which Muslim Bangladeshi immigrant women become self-employed? I explore the demographic characteristics, migration and settlement histories, and labour force participation of Bangladeshi immigrants in Toronto to evaluate how they influence Bangladeshi women's involvement in ethnic businesses.
2. What factors influence the characteristics of Bangladeshi women's businesses? I investigate Bangladeshi women's pathways to entrepreneurship inside and outside the home, how cultural and religious norms and practices including Islamic dress codes influence Bangladeshi women's entrepreneurial activities, and how Bangladeshi women negotiate household divisions of labour when they operate businesses inside and outside the home.
3. How are the business strategies of home-based and non-H-B business operators similar and different? I examine how Bangladeshi women access and mobilize the financial and social capital required to start and operate their businesses, and how they develop networks and access consumer markets.

To answer the research questions, I adopted multiple methods, conducting fieldwork in a Bangladeshi neighbourhood in Toronto. I implemented multiple qualitative methods. I engaged

in ‘participant observation’ in South Asian Women’s Rights Organization (SAWRO)<sup>14</sup>, a Bangladeshi community-based organization where I discussed the research with many Bangladeshi women and community leaders. Information about the Bangladeshi community in Toronto was also gathered from two key informants who work in different community based organizations. I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with twenty eight Muslim Bangladeshi immigrant women who operate home-based and non-H-B businesses. The purpose of the in-depth interviews was to explore women’s life stories focusing particularly on their identities and labour market integration in Toronto.

To contextualize the identities and experiences of the Bangladeshi women who participated in this study, I also used data from the 2006 census. The data analysis created a profile of Bangladeshi immigrants residing in the Toronto CMA with a specific focus on Bangladeshi women’s socio-economic characteristics, migration patterns, family composition, residential characteristics, labour force participation, and reproductive work. The general trends derived from the analysis illustrate the socio-economic and family contexts in which Bangladeshi women operate home-based and non-H-B businesses in Toronto. Overall, analyzing the general trends and personal narratives, the research explores how the multiple and intersecting identities of Bangladeshi Muslim immigrant women are constituted in relation to their places of work.

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<sup>14</sup> The South Asian Women’s Rights Organization (SAWRO) was established in 2005 in order to assist Bangladeshi women residing in Toronto to overcome their poverty, unemployment and other socio-cultural issues (Akbar 2009).

## **1.5. Research Contributions**

This research contributes to geographical analyses of immigrant women's identities and socio-economic integration in five ways. The study furthers understanding of the social and spatial processes that constitute immigrant women's identities by examining how they re-organize their paid and unpaid work in places of settlement. Building on feminist theories, this research integrates the notions of gender, intersectionality and place (Valentine 2007; Sardinha 2010). Situated intersectional analysis provides an analytical terrain to configure how gender intersecting with race, class, ethnicity and religion challenges and/or affirms the gendered public/private spatial binary that shapes immigrant women's labour market integration (McDowell 2007; Rose 1997).

This study advances the literature about ethnic entrepreneurship by illustrating how identities and locational attributes conjointly shape immigrant women's entrepreneurship experiences, and by documenting the diverse identities and experiences of Bangladeshi Muslim immigrant women who operate ethnic businesses inside and outside the home. The research identifies how focusing on 'masculine work norm', which defines the prominent theories of ethnic entrepreneurship, to evaluate immigrant women's entrepreneurial behavior leads to generalized assumptions about how women access social and financial capital and consumer markets. Analyzing Bangladeshi women's roles and diverse business strategies, the research shows that a gender perspective is essential to understand the social and spatial processes of ethnic entrepreneurship.

This research also responds to calls for research about diversity within immigrant groups (Veronis 2010; Ghosh 2005; Goldring 2006) by highlighting the diversity within immigrant groups and by focusing on intra-group differences in Bangladeshi women's integration. Focusing

on Muslim Bangladeshi immigrant women, the research challenges assertions that patriarchal norms and Islamic principles restrict Muslim immigrant women's physical mobility and participation in paid work. Taking on Bangladeshi women's experiences, the research shows how their productive and reproductive roles in their homes and workplaces are shaped by differences in their identities and religious views and practices.

Finally, the research contributes to the migration literature by demonstrating how Bangladeshi women's gender roles and identities influence their social and economic adjustment to a new environment. In particular, the study emphasizes the relationships between immigrant women's paid work and reproductive work, which often gains scant attention in migration literature (Wong 2003, 2006; Tastsoglou and Preston 2005). The study also explores the settlement patterns of Bangladeshi immigrants to highlight the significance of spatial processes that impact their labour market integration in Toronto.

## **1.6. Organization of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is organized into seven chapters. Chapter Two investigates how women's identities and the gendered social and spatial divisions of labour impact their experiences of paid and unpaid reproductive work. The social constructions of 'home' and 'workplace' underpinned by the private/public binary are described to understand the racialized immigrant women's productive and reproductive work in the home and in formal workplaces. In particular, debates about Muslim immigrant women's gender roles and spatial practices are highlighted. Arguments about critical concepts, such as gender, work, private/public spatial binary and intersectionality are explored in depth in the chapter. Scrutinizing the relationships between these key concepts allowed me to critically analyze the gender blind theories of ethnic entrepreneurship and emphasize the importance of identities that shape racialized immigrant

women's entrepreneurship experiences. An analytical framework that recognizes the importance of investigating the identities of Bangladeshi Muslim immigrant women who operate home-based and non-H-B ethnic businesses in Toronto emerges from the analysis.

Chapter Three describes the research methodology of the study. The chapter explains and rationalizes the philosophical underpinning of the research methodology and methods implemented to explore the identities and place specific experiences of Bangladeshi women who operate ethnic businesses inside and outside their homes. This chapter also highlights how my own positionality and subjectivity influenced the research questions and my choice of methods, which are primarily qualitative. The study's methodology goes beyond the quantitative/qualitative dualism in feminist research by adopting complementary qualitative and quantitative methods. I describe feminist concepts that allow for an understanding of how my own world views and identities influenced my research objectives and the research process. The rationale for selecting a Bangladeshi neighbourhood in Victoria Park and Danforth area as the study area is outlined. The chapter also provides a description of the research participants whose narratives define the findings of this research. The chapter concludes with a critical discussion of data analysis techniques highlighting the challenges in interpreting identities of the research participants from qualitative data which cannot be detached from researcher's world views and subjectivity.

Chapter Four, analyzing data from the 2006 Canadian census, examines the socio-economic characteristics, labour market outcomes and settlement patterns of Bangladeshi immigrants residing in the city of Toronto. The chapter compares the socio-economic attributes and labour market outcomes of Bangladeshi immigrants with those of white and other visible minority immigrants. The comparisons illustrate that gender, ethnicity and visible minority status

are significant factors in shaping the labour market participation and employment earnings of Bangladeshi immigrants in the Toronto CMA. Specifically, the analysis explores the gendered divisions of unpaid care work and household work to understand how unpaid work affects Bangladeshi women's labour market participation. The relationship between Bangladeshi immigrants' labour market outcomes and their residential patterns in Toronto is explored to evaluate the impact of enclave residence on their labour market participation and income. The chapter also discusses the relative influence of demographic and socio-economic factors on Bangladeshi immigrants' employment status through a multinomial regression analysis. The chapter highlights the various factors that affect the paid employment and self-employment of Bangladeshi immigrant men and women in Toronto. The gendered patterns of paid and unpaid work help us understand the circumstances in which Bangladeshi women engage in home-based and non-H-B businesses.

Chapter Five illustrates how Bangladeshi women negotiate gender roles to engage in home-based and non-H-B businesses in Toronto. The chapter investigates the social and economic circumstances that influenced Bangladeshi women to adopt two different pathways to ethnic businesses. The influence of Bangladeshi women's gender roles, class positions, and identity negotiations on the locational characteristics of their businesses is discussed. The chapter sheds light on how women interpret the connections between their religious and cultural practices and their business activities inside and outside the home. The chapter also examines how business activities inside and outside the home shape the ways in which Bangladeshi women negotiate unpaid household work. It emphasizes how patriarchal and Islamic norms are challenged as well as affirmed by home-based and non-H-B business operators.

Chapter Six examines the relevance of the interactional theory of entrepreneurship proposed by Aldrich and Waldinger (1990) for home-based and non-H-B businesses in the Bangladeshi neighbourhood in Toronto. The chapter seeks to identify the similar and contrasting ways in which the two groups of Bangladeshi women access and mobilize financial and social capital from their families and ethnic institutions. The effects of business type and business locations on the networks and strategies that Bangladeshi women use to access market opportunities are examined in the chapter. A critical evaluation of the need for a protected co-ethnic market for sustaining home-based and non-H-B businesses is outlined. Highlighting the similarities and differences in business strategies and resource mobilization between home-based and non-H-B business operators, the chapter suggests that a gender perspective is essential to understand the diverse socio-spatial processes of ethnic businesses.

Chapter Seven concludes the dissertation with a summary of the main findings from the research. I also reflect on the significance of the research findings for future research to enhance the understanding of racialized immigrant women's labour market integration and their identity negotiation in Canada.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework**

### **2.1. Introduction**

Analyzing gender through an intersectional lens has allowed scholars to recognize how race, class, immigration status and other social identities influence and change gender roles from place to place (Agnew 2009; McDowell 2015). Studying immigrant women's paid and unpaid work and identity negotiations in receiving societies, researchers have acknowledged the contested and changing meanings of the private/public binary (McDowell 2008; Pratt 2004; Hanson and Pratt 1988; 1991; Kofman and Raghuram 2006). While immigrant women's labour force participation, and their unpaid and paid domestic and care work in homes in North America and Europe have received significant attention from feminist researchers (Parrenas 2001; Pratt 1998, 2004, McDowell et al. 2007, Leonard 2011; Man 2004), their entrepreneurial activities have not been explored as much. Until recently, the contributions of immigrant women to ethnic entrepreneurship have remained largely unrecognized. The marginalization of immigrant women's contributions to ethnic businesses reflects feminist debates surrounding gender ideologies in which women's productive work inside and outside the home has remained crucial (Mirchandani 1999; Morokvasic 1991).

Geographies of women's paid and unpaid work are often explained in terms of a gender-based public/private binary emphasizing women's 'natural' association with the private sphere of home and social reproductive work (Okin 1998). Feminist theories illustrate how the gendered public/private division influences women's identities and experiences in all spheres of everyday life (McDowell 1993, 2008; Okin 1998; Walby 1997). Gendered/ racialized/ classed/ ethnicized identities of immigrant women add complexity to the various socio-spatial processes that constitute their paid work and reproductive work. Feminist scholars address this complexity

through an intersectional approach that captures differences in immigrant women's paid and unpaid labour (McDowell 2008). Immigrant Muslim women's participation in paid work and entrepreneurial activities is a topic of debates. Islamic religious norms that prescribe a sexual division of labour and gender segregation sometimes restrict women's presence outside the home and their involvement with paid work (Mohammad 1999, 2005a, 2005b; Moghissi 2006; Moghissi et al. 2009). As a result, limited information is available about how immigrant Muslim women, who engage in ethnic entrepreneurship negotiate the public/private binary and how their multiple identities influence their business activities at home and outside the home.

This chapter relates how feminist debates surrounding women's productive and social reproductive work are relevant for understanding immigrant women's ethnic entrepreneurship. I argue that immigrant women's identities and the social meanings of place affect the ways in which they operate their businesses. 'Why' and 'how' the women enter into and operate ethnic businesses and negotiate identities cannot be fully understood without investigating 'where' their business activities take place and the social meanings attached to those places.

The chapter is organized into five sections. The first section reviews feminist theories that analyze the links between identity and social-spatial divisions of labour. The conventional private and public and home and workplace binaries underpinning the gendered divisions of productive and social reproductive work are discussed. The conventional gender ideology is problematized through an intersectional approach to identities. The second section elaborates how the recognition of women's multiple and intersectional subjectivities opens-up new insights and debates about the productive and reproductive work of immigrant women including Muslim women. The third section summarizes major theoretical concepts from the ethnic entrepreneurship literature noting how - lacking a gender perspective - the theories often

overlook women's contributions to ethnic businesses. The fourth section describes the conceptual framework used to investigate the identities and experiences of Muslim Bangladeshi immigrant women who operate home-based and non-H-B businesses in Toronto. Finally, the fifth section outlines the major objectives of the research.

## **2.2. Identity, Place and Work: Feminist Theories**

### **2.2.1. Gender and Place**

The term 'gender' has been widely used in the feminist literature to illustrate the ways in which femininity and masculinity are constructed by roles ascribed to men and women (Pessar and Mahler 2003). Gender mirrors the "processes through which cultural meanings and inequalities in power, authority, rights and privileges come to be associated with sexual difference" (Zimmerman and West 1987). To conceptualize gender, feminist geographers stress two interconnected aspects: first, gender identity is socially constructed and performatively constituted, and second the enactment of gender is engrained in the spatial organization of places. Zimmerman and West (1987) argue that gender is a social construction, it is not innate, it is the "activity of the actor", it is "something we do [perform], not something we are" (Risman and Davis 2013). In the same vein, Butler (1990: 25) suggests that "there is no gender identity behind the expression of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results".

The notion of 'performativity' implies that performance normalizes particular gender roles through actions and appearances of bodies and normalization is legitimized by repeated performances of gender roles by men and women (ibid; Pratt 2004). The rhetoric and narratives of the discourse are connected to power relations embedded in social structures (Butler 1990).

Gender is a social relationship that affects almost all areas of social life including family, economy and politics (Harding 1986; Acker 1992; Cranford et al. 2003). Members of a society are taught and trained in a way that they view the socially constructed gender roles of femininity and masculinity as natural and unavoidable (Pessar and Mahler 2003). In response to the combination of others' expectations and internalization of these roles, people are inclined, often unconsciously, to align with socially learned and recognized gender roles (Minnotte et al. 2010; Hochschild 1997).

Gender is spatially constituted and the performances of male and female bodies are understood with regard to spatial contexts (Pratt 2004; Young 2005; Gunnerud 1997). Gender specific social roles are manifested in everyday spaces (Zimmerman and West 1987; Martin 2004). Through 'specialized performances' - enforced by specific cultural and normative practices - two different domains (in terms of habits, tasks, dress, and space) of maleness and femaleness are constructed (Datta 2008: 191). Different places are conceptualized as masculine and feminine based on the performances enacted in them. The ways in which masculinity and femininity are constructed are, thus, related to the material realities of place. Place is both as a "marker and a maker" of gender identity (Pratt 2004).

The intersections of bodies and places are dialectical and complex, and always subject to processes of change. Even though normative cultural codes shape the activities in a place, men and women possess the capacity to redefine and reconstruct the meanings of femininity and masculinity in various places by exercising their agency (Pratt 2004). Bearing in mind that gender is a social construction, Butler (1988: 520) notes that gender norms can be contested and 'constituted differently' by challenging prevailing hierarchies of power and privilege (Datta 2008). This notion raises a crucial question: can gender norms be subverted by the agency of the

bodies that challenge those norms in different spatial contexts? Feminists critically address this question by analyzing the interactions between gendered bodies and places of work.

### **2.2.2. Gender and Spatial Division of Work**

Feminist analysis highlights how gender norms regarding the socio-sexual division of labor in the home and outside the home are structured through a private/public dichotomy - a gendered dichotomy of place in which public places, concomitant with visibility, openness and empowerment, are masculinized, while private spaces, concomitant with invisibility, confinement and seclusion, are feminized (Harding 1986). The industrial revolution facilitated the separation of public from private and home from work and the resulting spatial reorganization of gender relations (Prugl 1999; Walby 1989). The conventional definitions of ‘work’<sup>15</sup> have sustained the categorical binary of women’s reproductive family work and men’s productive waged work (McDowell 1993, 2015; England 2010). Women’s unpaid reproductive work (reproduction of labour, domestic and care work) in the home has historically been valued less than productive work primarily done outside the home by men for ‘pay or profit’ (Raju 1993: 2).

Home is constructed as a “private, domestic and female realm where reproductive rather than productive work occurs” largely undertaken by women (Mallet 2004: 76) and the spaces outside the home as a masculine public domain where economic and political practices are located and productive work is done by men (Lawson 2007). Feminists argue that the gender

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<sup>15</sup> According to Marxist notion, production is conceptualized as work as it creates exchange value and reproduction as non-work as it creates use value ... Women’s association with the production of use value and their inability to produce exchange value though participating in the wage work outside the home, locate them a subordinate position in the society (Mitchell et al. 2003).

based socio-spatial division of labour is the foundation of a patriarchal<sup>16</sup> social structure that endorses a dominant ideology of male breadwinner/female caregiver roles is endorsed (Whatmore 1991).

*In a patriarchal system “men are assumed to be chiefly preoccupied with and responsible for the occupations of the [public] sphere of economic and political life, and women with those of the private sphere of domesticity and reproduction” (Okin 1998: 118).*

The idealization of men as economic actors in the public domain and naturalization of women’s association with un-paid reproductive work within the private sphere of home has allowed men to possess superior power and economic privilege in the family and in the society in general (Wilson 2000). On the other hand, “private enclosure of the home ... [is understood as] atomising, alienating, secluding, and confining” for women. It excludes them from the “arenas of institutional politics and government, and the labour market, denying them full participatory citizenship” (Mohammad 2013: 1804). The gender-based public/private binary underpinned by patriarchy has negative consequences for women especially with regards to labor market participation (Valentine 1992; Hanson and Pratt 1991, 1995). Women’s rate of participation in wage work has historically been lower than that of men in most countries including Canada (Vosko 2000). In the labour market, many women do low-paid, low-skilled part-time and precarious work (Vosko 2000; McDowell et al. 2007). Not only are women largely represented in the low-paid non-standard sectors, but they are also concentrated in gender segregated occupational sectors. Teaching, nursing, clerical positions, sales and services are the main sectors

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<sup>16</sup> Patriarchy is “a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women (Walby 2009: 214). Patriarchy reflects “the manifestation and institution of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general. It implies that men hold power in all the important institutions of society and women are deprived to access to such power. It does not [however] imply that women are either totally powerless or totally denied of rights, influence and resources (French 1985 cited in Wilson 2000: 1494).

where women predominate, whilst men dominate in high-tech and other high-‘skilled’<sup>17</sup> professional sectors (Blackburn et al. 2000; Chui 2011). In Canada, the majority of employed women are concentrated in female-dominated occupations such as teaching, nursing and related health occupations, clerical and other administrative positions and sales and service occupations (Chui 2011). In 2006, 87% of nurses and health-related therapists, 75% of clerks and other administrators, 64% of teachers and 57% of sales and service personnel were women in Canada<sup>18</sup>.

Due to the binary constructions between ‘productive man’ and ‘reproductive women’, women are often considered complementary wage earners, bearers of domestic and reproductive responsibilities and a source of cheap labour (Whatmore 1991; Bondi 1998). Salway et al. (2005: 316) state:

*“the socio-cultural construction of women’s waged work as secondary, inferior and justifiable only in times of economic need, is supported by structural and ideological forces operating at the level of the household, the labour market, and the wider community”.*

Patriarchal gender norms grounded in male breadwinner and female caregiver roles often restrict women from taking paid work (Whatmore 1991; Okin 1998). Women are assumed to be responsible for household chores and care giving even when they work for wage. Gendered divisions of household labour persist in the home even when women take paid work outside the home (Leonard 2001; McDowell 1993). Analyzing 1990 census data, Marshall (1993) shows that only 10 percent of full-time dual-earner couples share housework equally in Canada and in most families, the wife has primary responsibility for housework. Studies also find that women’s

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<sup>17</sup> The ascription of techno-logical innovation as the driving force of globalization and the new knowledge economy and society) has often led to the highly skilled being defined as those qualified in scientific and technological professions while the skills required in educational and caring jobs, such as teaching and nursing, are considered to be inherent in their femininity and often collapsed into it, so that these jobs are primarily conceptualized as women’s jobs and therefore semi-skilled rather than skilled (Hardill and MacDonald 2000). As such, the notion of skill is not gender neutral and the kinds of work which women do are often defined prima facie as less skilled [than those men] (Kofman and Raghuram 2005).

<sup>18</sup> Statistics Canada (<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89f0133x/89f0133x2006000-eng.htm>).

participation in the labour market has not reduced their domestic and family responsibilities. Rather, they often increase their workloads (McDowell et al. 2007; Leonard 2001). Women's earnings sometimes influence them to behave more traditionally in the home to neutralize the gender norm violation (Sevilla-Sanz et al. 2010; Menjivar 2003). In many societies negotiating the gender division of labour in the home is not accepted. As a result, many women negotiate "the gendered divisions between paid work and domestic responsibilities and between individual autonomy and the responsibilities for the family" (McDowell et al. 2007).

### **2.2.3. Alternative Gender Constructions: Class, Race and Ethnicity**

Researchers often criticize the static notions of gender and spatial divisions of labour that endorse stereotyped behaviors for all women (Donato et al. 2006). Feminist theorists problematize the notion of separating home and women from production (Hanson and Pratt 1988; 1991). This attempt is grounded in the notion that gendered divisions of labour produce gender inequality and construct women as subordinate subjects in relation to men. One body of literature criticizes the notion of separating home and women from production by emphasizing that the labour force - one of the essential components in the production process - is reproduced and sustained by reproductive work performed by women in the home (Kofman and Raghuram 2006; Marston 2000). However, the argument that production and reproduction are essentially inseparable can fail to recognize women's unpaid and voluntary reproductive work (Marston 2000). Women's unpaid work that does not generate monetary gain has continued to be seen as less important than economic production (Marston 2000).

Some interesting studies destabilize the home/workplace binary and differentiated roles of men and women by focusing on places of work where men's and women's gender roles are performed in a non-conventional manner. Three specific contexts are highlighted: women's

productive work in the home, women's employment in male-dominated sectors and men's employment in female-dominated sectors. Feminists emphasize women's paid work in the home to challenge the notion that home is only a site of reproduction (Domosh 1998). Kofman and Raghuram (2006) illustrate how immigrant women's paid domestic work in the global North constructs home as a public and a privatized space. As providers of paid reproductive labour, immigrant women not only cross geographical borders but also engage in production in the domestic sphere contradicting the notion that it is an unproductive domain (Kofman and Raghuram 2006). However, these scholars also question the extent to which the paid care work of women in the home affects gender norms (Pratt 2004, 2012; Preston and Giles 2006; Pratt and Johnston 2014)

Based on her research on Filipino care givers in Canada, Pratt (2004, 2012) suggests that although women's commodified domestic work challenges public/private divisions, the invisibility of the productivity of Filipino care givers as well as their physical invisibility often fails to establish an alternative approach to gender norms. Embodied gender norms are reinforced by the feminization of commodified reproductive work. Women are seen as appropriate for domestic service which had been performed by them in private residential spaces. Domestic work is conceptualized as the work of immigrant women who are not only women but also socio-economically marginalized and racialized subjects (Boyle 2002; Parrenas 2008). Immigrant women's paid domestic work in the homes of affluent North American families, therefore, is devalued by gender norms and by norms of race, class and citizenship (Boyle 2002; Giles et al. 2014; McDowell 2011a). Studies also demonstrate how undocumented racialized immigrant women often provide domestic care under restricted conditions (Parrenas 2008; Giles et al. 2014; Leonard 2001).

Contrary to most research that highlights the presence of women, especially racialized immigrant women, in female dominated sectors in the labour market. Raghuram (2008) focuses on the growing presence of immigrant women in the Information and Computer Technology (ICT) sector – which has been seen as a male-dominated sector. The ICT sector offers gender-neutral workplaces in which women’s labour is not constructed through the lens of feminine norms. In this sector, women’s attitudes toward paid work are not conditioned by conventional gender norms since women and men emphasize upward professional mobility. McDowell (2011a) emphasizes the increasing participation of immigrant women in the financial and banking sectors which are generally seen as male-dominated sectors in the UK. Immigrant women’s presence in male-dominated ICT and banking sectors problematizes the conventional (migrant) female identity.

The identity work of men in female-dominated sectors has also received scholarly attention. Men’s presence in female-dominated service, care and hospitality sectors reinforces the notion that conventional gender norms can be challenged and negotiated (Batnitzky et al. 2008; Leidner 1991; McDowell 2011b; Simpson 2006). Studying middle-class Indian immigrant men employed in the hospitality sector in London, Batnitzky et al. (2008) demonstrate how ascribed gender roles can be inhibited within the class structure of a particular society. They propose the notion of ‘class-based masculinities’ to explain how Indian men’s work in the feminized hospitality sector simultaneously challenges and reinforces their class-based masculine gender identity. Although working in the hospitality sector does not comply with Indian men’s masculine identity in the UK and India, their privileged class position in India influenced them to construct hotels as glamorous places to work where they can interact with celebrities. In addition, their ability to migrate to work in the UK and purchase consumer

products (i.e.; iPods and CDs) - which many Indians cannot afford - enables them to maintain their middle class position in India. Men emphasize the positive outcomes and material gains from migration to justify their work in a feminized sector in the UK. Batnitzky et al. (2008) conclude that gender roles are intertwined with class identities across places. They note that “in the context of migration and employment, signifiers of what it means to be a man or woman are tied to class and place” (p. 53). McDowell (2011b) documents how different dimensions of identity, such as gender, class, ethnicity and age affect the type and location of British white men’s employment. These studies illustrate how considering multiple identities is crucial for understanding the geographies of paid and unpaid work.

The diverse findings of these studies mirror emerging debates in the literature about place. Feminists stress that place is not a fixed, closed container but socially constructed and fluid, constituted through social meanings and power relations (Massey 1995; Knowles and Alexander 2005). At the same time, the construction of place is shaped by stable social meanings that are always contested (Ley 2004). Place stability shapes people’s idealized notions of home, workplace, neighbourhood and nation. For example, the conventional notion that women are responsible for providing care in the home contributes to the devaluation of immigrant women’s commodified care work. The stable as well as fluid and contested meanings of place mirror the competing social processes and relations that shape experiences in different workplaces (Ley 2004).

Taking on these insights, scholars argue that demarcation of places as public and private, and the artificial distinctions between them are created and naturalized through capitalist, race-based and patriarchal hegemony to exploit unpaid feminized domestic labour, the socio-institutional pillar of the capitalist wage-relation (Lawson 2007; Katz 2001; Marston 2000).

Feminists recognize that patriarchal gender relations are not the only social structure that shapes women's paid and unpaid work. Rather, gender intersects and overlaps with other social identities to influence women's experiences of paid work inside and outside the home (Pratt 2004, 2009; Hanson and Pratt 1995; Leonard 2001; Giles and Preston 1996). Feminists have increasingly drawn upon an intersectional approach to gender to explore the complex subjectivities and identities of women.

#### **2.2.4. Gender from the Lens of Intersectionality**

Intersectionality as a theoretical framework to investigate integrated identities and social differences was introduced by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989 who analyzed how the 'mutually exclusive' categorizations of race and gender marginalized black women in the USA. This process of exclusion was largely overlooked by mainstream white-feminism. Discussing how black women's experiences and struggles surrounding domestic violence and rape are overlooked by both feminist and anti-racist discourse, Crenshaw shows how 'race is gendered' and 'gender is racialized'. The intersection of these two dimensions produces qualitatively distinct experience for Black women (Crenshaw 1991, 1994). Identifying the flaws in thinking about gender and race separately, Crenshaw (ibid) argues that social categories – gender, race or class - mutually constitute, reinforce, and naturalize one another by introducing the term 'intersectionality'. The central thesis of intersectionality is that social identities/categories of differences are not additive or parallel, rather, they intersect and confirm each other producing qualitatively different signification of one's identity (Espiritu 2000). Davis (2008: 68) defines intersectionality as:

*The interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power.*

Intersectionality provides a new perspective in conceptualizing social identities. Identity in psychological terms indicates “one’s awareness of self, self-image, self-reflection and self-esteem” (Shields 2008). “Identities are individual and collective narratives that answer the question ‘who am/are I/we?’” (Yuval-Davis 2006: 197). Identity reflects both similarities with and differentiations from others. The construction of identities is both uniting and separating, often at the same time (Valentine 2007). Intersectionality implies that social identities are multiple, fluid and interrelated. In their everyday lives, people’s experience of identity do not conform to a specific either/or category or any settled positions of gender, class, race or age instead, they reflect metaphors of intersectionality – crossroads of many different identities (Wright 2013). A Black lesbian woman simultaneously represents her gender, race and sexual identities. Intersectional identities are: “not a set of discrete identities like beads on a string, but, rather, they are relationally defined and emergent” (Shields 2008: 303).

An intersectional approach to identity has profound effects on how gender is conceptualized in contemporary feminist research (McDowell 2008, 2015; Agnew 1996). Since the 1980s intersectionality has become a central theoretical lens in feminist conceptualization of gender in relation to other social categories (McCall 2005). In fact, intersectional theory emerged by recognizing the intersection of gender with race (Crenshaw 1994, 2005). Walton-Roberts (2008) suggests that focusing exclusively on gender does not allow us to comprehend the multiple identities and social processes that shape individuals’ attitudes and self-identification. Supporting this notion, Butler (1990: 3) states:

*“... gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out “gender” from the political and cultural intersections in which is it inevitably produced and maintained”*

Butler (ibid) emphasizes that gender performativity is not universal but contingent upon other social categories and socio-spatial contexts. The enactment of gender intersects with class, ethnicity, race etc. Thinking about gender performativity through intersectionality allows recognizing that an “individual’s [multiple] social identities profoundly influence one’s beliefs about and experience of gender” (Shields 2008: 301). Intersectionality, I suggest, captures the diversity in gender performativity across social and spatial contexts. Immigrant women’s commodified domestic work in the home and their presence in the male dominated ITC sector, that were discussed earlier, illustrate how gender in diverse workplaces is constituted through intersectional social positions.

One of the remarkable impacts of intersectionality on feminist theorizations of gender is the inclusion of the sociopolitical locations and standpoints of women of color which were overlooked in the early work of “white feminism” (Shields 2008; Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992; Collins 1998; Crenshaw 1994; Agnew 1996). The domination of feminist research by white middle class women led to projecting their experiences as representative of all women. The experiences of women from different positionalities in terms of class, race, religion, ethnicity and socio-cultural contexts were overlooked (Pratt 2004: 129). Postmodern/postcolonial feminists have argued that the assumption of a universal ‘women’s standpoint’ in feminist theorizing grounded in the common experience of [white] women under a patriarchal system, was insufficient to capture the complexity of women’s experience (Mohanty 1991; Spivak 1988, 1999; Kline 1991; Datta et al. 2010). For instance, white middle class educated women’s success in gaining wage employment does not reflect the experiences of working class women especially, racialized women, who face race and gender based discrimination (Anderson 1997). Intersectionality is thus crucial to examine the struggles and negotiations of non-white women

and their understandings of patriarchal and other forms of marginalization and oppression (Fennell and Arnot 2007).

The post-colonial insights are important for this research as these debates reflect the ways that visible minority immigrant women are constructed in relation to their paid and unpaid work. The value of racialized immigrant women's labour in the societies of settlement varies depending on the different ways they integrate into the labour market (McDowell 2008; 2015). Postmodern/postcolonial feminists draw on intersectionality to capture the racial and sexual boundaries that produce distinctions among women belonging to different races and classes as well as between men and women. Intersectionality on the one hand, deals with issues of difference and exclusion in feminist research and on the other hand, it offers a theoretical framework to recognize the multiple and fluid identities of women.

*'Intersectionality' addresses the most central theoretical and normative concern within feminist scholarship: namely, the acknowledgement of differences among women ... This is because it touches on the most pressing problem facing contemporary feminism – the long and painful legacy of its exclusions" (Davis 2008: 70).*

### **2.2.5. Theorization of Intersectionality**

Over the last two decades, intersectionality has been recognized as a substantial theoretical framework in social science and feminist research, even as the theoretical underpinnings of intersectionality have been subject to several criticisms. The notion of 'mutually constitutive' social categories of difference which is central to intersectional theory has been questioned by many scholars (Walby 2007; Walby et al. 2012; Acker 2006). Contrasting views have emerged about defining the mutual constitution of social categories as a crossroad - a 'road junction' where race, class gender etc. intersect (Crenshaw 1991), as 'axes' of difference (Yuval-Davis 2006) and as a fluid and dynamic process (Staunæs 2003). The most common questions ask whether 'mutually constitutive' implies that one dimension of social

category cannot exist without the other? Yuval-Davis (2006) suggests that each axis of social division has an irreducible ontological basis. For example, class, race and gender inform differing notions of categorization and are normalized in distinctive ways in specific historical, social, and cultural moments.

*“The ontological basis of each of these divisions is autonomous, and each prioritizes different spheres of social relations. [ . . . ] For example, class divisions are grounded in relation to the economic processes of production and consumption; gender should be understood not as a ‘real’ social difference between men and women, but as a mode of discourse that relates to groups of subjects whose social roles are defined by their sexual/biological difference [ . . . ]. Ethnic and racial divisions relate to discourses of collectivities constructed around exclusionary/inclusionary boundaries” (Yuval-Davis, 2006: 200-201).*

Walby (2007) asks how gender and race can be mutually constitutive while each has a distinct ontological basis. In response to this question, scholars argue that social categories are not necessarily ‘mutually constituted’ but ‘interrelated’ in particular ways in a specific social context (Acker 2006). Anthias (2012) explains that although social categories such as class, ethnicity, race and gender have different ontological basis they all “involve boundary making and hierarchy making processes” and that one’s position within one social hierarchy does not reflect his/her overall social experience since those experiences are also simultaneously shaped by his/her other social positioning. Valentine (2007: 13) adds that ‘we may think of race, class and gender as different social structures’ that ‘individual people experience simultaneously’. The intersectional position of black women in term of gender and race (Crenshaw 1991) mirrors this simultaneity in identification and differentiation.

Drawing on a social constructionist approach, scholars suggest a context dependent and fluid co-construction of social categories takes place in myriad ways and cannot be defined by fixed intersections (Anthias 2012; Warner 2008). For example, white lesbian women can be marginalized in relation to heterosexual norms in the society yet they can enjoy racial privilege

over heterosexual and lesbian women of color. A migrant woman can be oppressed in terms of race, but enjoy class privilege based on economic status in the country of origin – which situates her within contrasting social locations across national boundaries (Anthias 2012). Warner (2008) claims that intersectionality does not imply static social structures; rather, it examines the experiences of social categories in which individuals are active agents in the construction and maintenance of such categories. It is important to note that intersectionality with all its complexities provides theoretical insights into a wide range of social processes shaping differences in paid and unpaid work of women including immigrant women.

#### **2.2.6. Placing Intersectionality**

Feminist geographers have argued that place, like gender, race or ethnicity, should be considered in intersectional analysis (Valentine 2007; McDowell 2008; McDowell et al. 2007; Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996; Gunnerud 1997). Valentine (2007) and McDowell (2008) are the pioneers who illustrate how everyday places play a part in the intersectional positioning of subjects. Describing intersectionality as ‘situated accomplishments’, they argue that an individual’s multiple identities are established and negotiated in relation to particular places (ibid).

Valentine (2007) tracks the lived experiences of Jeannette, a deaf woman, in different locations: home, school, Deaf Club and workplaces to illustrate how her identities in relation to gender, class, sexuality and disability, are constituted differently in different places. Her presence in these places exposed her to various power relations vis-a-vis dominant groups who normalized their ‘ways of being’ in those places by perpetuating hegemonic social norms. Her identity negotiations have not occurred in a vacuum. Instead different intersections of her identities emerged and transformed in differentially constructed places. In the home, her gender identity as

a woman, a wife and a mother shaped her social identity. While gender relations in the home exposed her to domestic violence, in the Deaf Club her gender roles become less relevant and she felt powerful as a Deaf woman. Drawing on Jeannette's experiences, Valentine insists that "space and identities are co-implicated" and that our "... ability to enact some identities or realities rather than others is highly contingent on the power-laden spaces in and through which our experiences are lived" (Valentine 2007: 19). Integration of place in intersectional analysis, Valentine suggests, can contribute to understanding how identities take shape and acquire meanings, and are lived by individuals.

The significance of 'place' in studying intersectionality is also emphasized by Rodó-de-Zárate (2014) who explores the experience of oppression and privilege of men and women in different places in Manresa city in Spain. By focusing on individuals' lived experiences in everyday spaces: home, neighbourhood, streets and parks, she shows how gender, class, race intersect differently in each space and how an individual's experiences are contingent on the nature of place and power relations in them. She produces 'Relief Maps' to visually show how different intersections take shape across different places and produces geographies of fear and relief for men and women. Rodó-de-Zárate (2014) notes that "when place is situated at the centre, the analysis is always situated in a determined context, avoiding universalization but allowing at the same time relationships with other different contexts". She provides an example of a Muslim Moroccan woman, Laila, who identifies her home as a place of oppression and the cafeteria (far from her home in Barcelona) as a neutral place and a place where she feels less restricted. Since her spatial mobility is constrained in her neighborhood where the majority are Moroccan Muslims, she seeks places where she can enjoy friends without any restrictions. The study captures her experiences in and perceptions about different places and problematizes

hegemonic notions about Muslim women that often overlook their agency in navigating places outside the home.

McDowell (2008) stresses that placing ‘workplace’ at the forefront of intersectional analysis permits investigating how cultural ideologies and beliefs about gender, race, ethnicity etc. “produce active, acting and differentiated subjects in particular places” (McDowell 2008: 494).

*“It is clear that constructions of difference – whether based on class, race, nationality, language or skin colour – are produced and maintained through practices that operate at and across different spatial scales. These practices include ideological assumptions, multiple regulatory systems, structures of power and domination and spoken and enacted everyday practices in multiple sites, operating at both conscious and unconscious levels and open to contestation and renegotiation” (McDowell 2008: 496).*

Datta (2008: 191) points out how one becomes a situated subject through discursive processes by interacting with others within a spatial context:

*“The significance of place in constructing gendered identities is partly based on our self positioning within categories of gender, class, religion, ethnicity, and so on, and partly due to the way differences between bodies in these places are perceived through representative aspects – attire (clothing, accessories), voice (dialects, language, accents), or behaviour (demeanour, eye contact) that are ‘read’ as indelible signs of the ‘natural’ positions of these bodies within social hierarchies”.*

In this study, intersectionality refers to the socially constructed co-constitution of social identities that takes forms in a particular manner at a specific location reflecting specific power dynamics of domination and marginalization (Shields 2008; Valentine 2007; Warner 2008). I argue that a geographic approach to intersectional gender identity/performativity is crucial to understand racialized immigrant women’s paid work and household responsibilities, and the ways in which they negotiate gender norms (McDowell 1993). With this note, I now turn to literature that explores ethnic and racial minority immigrant women’s identities, their socio-

economic integration in societies of settlement and how their paid and reproductive work inform the debates surrounding the private/public binary. The discussion highlights empirical studies that document racialized immigrant women's diverse experiences of wage work and unpaid work and how their identities influence their workplaces.

### **2.3. Identity, Place and Work: Focus on Racialized Immigrant Women**

A critical enquiry into racialized immigrant women's multiple social positions is essential since women who cross geographic borders also cross multiple social boundaries – ethnic, racial, class, gender, religion – through their migration and settlement in the host society (Nash 2008; Bastia 2014). 'Culture' and identity acquire a new significance for immigrant women who are transformed into ethnic and racial minorities in the immigrant society (Anitha et al. 2012). Migration to a new place exposes many women to new forms of gender and race/ethnicity based discrimination that affect their sense of belonging (McDowell et al. 2007). Research findings indicate that the productive and reproductive work of immigrant women in the places of settlement involves both continuity and change in their intersectional positions, and negotiation and re-negotiation of gender roles in the labour market, in the family, and in the ethnic community (McDowell 2008; Donato et al. 2006; Krummel 2014).

Immigrant women's identities influence their paid work and the locations and attributes of their workplaces. Racialized immigrant women's labour market integration is often marked by institutionalized discrimination (Galabuzi 2006; Ng 1990). Research conducted in the USA, UK, Canada and Australia finds that visible minority immigrant women are likely to experience discrimination in obtaining employment and that this discrimination is especially attributable to their racial minority status (Ho 2006; McDowell 2008; Bauder 2003; Purkayastha 2005; Gupta 2009; Agnew 1996). Often their embodied racial and cultural attributes: skin color, accent and

dress are constructed as less desirable in jobs especially in specific service sectors - where “human capital, self-discipline and consumer power are associated with whiteness” (Ong1996 cited in McDowell 2011c). Systemic and structural racism such as the lack of recognition of international credentials and work experience is a major challenge that immigrant women face in getting access to stable and well paid employment in Canada (Gupta 2009; Man 2004; Bauder 2003; McDowell 2008; Akbar 2009; Preston and Giles 1997). Research evidence demonstrates that visible minority immigrant women are one of the disadvantaged groups in the Canadian labour market (Hiebert 1997; Grant 2007; Pendakur 2000). They are much more likely than Canadian-born women to be manual workers, and earn less at their jobs than Canadian-born women (Hiebert 1997; Tastsoglou and Preston 2005; Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2005: 50 & 56).

Racialized women who are highly educated and skilled professionals experience de-skilling in the formal labour market after migration (Meraj 2015). Several studies document how immigrant women - Indian women in the USA (Purkayastha 2005), and Chinese women in Canada (Man 2004) and Australia (Ho 2006) - experience de-skilling. Mojab (1999) studying immigrant women from 30 countries explores how de-skilling processes and the resulting downward social mobility affect women’s careers and their psychological health in Toronto. Due to non-recognition of their foreign credentials women end up doing manual and unstable low paid jobs. McDowell (2008) highlights how women from Third World societies are constructed as backward and incompatible with modern ‘western’ women in the UK. This multilayered intersectionality contributes to the representation of racialized immigrant women’s presence in low-paid job sectors and their working class social location in societies of settlement (McDowell 2008; Mojab 1999). As discussed earlier, a few studies that emphasize visible minority

immigrant women's presence in 'high-skilled' and high-paid job sectors provide a counter narrative (Raghuram 2008; Kofman and Raghuram 2005). However scholars, agree that minority women's presence in high-paid/skilled job sectors is nominal compared to their concentration in low-paid and feminized job sectors (Man 2004; Raghuram 2008). For many racialized immigrant women the workplace is associated with exclusion and discrimination. Studies report that immigrant female nurses in the UK and the USA experience hostile behavior on the part of their co-workers and employers (Allan et al. 2009; Diccico-Bloom 2004). Similar types of workplace discrimination are experienced by racialized immigrant women in Canada (Gupta 1999, 2009). Studying Iranian women in Canada, Dossa (2004) found that religious markers, such as wearing headscarf, often intensify 'Othering' of immigrant women in workplaces.

Negative experiences in workplaces often influence racialized immigrant women's gender roles in the home (Meraj 2015). Research shows that women often accept an unequal gender division of household labour in response to the social marginalization they experience in places of settlement. Along with socio-economic marginalization, the construction of minority immigrant women's identities and social locations as inferior to, and distinct from, the mainstream population in North American and European societies, drives them towards social exclusion and isolation from mainstream society, and reduces their capacity to participate effectively in many aspects of everyday life (Dobrowolsky and Tastsoglou 2006; Saloojee 2003; Man 2004). Such exclusion influences women's "need to construct positive idealized representations of gender" and ethnic identity often by constructing themselves as chaste, virtuous and self-sacrificing wives (Mahalingam et al. 2008). Due to their marginalization, women often adopt 'traditional' gender roles; juggling the double burdens of paid and reproductive work and in certain cases tolerating domestic violence to maintain a positive

gender-ethnic identity (ibid). Idealization of women and adolescent girls as virtuous, and more family oriented than 'western' women has been observed among Indian families in the US (Mahalingam and Haritatos 2006), Pakistani families in the UK (Mohammad 2005a, 2005b) and Moroccan families in the Netherlands (Buitelaar 2002). These studies emphasize the intersections of gender with other identities to reflect on the essentialist assumptions that frequently homogenize minority immigrant women's identities and their paid and unpaid work in the home and in the formal labour market.

Another thread of scholarship illustrates how migration increases women's responsibility for household work and child care. Gendered processes of migration significantly influence the links between women's productive and reproductive work in and outside the home post migration. Women often play secondary roles in migration decisions in the family and follow their husbands as 'tied' migrants to support the advancement of their husband's career (Shihadeh 1991; Dion and Dion 2001). Women are expected to do the social reproductive and care work essential to re-settle in the host society. The loss of familial supports and paid domestic help that they enjoyed in their home countries intensifies immigrant women's domestic responsibilities (Guo 2009). Increased responsibilities in the home resulting from an unequal division of labor often limit women's physical mobility, their development of language and employment skills and their employment options (Guo 2009; Man 2004; Meares 2010). Their participation in wage employment most often fails to challenge and change gendered norms regarding the division of household labour (Menjivar 1999). Others counter that, though migration is a gendered process, women do exercise agency and actively participate in migration and settlement decisions (Wong 2003, 2006). For example, researching Ghanaian immigrant women in Toronto, Wong (2003)

describes how they played active roles in the decision to migrate and utilized friendship and kinship ties to overcome social and economic marginalization in Toronto.

Several scholars also focus on the diverse ways immigrant families re-organize gender divisions of labour within the home and re-negotiate gendered expectations and responsibilities relating to family roles (Dion and Dion 2001; Mahalingam et al. 2008). For example, Menjivar (1999) investigates the effects of immigration on gender relations by studying Central American couples in the US. She finds that the changes in gender roles among men and women in relation to paid and unpaid domestic work have contradictory impacts on women's lives. Women's entry into wage labour on the one hand, improves their status in the family and on the other hand, increases their responsibilities for household work. While, women's paid employment provides them with financial security, it unsettles their conventional caregiver roles which they often maintained before migration. The violation of gender roles affects couples' marital relations. To maintain stable relations with their husbands, women take sole responsibility for household work. By performing their expected gender roles in the home, women compensate for the violation of gender norms surrounding paid employment post migration.

In another study, comparing upper middle-class and working-class Chinese immigrant women in New York, Zhou (2000) reveals that, shaped by class locations, gender relations in a family are likely to evolve on multiple paths. Working Chinese women who become middle class after migration, quit their jobs and moved from an 'egalitarian' to 'traditional' gender arrangement. In contrast, working-class Chinese immigrant women, who contributed to the family income, gained more freedom and power in family decisions, establishing an egalitarian division of household labour. The studies highlight crucial alterations in the connections between immigrant women's productive and reproductive work in their workplaces and homes.

### **2.3.1. Immigrant Women's Paid Work at Home**

Racialized immigrant women are most often seen as appropriate for low-paid domestic, care, and cleaning related occupations (Raghuram 2008; Pratt 2004; Giles et al. 2014); these are tasks that educated middle class women transfer to working class immigrant women (Leonard 2001; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1997). Pratt (1998) demonstrates how the gendered and racialized marginalization of immigrant women of color is reinforced by the feminization of commodified reproductive work in Canada. The integration of non-European immigrant women as domestic laborers is also observed throughout Europe (Andall 1992; Anderson 1997; Romaniszyn 1996). As stated earlier, most often women's productive domestic work is not considered 'real' work due to gendered notions of workplaces. Immigrant women's productive care-work in the homes of affluent families is downplayed illustrating how their gender, racial and class locations intersect with the location of paid work (Pratt 1998; D'Addario 2012; Giles et al. 2014).

While some minority immigrant women perform paid work in the homes of middle and upper class women, others bring paid work into their own homes. Traditionally, home-based work was low-skilled manufacturing and service activities. The increased informalization and domestication of paid-work in North America and West Europe influence immigrant women's entry into home-based work (Mitter 1985; Leonard 2001; Silver 1993). Well-paid white collar and computer aided jobs are increasingly taking place at home (Leonard 2001). Homeworking is shaped by gendered norms. Research reveals that women are more likely than men to engage in home-based low-paid, often informal income generating activities (Nelson 1999). The construction of immigrant women as a flexible and easily exploitable workforce means they often have limited alternatives to home-based work. As a result women of color often perform labour intensive and poorly paid tasks from their homes to obtain an income (Mitter 1985).

Homeworking introduces a new form of connection between work and family responsibilities (Mirchandani 2000). In certain cases immigrant women become home-workers to balance the family's need for income and the demands of household work (Leonard 2001; Giles and Preston 1996; Ng 1991). Immigrant women reconcile their financial needs and their roles as mothers and wives by becoming home workers. Leonard (2001: 74) argues that "[the] perceived primacy of familial responsibility and the cultural construction of feminine roles encourage many women into accepting homework as a form of employment that can be organized "conveniently" around their household chores". Scholars argue that although women's productive/paid-work in the home blurs the interface between public and private, and production and reproduction, it fails to challenge conventional gender norms. Mirchandani (2000: 368) notes that "women's greater proximity to the home may further entrench the assumed divisions of family work".

Immigrant women's experiences of homework, however, are not homogenous. They may differ across ethnic groups. Comparing the home-based work of Chinese and Portuguese immigrant women, Giles and Preston (1996) outline how the overlaps between paid work and family relations in the home influence gender relations between married couples. Unlike the husbands of Chinese women, the husbands of Portuguese women support their work by helping them with domestic chores. As a result, Chinese women are less satisfied than Portuguese women about their home-based paid work. While immigrant women's experiences differ, their home-work "demonstrates the extent to which expectations surrounding women's domestic roles continue to influence the circumstances under which they are brought into paid employment" (Leonard 2001: 72).

The literature indicates that immigrant women negotiate their gendered/ racialized/ ethnicized/ classed identities and the gendered private/public spatial dichotomy in myriad ways at home and in formal workplace. Their varied identity negotiations shape their paid and unpaid reproductive work in the home and in formal workplaces.

### **2.3.2. Identity, Place and Work: A Focus on Muslim Immigrant Women**

Muslims in North America and Europe have become a stigmatized racial group particularly after the 9/11 2001 terrorist attacks in the US and 7/7 2006 bombings in the UK. A series of terrorist attacks in France and other European countries that followed these two major events have intensified 'Islamophobia' all over the world. After these violent events, Muslim as a master category of identification has gained prominence in debates on racial and ethnic diversity in North America and Europe (Modood and Ahmad 2007; Guveli and Platt 2011; Moghissi and Ghorashi 2016). Though Islam is a diverse religion that encompasses various ethnicities, Muslims have been ethnicized as a homogenous group in many North American and European societies (Jain 2011; Mohammad 1999; Guveli and Platt 2011). Recently, in electronic and print media, Muslims are treated as a homogenous mass and Islam has become a symbol of race (Hamel 2002; Modood and Ahmad 2007; Ahmad and Evergeti 2010). The veil has become one of the visible markers of Islam, for it is seen as a symbol of gender oppression and separation of women from 'public' domains (Williamson and Khiabany 2010; Al-saji 2010). Muslim women are often essentialized by imposing a cultural binary of passive Muslim women vs. independent women (Hoodfar 1997; Hamel 2002). It is argued that while Muslims are more divided than unified in many ways, the questions of women's engagement in paid work and their presence outside the home are central to almost all Islamic societies (Mohammad 1999, 2013; Moghissi 2007; Gokariksel 2009). However, scholars express contrasting opinions about the ways in

which Islamic practices influence women's paid work and their presence outside the home (Moghissi 2007; Dwyer 2008; Ruby 2006; McGrawn 1999; Mohammad 2005a and 2005b).

One branch of literature suggests that Islamist worldviews influence Muslim women's physical mobility outside the home, their appearance and conduct and gender relations in general (Norton et al. 1997; Mernissi 1987, 1995; Mohammad 1999; Amin and Thrift 2002). How gender should be done is one of the core concepts of Islam which indicates "how women and men make their femininities and masculinities known to themselves and to each other, through saying and doing things in specific instances" (Torab 1996: 238). Some scholars take a critical stand toward Islamic prescriptions regarding women. They argue that the Islamic notion that men's masculinity is associated with honor and 'public' life and women's femininity is associated with shame, chastity and modesty informs the justification of separate spheres for women and men (Mohammad 2005b).

In the context of migration, as Moghissi (2006) suggests, transformation of identities often drives Muslims towards more conservative practices. The loss of previous social positions and minority status in the countries of settlement encourage Muslims to emphasize cultural and religious practices which allow them to identify with a larger Muslim 'ummah' (community). Faced by racism and marginalization, Muslims communities – who are diverse in their religious practices in their homeland – often, develop strong associations with Islam in post migration context. For many migrant Muslims, Islam becomes a defining factor in the destination country though Muslims differ ethnically, culturally, linguistically, nationally, and religiously (Moghissi 2006; Siraj 2011; Mohammad 2013). The tendency to adopt conservative Islam among Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigrants and the second generation has been observed in the USA (Kibria 2008, 2011), the UK (Dale et al. 2002; Kibria 2008) and Canada (Islam 1997; Halder 2012).

These studies indicate how Islamic symbols and practices in immigrant Muslim communities are consolidated and their consequences for women and their work lives. In general, migrant communities constrain women's engagement in paid work especially their paid work outside the home (Ghorashi 2005; Mohammad 1999).

Studying Pakistani immigrant women in Britain, Mohammad (1999; 2005a and 2005b) finds that Pakistani Muslim identity is constituted in opposition to 'the west'. For the Pakistani community "the representation of spaces as masculine or feminine is central to group identity" as it allows them to preserve the chastity of women who are assumed to be the bearers of collective/community identity as the mothers of future generations. Mohammad (1999) illustrates how the assertion of such a collective identity is manifested by re-enforcing the conventional gendered dichotomies of space and maintaining a public/private boundary. Pakistani immigrant women's 'gender' roles are often policed and monitored in particular locations especially outside the home by imposing Islamic dress codes such as the veil/hijab<sup>19</sup> (ibid; Afshar 1989; Hiro 1991). Community surveillance as well as parental regulations seek to control and limit women's access to particular spaces (such as, educational centers, labour market) that are perceived as a threat to Islamic ideology.

By veiling women, men establish their supremacy and commitment to Islamic ideologies. As such, veiling is a symbol of masculine control and regulation of women (Mernissi 1987; Mohammad 1999; Dwyer 2000). By wearing the veil/hijab immigrant Muslim women often adopt a defensive denial of self and sexual identities and secure their class and gender identities

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<sup>19</sup> The veil refers to the clothing which covers and conceals the body from head to ankles, with the exception of the face and hands and feet ... in recent times, the most frequent form of veiling in most cities is a long loosely fitted dress of any color combination, worn with a scarf wrapped in various ways ... the veil has been varied and has been subject to changing fashions throughout past and present history. Moreover, like other articles of clothing, the veil may be worn for multiple reasons. It may be worn to beautify the wearer, ... to demonstrate respect for conventional values, or to hide wearer's identity (Hoodfar 1997:7).

in the community (ibid). Adopting the hijab/veil women also provokes further marginalization and exclusion ‘outside’ their own communities where they are seen through an ‘Orientalist’ gaze - as subordinated and backward (Said 1979; Mohammad 1999). These social processes influence Muslim women’s spatial mobility, their access to employment opportunities and other social supports, and ultimately their ability to overcome social and labour market barriers (Mohammad 1999; Dale et al. 2002; Dale 2008; Dale and Ahmed 2008; Aston et al. 2007).

Researching Bangladeshi immigrants in Toronto, Halder (2012: 206) illustrates how Bangladeshi Muslim women who wear a *burqa* or *hijab*<sup>20</sup> identify themselves with “a global Islamic womanhood which is more powerful compared to their ethnic ... identities in Canada”. Women may wear the hijab as a response to patriarchal norms. In Bangladeshi immigrant communities in the UK and Canada, women are expected to be modest, submissive and virtuous by adopting the hijab (Mies 1986; Gardner 1995; Halder 2012). Halder (2012) also observed that Bangladeshi immigrants in Toronto re-produced gendered social relations that they practiced in ‘public and ‘private’ spaces in Bangladesh in order to maintain their religious, cultural and gender identities. Bangladeshi Muslims in Toronto maintain gender segregated socialization inside and outside the home. Their approach to paid work is also shaped by Islamic and patriarchal notions of work and place. They are expected to be ideal “house wives”, “good mothers”, “monogamous virtuous women”, and proper “married women” (Mies 1986). Peer pressure and social expectations affect their involvement in paid work outside the home. Bangladeshi women whose husbands earned enough money to support the family were

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<sup>20</sup> Hijab is a head-covering scarf that Muslim women wear to represent their modesty, morality and religious identity, whereas Burqa refers to a full body covering dress that many Muslim women wear to go to public space. It represents the modesty of a Muslim woman (Halder 2012: 47-48).

discouraged from doing paid work outside the home so that they maintained their status as devoted wives.

While these studies provide a stereotypical image of Muslim women, other studies interpret the lives of Muslim immigrant women differently. Abu-Lughod (1986) suggests that there are gaps between what ideally Muslim women should do and what they do in reality. Muslim women's increased participation in education and employment where they share 'public' spheres with men indicates their resistance to conservative ideas and practices. Muslim women challenge the dichotomy between honor and shame by being in 'public' spheres. They often negotiate the religious values that reinforce their social marginalization through feminist interpretation of Islamic principles (Hoodfar 1997; Bartkowski and Read 2003). One thread of feminist interpretation claims that covering the hair is not sanctioned in Islam but it has been a custom in Arab culture since the pre-Islamic period (Ali 2005; Mernissi 1987, 1995).

A few scholars have a positive view of the veil/hijab. Hoodfar (1997), outlining diverse meanings of the veil, argues that the veiling of Muslim women holds various cultural and religious implications, rather than being solely a sign of oppression. She insists that wearing the veil often allows Muslim women to negotiate masculine spaces. In the same way, Ruby (2006) draws on a study of Pakistani Muslim women in Canada, to illustrate the ways in which women negotiate places within and outside Muslim concentrations. She argues that women protect themselves from the male gaze in a sexist society by covering their beauty and sexuality. Like Ruby (2006), Tiilikainen (2003) argues that Somali women in Finland embrace the 'veil' as a marker of their religious identity. By emphasizing that they adopt the 'veil' by their own will, Muslim women construct the 'veil' as a sign of their agency. Empirical studies show that Muslim women most often do not perceive the 'veil' as a boundary between them and the public spheres

rather they construct the veil as a means to enter into gender-biased ‘public’ space, gain respect in the community, and practice modesty (Abu-Lughod 2006; Papanek 1982; McGrown 1999).

The contrasting views regarding Muslim immigrant women’s identities and their presence outside the home are shaped by the broader socio-cultural contexts within which the identities of women are understood, made and negotiated. For example, Muslim women in North America and Europe encounter social, cultural and economic contexts that affect their physical mobility outside the home and participation in paid work. Even though feminists are increasingly recognizing the multiple and overlapping subjectivities of Muslim immigrant women, the spatial patterns of their paid work and its link to their reproductive work remain debated. How the ‘veil/hijab’ influences the spatial practices of Muslim women is disputed in the literature (Siraj 2011).

I argue that locations and sites are important to understand the diverse social processes of Muslim immigrant women’s paid work. How Muslim immigrant women negotiate Islamic and patriarchal norms to carry out paid work outside the home reflects their diverse identities. Their home-based paid work, which is generally invisible from ‘public’ eyes, represents an “interface of productive and reproductive resources and spaces” (Giles and Preston 1996). At this ‘interface’, how women organize their paid and unpaid work is crucial for understanding their identity negotiations (Giles and Preston 1996). Drawing on Muslim Bangladeshi immigrant women’s experiences in ethnic entrepreneurship, the research demonstrates how identities are constructed through and in relation to the locations of women’s paid and unpaid work. My research explores Muslim Bangladeshi immigrant women’s identities and experiences of paid work - in the home and outside the home – and how they negotiate gender roles and norms surrounding paid and reproductive work.

## 2.4. Immigrant Women and Ethnic Entrepreneurship

Ethnic entrepreneurship has been widely discussed since the mid-1970s when scholars noticed that self-employment was higher among minority immigrant populations than native born populations in North America and Europe (Lofstrom 2002, 2004; Light 1972; Hou and Wang 2011; Li 1997, 2001). Self-employment has been recognized as an important factor in reducing unemployment among immigrants in Canada (Li 1997; Green et al. 2016; Abada et al. 2014). A branch of literature has emerged to explore and describe the nature and characteristics of immigrant and minority ethnic entrepreneurship (Light 1972, 1984; Light and Bonacich 1988; Light et al. 1993). Ethnic entrepreneurship is generally considered as a self-organizing institution propelled by social capital - reciprocal obligations and ethnic solidarity - through which ethnic minorities create business ventures and improve their socio-economic positions.

Ethnic businesses are most often distinguished from mainstream businesses based on their orientation towards ethnic products, ethnic markets and customers, and indigenous ethnic business strategies (Light 1972, 1984). In contrast, recent studies show that orientation towards ethnic markets, consumers and products is not a defining factor for all ethnic businesses (Lo 2006, 2009b; Ram et al. 2000). Highlighting diversity in ethnic businesses, scholars criticize the general assumption that immigrants and ethnic minorities operate businesses differently than the native born and ethnic majority population (Levie and Smallbone 2006). Carter et al. (2015) argue that by adding the label 'ethnic' to minority operated businesses, scholars accept the fact that ethnic minorities are constructed differently by the wider population on the basis of their racial and cultural attributes. As Aldrich and Waldinger (1990: 112) state:

*"... what is ethnic about ethnic enterprise may be no more than a set of connections and regular patterns of interaction among people sharing common national background or migratory experience".*

Another branch of studies emphasizes the importance of ethnicity to define minority businesses. Levie and Smallbone (2006) note that racial and ethnic minorities may face distinct barriers (such as difficulties in getting bank loans and accessing business ownership) to start and operate businesses which native born and ethnic majorities do not face. Li (1997, 2000) found that the reason for adopting entrepreneurship differs between racialized and non-racialized population in Canada. While non-racialized populations start businesses to increase their earnings, racialized populations often start businesses to overcome labour market barriers and compensate for the low income from paid employment. Many racialized immigrants become self-employed to combat financial difficulties resulting from unemployment and underemployment (Light and Bonacich 1988). Using the Canadian Employer-Employee Dynamics Database (CEEDD), Green et al. (2016) found that immigrant owned businesses tend to be smaller<sup>21</sup> and younger than Canadian-owned firms. In addition, residential segregation and cultural distance from the 'Others' in the destination country are seen as key elements for the emergence of ethnic minority entrepreneurship (Aldrich and Waldinger 1990; Light 1972, 1984; Light and Bonacich 1988). The social and spatial processes that influence the emergence of ethnic businesses often differ from those affecting mainstream businesses (Levie and Smallbone 2006). Some researchers argue that race/ethnicity plays an important role in shaping immigrant and minority businesses (Aldrich and Waldinger 1990; Levie and Smallbone 2006).

In recent studies, ethnic entrepreneurship refers to businesses that are owned and operated by ethnic minorities (Lo 2006, 2009a; Carter et al. 2015). Focusing on ethnicity allows scholars to recognize and explore the distinct experiences and challenges that ethnic minorities face when establishing and operating businesses. In accord with this notion, I defined

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<sup>21</sup> Green et al. (2016) measured business size based on the number of employees in incorporated and unincorporated businesses.

Bangladeshi women operated businesses as ethnic businesses to understand their entrepreneurship experiences in Toronto. However, I agree with Carter et al. (2015) that the term ‘ethnic’ needs to be deconstructed and used critically. This study analyzes ethnic entrepreneurship theories using a feminist approach which is not discussed much in the ethnic entrepreneurship literature. The study emphasizes that the functions of ethnic businesses cannot be properly understood without recognizing how ethnicity intersects with other social dimensions such as gender, class and religion in the varied socio-spatial contexts of entrepreneurship. Examples from empirical studies are discussed to establish that ethnic minorities’ multiple social positions and the characteristics and locations of their businesses conjointly shape their entrepreneurship experiences.

Ethnic entrepreneurship is overwhelmingly constructed as a ‘masculine’ domain – a male dominated and paternalistic labour process in which women’s contributions are often overlooked (Light 1980; Mirchandani 1999; Hillman 1999; Maitra 2013). Though migrant women’s involvement in ethnic entrepreneurship may challenge traditional notions of gender, until recently women’s diverse experiences of ethnic entrepreneurship often remained in the background. Women first appear in the ethnic entrepreneurship literature at the beginning of the 1980s when several studies documented immigrant women’s roles in family businesses in ethnic concentrations/enclaves (Morokvasic 1991; Hillman 1999). Most studies defined unpaid family labour as one of the secret ingredients for the survival and success of ethnic small businesses and explored the unpaid family labour which is provided often by female family members.

Based on a comparative study of ethnic entrepreneurship in five European countries Morokvasic (1991) describes women’s roles as ‘hidden partners’ who provide unpaid labour for the survival and success of the businesses run by men. Women’s hidden roles in family

businesses are often seen as an extension of patriarchal family relations to the work sphere. Research suggested that wives' contributions to family businesses took several forms: managing the household, working in the business, being employed by others, and holding outside employment (Morokvasic 1991). In most cases, women's informal roles in the business, their financial contributions and their unpaid work in the domestic sphere remained in the background and their roles in the businesses remained unacknowledged (Frishkoff and Brown 1993; Marshack 1994). Despite their significant active roles and economic contributions to family businesses many immigrant women – such as Korean women in Toronto (Kwak 2003) - do not challenge the traditional gender relations in the family that place men in a position of power. As a result, an unequal gendered division of labour remains intact in the home.

In later studies particularly in the 1990s, scholars shifted their focus from women's voluntary work in family businesses to sole business ownership and their more visible roles. Most studies that focus on women's entrepreneurship experience however, have used the 'masculine work norm' to evaluate women's entrepreneurial behaviour (Mirchandani 1999). For example, research demonstrates that unlike men, women are concentrated in feminized retail and service sectors with lower financial outcomes and they generally depend on other co-ethnic women to access social capital and consumer markets (Anthias 2007; Anna et al. 2000). These studies underestimate women's diverse business experiences by accepting "men's labour as the general standard for understanding women's work" (Kobayashi et al. 1994: 15; Mirchandani 1999: 227). In addition, the homogenous representation of immigrant women's entrepreneurial orientation fails to capture how their multiple identities, and varied business characteristics and locations intersect to shape their business experiences (Apitzsch 2003; Kontos 2003; Pio 2007, 2010). This lack of recognition of women's distinct ways of operating ethnic businesses in the

earlier literature is to some extent influenced by the major theoretical notions of ethnic entrepreneurship that exclusively highlight the experiences of male entrepreneurs (Dallalfar 1994).

#### **2.4.1. A Reflection on Theories of Ethnic Entrepreneurship**

Scholars in North America and Europe have proposed a number of theoretical explanations to describe the features of ethnic entrepreneurship over the last four decades. Among these theories, blocked mobility theory, cultural theory, interactional theory and mixed embeddedness theory gained prominence. These theories emphasize the experiences of male entrepreneurs. Blocked mobility theory highlights the barriers experienced by minority groups in accessing employment opportunities in the labour market due to racism or lack of language and other skills and identifies entrepreneurship as an alternative option for survival (Light 1972, 1979, 1980, 1984; Bonacich and Modell 1980; Min 1988). Entrepreneurship is recognized as an economic adaptation for racialized ethnic groups who were excluded from the mainstream labour market or who had to take up low-end and temporary jobs in the places of settlement (Waldinger and Aldrich 1990; Light and Rosenstein 1995; de Raijman 1996). In blocked mobility theory, entrepreneurship is a source of upward social mobility and a route to escape un- or underemployment (Ram and Jones 1998).

##### **2.4.1.1. *Cultural Theory***

A major question arose when scholars noticed that not all ethnic minorities adopt entrepreneurship as an alternative employment option. Blocked mobility theory does not address the social processes that determine why entrepreneurship is more common among certain ethnic groups (for example, the Chinese, Korean, Jewish, South Asian and particular European immigrant groups) than others (for example, visible-minority groups from the Philippine,

Caribbean and Africa) (Teixeira 2001; Uneke 1994). In answering this question scholars shifted their attention to the cultural attributes of minority ethnic groups. The theory of embeddedness<sup>22</sup> - proposed by sociologist Polanyi in 1944 - recognizes how the functions of ethnic businesses are connected to social capital and socio-institutional structures of particular ethnic groups (Bonacich and Modell 1980; Granovetter 1985, 2005; Light 1972). Drawing on embeddedness theory, the cultural approach to ethnic entrepreneurship emphasizes the importance of social capital in the emergence and survival of ethnic businesses.

The mobilization of social capital is generally considered a collective activity through which ethnic entrepreneurs utilize social relations to gain economic opportunities by drawing on family, kin, and co-ethnic relations for labor, customers and capital (Waldinger 1986; Lo 2009; Light 2004; Zhou 2004; Bonacich and Modell 1980; Li 1997). Ethnic resources such as group solidarity, reciprocity and enforceable trust among group members are the foundations of ethnic networks. Bounded solidarity forms on the basis of shared cultural practices, shared minority status and common experiences of a place (Zhou 2004). Racialization often raises immigrants' consciousness regarding their own identities, cultural practices and symbols. As a result, mutual obligation develops among co-ethnic owners, employees and clientele (ibid). Group solidarity allows ethnic minorities to start and operate a business in the countries of settlement even if they possess limited economic and financial capital (Fairchild 2010; Light 2004).

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<sup>22</sup> Analyses using the concept of embeddedness focus on the different conditions within which various modes of social action take place and upon which they depend. Most prominently, the economic historian Karl Polanyi argued that the functioning of an economy could not be understood disassociated from the social world in which it was embedded. Specific organizations and institutions, and ultimately the economy as a whole, need to be understood as parts of larger, historically derived, institutional, or social structures. More generally, the concept of embeddedness helps describe and explain how, although they each seemingly follow their own distinct logics and rules, different surrounding institutions and contexts interact and may complement or conflict with each other.

Settlement patterns of minority ethnic groups and the emergence of ethnic businesses are often interwoven (Hou 2009). The central focus of cultural theory has been the residential concentrations where the proximity and cohesion of co-ethnics is thought to create a favorable environment for the emergence of ethnic businesses. Ethnic enclaves (i.e.; China town, Little India, Little Italy, Little Havana, Curry Mile) which are visible in the cities of many ‘western’ countries are defined “as a social system of families, neighbours, friends, and acquaintances that engage in ethnic employment and consumption” (Lo 2009b). Enclave businesses exemplify the expected relationships between place and ethnic entrepreneurship (Gunnerud 1997). The socio-cultural environment in the ethnic concentrations facilitates<sup>23</sup> the emergence of niche markets for ethnic goods and services particularly at the interface of the two cultures that new-comers confront on an everyday basis.

Cultural embeddedness theory is criticized for focusing solely on ethnic ties and relations and constructing the ethnic economy as an isolated sphere developed independently apart from the socio-economic structures of the host country (Kloosterman et al. 1999; Fairchild 2010; Rath 2002). Dependency on ethnic resources particularly on ethnic networks is often seen as a barrier to the advancement and expansion of the businesses (Deakins et al. 2007). Businesses in ethnic concentrations which are exclusively dependent on ethnic ties are also prone to tough competition for markets and resources and are rarely sustained for a long time (Kloosterman et

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<sup>23</sup> Research also shows that ethnic networks are equally important for ethnic businesses located outside the enclave. For example Jews, Cubans, Chinese, and Japanese immigrants successfully operate businesses in the wider market by taking advantage of social networks. Co-ethnics can create business opportunities by their contacts despite living in separate places as relationship with members of similar group can be build based on shared identity rather than shared place. However, ethnic concentrations have remained the most influential factor for the emergence of ethnic businesses (Greve and Salaff 2005).

al. 1999; Rath 2002). Interactional theory, proposed by Aldrich and Waldinger (1990), expanding the ‘embeddedness’ approach addresses most of these criticisms.

#### **2.4.1.2. Interactional Theory**

The ‘interactional’ theory of Aldrich and Waldinger (1990) explains the emergence of ethnic entrepreneurship as a function of three interrelated components: opportunity structures, group characteristics, and emergent strategies. Along with recognizing the importance of social capital, the theory emphasizes how ethnic minorities implement business strategies to access existing local markets since selling goods and services and generating incomes are the essential factors for the survival of ethnic enterprises. Aldrich and Waldinger (1990) define opportunity structures as:

*“Opportunity structures consist of market conditions which may favor products or services oriented to coethnics, and situations in which a wider, non-ethnic market is served. Opportunity structures also include the ease with which access to business opportunities is obtained, and access is highly dependent on the level of interethnic competition and state policies”.*

The theory implies that ethnic concentrations provide a co-ethnic ‘protected/captive market’ for specialized goods and products. However, growth can be circumscribed due to competition among businesses established by co-ethnics. In this context, the ethnic firms need to expand to reach non-ethnic markets for survival and growth. Both ethnic and non-ethnic market conditions can be supportive or restrictive for the survival of ethnic businesses.

Group characteristics, the second component of the theory, focus on the population’s possession of human and financial capital, their previous experience operating businesses, settlement characteristics, culture and aspiration levels, and resource mobilization. Residential concentrations that foster solidarity and socio-economic dependency among co-ethnics, as stated in cultural theory, are identified as a positive factor for the emergence and growth of ethnic

businesses. Resource mobilization is shaped by two aspects: utilization of ethnic and class resources<sup>24</sup> (Light 1984), and ethnic social structures. The distinction between ethnic and class resources is drawn to “separate the purely ethnic from the generic process of resource mobilization” and analyze the emergence of highly educated and middle class ethnic entrepreneurs among recent immigrants (Aldrich and Waldinger 1990: 127). Mobilization of ethnic and class resources, the theory suggests, is shaped by ethnic social structures that include ethnic institutions, networks, kinship and families that facilitate “raising capital, recruiting labour, and dealing with suppliers and customers” (Aldrich and Waldinger 1990:127). Ethnic institutions and networks reflect the level of ‘institutional completeness’<sup>25</sup> in an ethnic community that provides advantages for ethnic members in mobilizing resources. For example, institutional completeness in ethnic residential concentrations strengthens social capital and may trigger the emergence of ethnic enterprises. The emergence of ethnic business in turn, strengthens and expands ethnic institutions. This two way relationship shapes and sustains ethnic social structures.

The third component, ethnic strategies “emerge from the interaction of opportunity structures and group characteristics, as ethnic entrepreneurs adapt to the resources available to them, building on the characteristics of their groups” (Aldrich and Waldinger 1990: 130). Ethnic strategies reflect the ways in which entrepreneurs negotiate social circumstances to accomplish business goals: recruiting labour, targeting and maintaining customers, surviving competition

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<sup>24</sup> *Ethnic resources* are any and all features of the whole group which co-ethnic business owners can utilize in business or from which their business benefits. Thus, ethnic resources include orthodox cultural endowments, relative satisfaction, reactive solidarities, sojourning orientation, and these four encompass all types of ethnic resources empirically described in the existing literature ... *Class resources* are cultural and material. On the material side, class resources are private property in the means of production and distribution, human capital, and money to invest. On the cultural side, class resources are bourgeois values, attitudes, knowledge and skills transmitted intergenerationally in the course of primary socialization ... In principle, class and ethnic resources might occur singly or in combination (Light 1984: 201-202).

<sup>25</sup> Institutional completeness refers to “parallel institutions which either inhibit or serve as alternatives to participation in the institutions of the broader society (Brenton 1964 cited in Rosenbers and Jebwab 1992: 266).

etc. Interactional theory by highlighting the interconnections of markets, group characteristics and business strategies, enables scholars to capture how ethnic minority immigrants mobilize resources and their embeddedness in wider social, locational, economic and market contexts (Waldinger 1999, 1996).

Interactional theory has addressed many key questions about the nature, development and function of ethnic businesses. However, like blocked mobility and cultural theories, it assumes an unproblematic notion of ethnic community that often stereotypes and homogenizes identities by ignoring other socio-economic attributes such as gender, class and religion and cultural practices (Light and Gold 2000). Women's experiences have not been taken into consideration very much.

#### **2.4.1.3. *Mixed Embeddedness Theory***

Interaction theory also fails to consider how ethnic businesses are linked to the broader social structures of the country of settlement. Kloosterman et al. (1999) address this notion by proposing mixed embeddedness theory. Mixed embeddedness theory suggests that ethnic businesses need to be conceptualized as grounded in the broader economic and political environment of the host country as well as in the socio-cultural context of ethnic communities (Kloosterman et al. 1999). Central to the notion of mixed embeddedness is opportunity structure as ethnic minorities cannot become entrepreneurs if no opportunities exist. While interactional theory focuses on ethnic and non-ethnic markets to evaluate opportunity structures, mixed embeddedness theory emphasizes the economic and institutional contexts (i.e.; business vacancies, legal and regulatory structures, access to ownership and government policies) in which ethnic enterprises operate (Rath 2002; Lo 2009b; Ram et al. 2001). The theory suggests that apart from characteristics of ethnic groups, differences in socio-economic institutional

frameworks play key roles in enabling and constraining ethnic businesses. For example, strict laws regarding business ownership can prevent immigrant and ethnic minorities to own a business.

Some scholars argue that mixed embeddedness theory is grounded in structural determinism. The theory “provides more emphasis on macro spheres-institutional, political and legal contexts of the state over micro spheres- the social-cultural processes within and among minority ethnic groups” and as such it undermines the agency of ethnic minorities (Brettell and Alstatt 2007; Sepulveda et al. 2011). All ethnic groups do not experience similar structural barriers in the society of settlement or adopt similar strategies to overcome structural barriers. In addition, scholars also observe that institutional and regulatory politics are more important in Europe than in North America where institutional regulations are relatively flexible for immigrants (Ram et al. 2001; Light and Rosenstein 1995; Pécoud 2010). This study, drawing on interactional theory, emphasizes the socio-spatial processes within and among Bangladeshi immigrants in Toronto, although the influence of the macro contexts, such as migration, employment and regulatory policies, on Bangladeshi women’s entrepreneurship is also explored.

Theoretical analysis of ethnic entrepreneurship has addressed many key questions about the nature, development and function of ethnic businesses. However, all these theories often overlook women’s experiences due to lacking a gender perspective (Light et al. 2004). Recent studies of immigrant and minority women’s entrepreneurial activities provide insight into how various social and locational characteristics and cultural practices influence the entrepreneurial experiences for women and shape the characteristics of ethnic enterprises that they operate.

#### **2.4.2. Immigrant Women in Ethnic Entrepreneurship Literature**

The analysis of ethnic entrepreneurship is built upon the assumption that ethnic resources such as ethnic networks, revolving credit institutions, cheap co-ethnic labour and structural opportunities such as protected ethnic markets and bank loans are available to co-ethnics in the same way (Light 1980, 1984; Light and Bonacich 1988). Little information is available about how access to ethnic and class resources influences men and women's propensity for entrepreneurship. Zimmer (1986: 4) states that ethnic economic activities are "embedded in a social context, channeled and facilitated or constrained and inhibited by people's position in social networks". Ethnic ties and institutions do not always function as social capital and provide social advantages equally to all co-ethnics. People with different social positions cannot access the same ethnic resources and social networks for varied purposes (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992).

*"We need to differentiate between social capital from a position of advantage and from a position of disadvantage ... to relate it centrally to divisions of class and gender. From a position of advantage social capital may act as a way of further enhancing social advantage and is central to the effective deployment of resources. From a position of disadvantage, it can act to mitigate or partially compensate for the lack of other social and economic resources" (Anthias 2007: 801).*

By ignoring varied power relations based on gender, class and religion, ethnic entrepreneurship theories have overlooked how social capital is distributed among co-ethnics and disregarded who is marginalized and who is excluded from opportunities to utilize social capital (Anthias 2007; Zimmer and Aldrich 1987). Most studies suggest that immigrant women often have less access to financial and social resources than men so they are more likely to engage in informal businesses that do not require large financial investment (ibid). Women's low cost businesses are more vulnerable in the face of competition particularly in enclaves where business growth is severely constrained by competing enterprises targeting the same market and social

resources (Wright and Ellis 2000). Women often do not get family support and often face criticism from family members (Mulholland 1997; Anthias and Mehta 2003). Anthias and Mehta (2003) note that women including immigrant women receive less support from family and ethnic networks than men in operating businesses.

Most research insists that men's business networks are larger and richer in resources than those of women. Women's business-related networks are often built upon ties with kin and other women while men's networks tend to be more diverse (DeWine and Casbolt 1983; Anthias et al. 2006; Aldrich et al. 1989). Smeltzer and Fann (1989) identify two types of relations - instrumental and social. They state that women's business networks are more social than instrumental in the sense that they utilize social relations for economic gain. Men, on the other hand, most often maintain social and professional relations separately. Brush (1992) states that women's focus on relationships means their ethnic businesses build up based on family and community relations. When women establish a business, they do not create a separate economic organization; rather they integrate business-related relations into their personal lives (Brush 1992). Women's business experiences blend the business and social spheres. This is one of the reasons why businesses operated by women do not thrive economically (Dhaliwal 1998: 464). Others suggest that women usually get more emotional support as well as advice from interpersonal networks than men (Greenglass 1995). Women are emotionally involved with the people they know which helps them gain emotional support from a wide network of people.

Most studies provide a stereotypical image of ethnic minority immigrant women's social network and resource mobilization without considering the social and spatial contexts in which women operate businesses. Mirchandani (1999) argues that women's concentration in informal and home-based businesses is shaped by unequal social and economic processes. Women's

responsibility for social reproductive work in the home and men's relative freedom from those responsibilities places women at a disadvantage in terms of investing time and resources and building the social networks added to operate a business. Within patriarchal social structures women face more barriers than men to access the financial resources of the family as well as to get bank loans for business purposes. Racialized immigrant women face more social and institutional barriers than other groups (Anthias and Mehta 2003). Due to these barriers women most often end up starting businesses that require low investments and yield limited profits. Despite such constraints, studies show that Indian and Chinese women in the USA and Canada have successfully established large businesses that require substantial financial investment and diverse business networks. Saxenian (1999) observed that Chinese and Indian immigrant women in Silicon Valley develop networks with professional and business associations to obtain business opportunities. These insights suggest that an in-depth analysis of women's social positions and their business contexts is crucial to problematize their homogenous representation and understand their network development and resource mobilization.

#### **2.4.2.1. *Ethnic Neighborhood and Cultural Practices***

The prominence of traditional cultural norms and ideologies is an important aspect of ethnic neighbourhoods. Few studies consider how the influence of transnational links and the tendency of co-ethnics to preserve 'traditional' cultural identities within ethnic neighbourhood influence women's entrepreneurship and unpaid work. The literature on transnationalism highlights how the ways in which immigrants settle are shaped by their strong linkages with their countries of origin. Basch et al. (1994: 6) define transnationalism as a "process by which immigrants forge and sustain multistranded social relations that link together their societies of

origin and settlement”. Using Bourdieu’s notion of habitus<sup>26</sup>, scholars argue that immigrants’ lives are shaped by ‘transnational habitus’ – a social field in which immigrants evaluate social and cultural practices of places of origin and settlement while making choices about their social and economic integration after migration (Schiller et al. 1995; Kelly and Lusia 2006). Immigrants’ simultaneous positionality in places of origin and destination affect their gender roles and social and economic integration. Studies report that the retention of cultural identity in ethnic neighbourhoods often translates into reinforcement of patriarchal control over South Asian women’s mobility and life styles (Hunjan 1997, 2003). Cultural practices and norms within ethnic enclaves can create obstacles for women to access information, resources and training by imposing traditional gender norms in which women are expected to have limited work outside the home and remain responsible for family care and household tasks (Berard and Brown 1994; Birley 1989).

Accessing the benefits of social networks requires compliance with cultural norms, particularly for women who must be seen as a ‘good woman’ to access social networks. Based on studies of Chinese enclaves in the US, Zhou (1992) states that by entering into enclave businesses through family and community networks, Chinese women become even more obliged to fulfill expected family roles. At the same time they are bound to earn money for the financial advancement of the family, an important goal of migration (Zhou 1992: 156). Similarly, studies of Pakistani migrant women illustrate the importance of being a good Pakistani and good Muslim woman to gain access to group supports (Ramjit 2006). Studies of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women in the UK (Afshar 1989; Mohammad 2005a, 2005b; Dale et al. 2002) outline how

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<sup>26</sup> Habitus implies the ways in which “individuals act in the context of a structured framework of evaluations and expectations which lead to the conscious or intuitive prioritising of certain dispositions and practices” (Kelly and Lusia 2006: 833). Habitus captures the interaction between social structures and human agency.

women encounter social pressure to present themselves as a 'good woman' by performing 'traditional' gender roles. Similar trends have been observed among Chinese immigrant women in Canada. A good Chinese woman needs to be a dutiful daughter (Giles and Preston 1996).

Gender ideologies related to breadwinner men and care-giver women underpinned by a public/private binary also influence women's roles in ethnic business. Gender stereotypes are prevalent among couples who jointly own family firms as husbands generally remain responsible for equipment maintenance and the negotiation of contracts whilst wives are engaged in secretarial work, interactions with customers and most of the household tasks (Marshack 1994; Kwak 1996). Working in businesses does not lessen women's domestic work in the family but often increases their workloads (Kwak 2003). Some scholars argue that discrimination against minority women in the host country and women's double and often triple burdens as workers, mothers and wives influence their entry into self-employment (Zhou and Logan 1989; Pessar 1984). Many women operate businesses at home to accommodate family needs and flexible working hours (Lavoie 1992). Women, especially those who have small child, prefer to be self-employed to combine paid work and motherhood at home. Studies found that combining work and family responsibilities is the main reason for South Asian women who had failed to get a job to work in home-based businesses (Martins and Reid 2007; Maitra 2013).

While these studies provide valuable information about immigrant women's experiences of ethnic entrepreneurship and the impacts of gender roles and negotiations that have often been overlooked, the diversity of women's entrepreneurial activities is not highlighted. Immigrant women's entrepreneurship experiences are not homogenous. Rather, their entrepreneurship experiences are shaped by their various identities and the socio-spatial contexts of their businesses. The following section highlights the diversity and differences in immigrant and

ethnic minority women operated businesses to illustrate the links between identity, place and ethnic entrepreneurship.

### **2.4.3. Identity and Entrepreneurship**

A few recent studies of minority immigrant women's entrepreneurial activities provide insight into how various social factors and contexts influence the entrepreneurial experiences of women and shape the characteristics of ethnic enterprises that they operate. Based on a study of South Asian women, Dhaliwal (1998) identified two types of South Asian female entrepreneurs in the UK: the hidden and the independent. Hidden entrepreneurs are those who help with family businesses, mostly by providing voluntary work and the independent women are entrepreneurs who manage their own businesses. Hidden women work in family businesses due to financial difficulties. They are almost invisible though they run the day to day business and serve the customers. Men control the financial aspects and 'external' aspects completely. In these cases women do not have much control over the business and they do not make many decisions. Working in family businesses does not provide opportunities to build social networks and it limit their opportunities to socialize. Women do not claim business ownership and they are not acknowledged as economically valuable though they work hard and organize their everyday lives based on the business.

On the other hand, women who operate businesses independently enjoy more social status and get help from family members, especially from their husbands. Often, they are married to wealthy men and have control over the business, though major decisions may be made in consultation with their husbands or other male family members. Unlike those who work in family businesses, independent business operators have the opportunity to build up business networks and play visible roles. This study indicates how the class positions of the family

influence the roles that South Asian women play in family businesses and as independent entrepreneurs. This particular study however, has not examined how the gendered public/private binary impacts women's distinct roles. Whether and how their class position affect the ways independent entrepreneurs negotiate patriarchal gender norms is not discussed.

Dallalgar (1994) in a study of Muslim and Jewish women in the Iranian ethnic economy in Los Angeles found that gender in combination with class and ethnicity is a major factor in shaping ethnic businesses. Her study explores women's varied experiences in family-run businesses and home-operated businesses. She compares their experiences in the two types of business settings by focusing on their utilization of ethnic, gender and class resources for attracting clients and customers. Those who operate businesses at home use ethnic resources such as friendship and kinship ties for business purposes, socializing with friends and relatives at home, a common custom in the Iranian community. Non-contractual and flexible financial transactions help them to broaden their customer base. In addition, these women utilize the 'feminine skills' they acquired through domestic and family responsibilities. Home-based entrepreneurship, thus, adds another role to their already established gender roles. In this case, women working in home-operated businesses can take advantage of ethnic and gender resources easily since these resources overlap with the home environment. They are married to wealthy men and have the freedom to conduct home-run businesses and make business related decisions.

Iranian migrant women who work in family-run businesses (which are mostly non-home-based), on the other hand, help with business-related work to overcome the family's financial difficulties. They work long hours and use their talents, skills and personality for operating the businesses yet they are viewed as unpaid helpers rather than co-owners and co-managers. In most cases, businesses are solely owned by their husbands and they do not receive much

recognition or financial gain from working in family-run businesses. These businesses are also dependent on ethnic and gender resources as well as social relations with customers, but women play a secondary role in establishing friendship and kinship ties. The study reveals how women's identities and business locations shape their business activities and utilization of social network. Although Dallalfer (1994) emphasizes how the socio-spatial setting of home, which is considered as a 'feminine domain' in Iranian culture, shapes women's business activities, she does not elaborate whether the gendered notion of 'public' places influences women's secondary roles in family businesses outside the home.

Another study of South Asian women conducted by Maitra (2013) provides an in-depth analysis of women's experiences of home-based businesses in residential concentrations in Toronto. This study explores how South Asian women renegotiate gender relations and community ties while operating home-based businesses. Many women do not have access to financial capital or 'skills' to set up a big business. Rather, they utilize their 'feminized skills' like cooking, sewing and child minding and mobilize community ties particularly ties with women to generate business opportunities in enclaves. Operating businesses at home often increases pressure on the women to juggle domestic and work responsibilities simultaneously which in turn restricts their abilities to expand their businesses or work outside the home. Even after facing so many challenges, South Asian women construct themselves as having agency. They contribute to the community through community based organizations (Maitra 2013). The study captures the effects of place across different scales - home and ethnic neighbourhood on women's business activities and gender roles.

In summary, these three studies describe the experiences of immigrant women in diverse types of businesses: family, independent and home-based businesses. They provide a critical

look at the ways in which the conventional gender roles of women along with their varied social positions shape their business activities. While the overlap between women's home-based businesses and their domestic and family roles is discussed explicitly, how women situate themselves outside the home to operate ethnic businesses is not explored as much. Whether women working in home-based businesses and those who operate businesses outside the home in formal workplaces utilize similar or different strategies to mobilize ethnic and class resources and access consumer markets is not explained. Focusing on the socio-spatial settings of ethnic businesses, I suggest, would allow for a better understanding of how gender relations and social processes in differentially constructed places create distinct opportunities and constraints for minority women that shape their business experiences and resource mobilization process.

#### **2.4.4. Ethnic Entrepreneurship and Muslim Women**

Very few studies focus on how religious practices and identities affect the entrepreneurial activities of immigrant Muslim women. The few studies of this topic have generated ambiguous and conflicting debates in the ethnic entrepreneurship literature. Studies of South Asian women including Muslim women indicate that often they do not enter into ethnic businesses by their own choice, rather they are forced to work in businesses based on decisions made by other family members (Dhaliwal 2000). By working in family businesses these women address the family's financial needs.

Based on a study of South Asian restaurant businesses in the UK, Ram et al. (2000) point out that Muslim women are less likely to work in family and independent businesses because Islam is a conservative religion. This study suggests that the roles of female members of South Asian Muslim families differ from those of Hindu, Sikh and other South Asian women. For example, Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslim wives are almost absent from restaurants in the UK

because of religio-cultural norms that prohibit women's participation in paid work. In a similar vein, a study of Asian restaurants in the UK found that:

*“In the case of the South Asian Muslims, the wives of the owners rarely had any direct and visible involvement in the restaurant (although they performed key tasks in the domestic sphere that helped to maintain the microbusiness household). Hence, it was not possible to interview these South Asian women” (Sanghera 2002: 243).*

These studies suggest that Islamic traditions and concomitant gendered definitions of paid work and domestic work shape men's and women's roles and their involvement in ethnic businesses. In contrast, studying the interaction between culture and entrepreneurship of South Asians in London, Basu and Altinay (2002) find that there is no association between Muslim women's participation in businesses and their religious practices. They state that “the main reason for the lack of female participation is family tradition rather than religious restrictions” (p. 374)

While the above findings provide contradictory information about South Asian Muslim women's participation in ethnic businesses, the views and voices of women regarding the impacts of their religious practices on their business-related activities are not acknowledged. In addition, a homogenous representation of South Asian as well as Muslim women is problematic since it glosses over their social-cultural differences (Ghosh 2005; Moghissi 2006). Muslim women, as Essers and Benschop (2009) suggest, are not homogenous and they are not passive victims of religious norms in the context of ethnic entrepreneurship. They criticize the notion that Islam and women's entrepreneurship are incompatible. Based on a study of Moroccan and Turkish Muslim women who operate ethnic businesses in the Netherlands, they describe how these women strategically construct their entrepreneurship activities.

Drawing on an intersectional approach, Essers and Benschop (2009) explore how the entrepreneurial activities of Moroccan and Turkish women intersect with their gender, ethnicity

and religion. Through the notion of 'boundary work'- the strategies people adopt to maintain alignment and (dis)alignment with different social positions "to react to processes of inclusion and exclusion tied to various identity categories" (p. 406) - the study describes how women utilize religious norms to justify their individual decisions to become entrepreneurs. Women highlight verses from Qur'an that support women's involvement in paid work and gender equality. They challenge patriarchal interpretation of religious norms that restrict women's presence in 'public' domains including entrepreneurship. Resisting sex segregation, emphasizing individualism in decision making, adopting feminist interpretations of the Qur'an, and contextualizing the Qur'an are the strategies that Moroccan and Turkish Muslim women applied to justify becoming entrepreneurs and operating businesses.

The notion of 'boundary work' emphasized by Essers and Benschop (2009), mirrors intersectional gender performativity (Butler 1990). Women simultaneously position themselves in various social locations to negotiate conventional gender and religious norms and explain their business activities outside the home. For example, some women tie their religious identity with business activities by describing how their paid work enables them to help poor people - one of the religious obligations for Muslims. Some women do not wear the hijab as they think their distinct look may restrict their business expansion and as such they prioritize their entrepreneurial identity. In contrast, for others wearing the hijab helps create business niches that cater to Muslim clients particularly women. These examples indicate how women's diverse identity work impacts their business networks and clients.

Essers and Benschop (2009) provides an alternative interpretation of how the multiple identities of Muslim women vary across diverse contexts of ethnic entrepreneurship. Moroccan and Turkish Muslim women performed identity work to justify their business activities in

‘public’ places and to challenge the gendered public/private binary prescribed by conventional patriarchy and Islam. The study however, treats place as a background rather than a factor that influences the constitution of identities. Whether women’s involvement in businesses outside the home impacts their gender roles in the home is not addressed.

When gender is considered seriously, recent studies confirm that business locations and types, and the various identities of immigrant women are crucial in shaping their entrepreneurship experiences. Negotiating multiple identities plays a central part for women to cope with cultural and religious gender norms especially in ethnic enclaves (Dallalfar 1994; Essers and Benschop 2009). How the intersections of identities and workplaces shape the linkages between immigrant women’s productive and reproductive work - a central debate in feminist analysis – is less explored. To what extent the boundary work of identity construction is similar or different when immigrant Muslim women work from home or step outside the home to operate ethnic businesses is unaddressed. Interrelationships between place, identities and entrepreneurship are crucial to recognize how women affirm and or/challenge the gendered notions of paid and unpaid work that may affect their business opportunities.

## **2.5. Conceptual Framework of the Study**

Through a case study of Muslim Bangladeshi immigrant women operating home-based and non-home-based ethnic businesses in a residential concentration in Toronto, this research aims to analyze ethnic businesses operated by Muslim immigrant women through a feminist theoretical lens. The research will contribute to feminist debates regarding the intersectional nature of gender identities and the socio-spatial constitution of Muslim immigrant women’s productive and reproductive work. The study examines how various identities influence Bangladeshi women’s involvement in home-based and non-H-B businesses, and how business

type and location influence their unpaid work, business activities, resource mobilization and identity negotiations. Investigating how Bangladeshi women negotiate identities and expected gender roles in 'public' and 'private', this study contributes to a re-evaluation as well as expansion of ethnic entrepreneurship theories.

While developing the conceptual framework to investigate how identities of Muslim Bangladeshi immigrant women influence their engagement in home-based and non-H-B ethnic entrepreneurship and the implications of workplace locations for their gender roles and identity negotiations, I questioned how the analysis can take account of Bangladeshi women's multiple identities and their implications for paid and unpaid work in different workplaces. Most research grounded in an intersectional approach explicitly focuses on identities (i.e.; gender, class race, sexuality etc.) and social structures (economy, politics, social organizational) to analyze intersecting identities. Though intersectionality is theoretically understood as specific to a particular place, the significance of 'place' in intersectional analysis is less explored in the literature (Valentine 2007). In most cases, place remains in the background. Recent research stresses investigating "how power is clustered around certain categories" which have 'real' consequences in individuals' everyday lives and at the same time recognizing the fluidity in individual's identities and their active participation in identity negotiations (Crenshaw 1994: 21). However, little research investigates how intersectionality is affirmed, challenged and negotiated in everyday spaces (Adams and Padamsee 2001; Valentine 2007). For example, Ludvig (2006) explores how an immigrant woman's self-identification after migration reflects various privileged and marginalized intersections of ethnicity, gender and class. The study briefly mentions that identities and intersectionality vary depending on place but did not elaborate how intersections of identities take shape in particular socio-spatial contexts. In another study,

Staunæs (2003) explores how teenage students construct gender and ethnic identities in diverse ways – simultaneously conforming and challenging conventional notions - in a multi-ethnic school in Denmark. While the analysis indicates that the school, classroom and the sports field are “often important locations for the negotiation and sustaining of masculinity”, how the social construction of place influences identity negotiation is not emphasized.

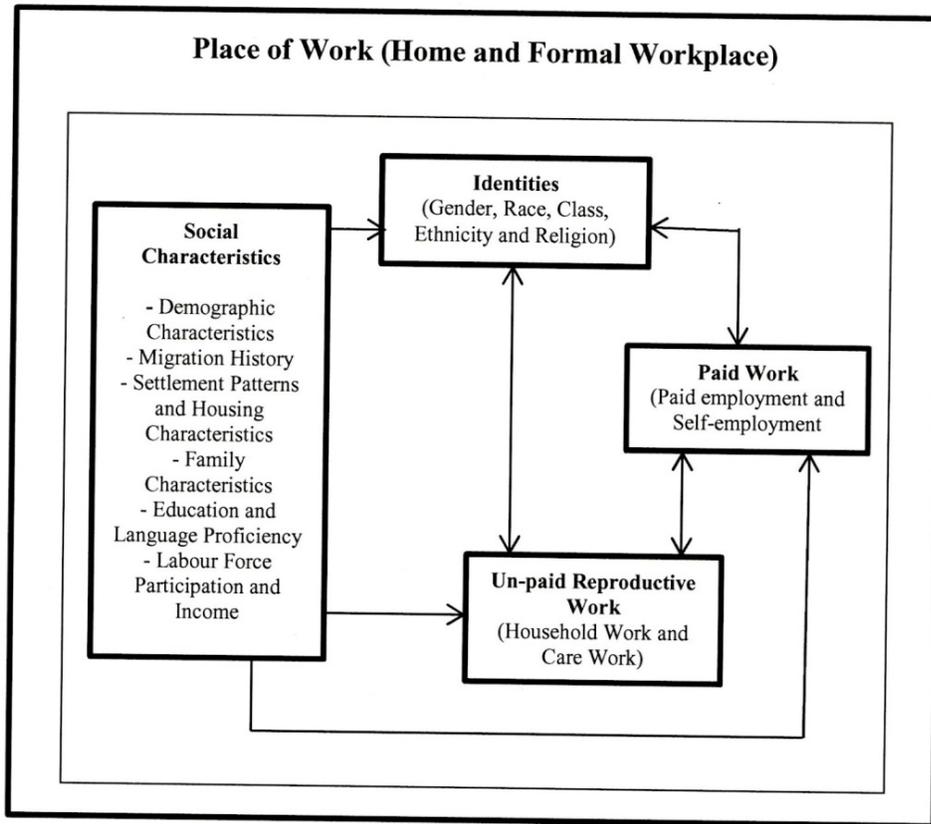
My research framework is shaped by an emerging notion in feminist geography that conceptualizes intersectionality “as historically variable and spatially contingent” and highlights the importance of integrating ‘place’ in intersectional analysis (McDowell 2008: 491; Valentine 2007; Rodó-de-Zárate, 2014). Place-based intersectional analysis, I argue, is essential to understand women’s ethnic entrepreneurship due to the fact that productive and reproductive labour is inherently structured through gendered public/private spatial divisions.

### **2.5.1. Placing ‘Workplace’ at the Center of Analysis**

Conceptualizing intersectionality as ‘situated accomplishments’, I place ‘workplace’ at the centre of my analysis to situate the lived experiences of entrepreneurship by Bangladeshi Muslim immigrant women (Valentine 2007). Taking ‘workplace’ as a point of departure between two groups of Bangladeshi Muslim women, the study compares the similarities and differences in the ways they negotiate multiple identities as they operate businesses in the home which is conventionally constructed as a private/feminine domain of social reproduction, and outside the home generally constructed as a public masculine domain. I suggest that investigating the intersections of Bangladeshi women’s identities in relation to workplaces will add to our understanding of their ethnic enterprises.

Figure 2-1 outlines the conceptual framework of my research. The diagram suggests that social characteristics influence women’s identities and their paid and unpaid work that are also

interrelated. Women's identities influence their participation in paid work. Involvement in paid work influence the ways they construct identities. Similarly, there is a reciprocal relationship between identities and unpaid work. Paid work and unpaid work also influences each other. Responsibility for unpaid household and care work affect women's involvement in paid work and vice versa. I argue that the strengths of these relationships are shaped by places of work. Workplace locations inside and outside the home influence women's identities and their paid and unpaid work, and the ways in which women carry out paid and unpaid work and construct identities also influence the social meanings of their workplace locations. Using this conceptual framework, the research explores the multiple and intersecting identities of Muslim Bangladeshi immigrant women to investigate how their workplace locations shape their entrepreneurial experiences in Toronto.



**Figure 2-1: Conceptual Framework of the Research**

Explaining ‘where’ an intersection of social identities emerges will offer deeper insights into women’s paid and unpaid work. The study captures how the location of the workplace is an essential component in shaping the ways Bangladeshi women conform, challenge and reconstruct gender notions prescribed by patriarchal as well as Islamic religious values and practices. Comparing the experiences of women who work in home-based businesses with the experiences of women who operate businesses outside the home provides opportunities to explore how women’s subjectivities shape, and are shaped by socio-spatial processes (Butler 1990; Essers and Benschop 2009).

I argue that cultural practices, ethnic networks, and cultural and religious practices in residential concentrations may have different impacts on women whose businesses are more visible than on those who conduct businesses in their homes. Women's access to and mobilization of resources, access to consumer markets and ability to implement business strategies may vary depending on the locations of their businesses. The question of workplace in the context of ethnic entrepreneurship is even more critical for Muslim women since their paid work in and outside the home is questioned often in the literature (Essers and Benschop 2009). Placing workplace at the center of analysis opens up the possibility to investigate how identities and experiences are contingent on the socially constructed meanings of workplaces and is an opportunity to recognize how power relations are embedded differently in different places (Butler 1988; 1990; Valentine 2007).

Determining how many and which identities to study is one of the challenges that researchers face when investigating intersectionality (Pieterse 1997; Anthias 2012). Butler (1995) states that the 'etc.' that follows at the end of lists of social categories indicates an "illimitable" process of signification. Gradually, researchers have expanded their focus to a wide range of social dimensions in addition to race, gender and class. Bowleg (2008), for example, explores the stress and resilience associated with the intersections of gender, race and sexuality for Black lesbian women. McDowell (2008) examines how gender, class, immigration status and race conjointly shape immigrant women's labor processes at local and international levels. Essers and Benschop (2009), as discussed earlier, explore the intersections of gender, ethnicity and religion in the context of Muslim immigrant women's ethnic entrepreneurship. The inclusion of diverse identities allowed them to explore the experiences of women who had been overlooked earlier.

In this vein, this study investigates how gender intersects with race, class, ethnicity and religion within the context of two different business settings. Focusing on specific identities does not provide a comprehensive analysis of diversity and differences among Bangladeshi Muslim women. They are also positioned differently in terms of social dimensions such as age, marital status, immigration status, ability, and education etc. Researchers agree that the social dimensions that should be selected as the major focus of analysis depend on the research topic, level of analysis and researchers' interests (Mahalingam et al. 2008; Lorber 1994; Shields 2008). My selection of specific identities is shaped by the literature that examines the paid and reproductive labour of immigrant women in general and Muslim women in particular. Investigating how gender intersects with class, race, ethnicity, and religion in different workplace locations, the study demonstrates how identities and workplaces shape Bangladeshi women's business activities and identities.

While the research exclusively focuses on the experiences of Muslim Bangladeshi immigrant women and can be labeled as a micro-level analysis, it also connects their experiences to broader social processes of migration, settlement, labour market integration and ethnic entrepreneurship. Focusing on workplaces, the study illustrates why two groups of women adopted two different paths to entrepreneurship and how multiple dimensions of their identities shaped the differences and similarities in the ways they looked for paid work and entered into ethnic businesses. The analysis captures the commonalities and differences in the ways women integrated into the labour market in Toronto after migration. By situating the intersectional analysis of gender in workplaces, my research opens up new ways of theorizing and applying intersectionality. The research aims to offer additional insights into the links between place and intersectionality.

## **2.6. Specific Research Objectives**

As mentioned earlier, there is little information available about Bangladeshi women's participation in paid employment, self-employment and their unpaid reproductive work in Toronto. One of the objectives of this research is to produce a profile of the immigrant Bangladeshi community in Toronto that describes in detail women's demographic characteristics, migration patterns, residential types and locations, labour force participation, and reductive work based on 2006 census data. The community profile will provide information about Bangladeshi immigrant women in Toronto that is essential to understand the socio-economic and spatial circumstances in which Bangladeshi women enter into diverse ethnic businesses. Describing the social context in which Bangladeshi immigrant women are involved in ethnic businesses in Toronto, the first objective addresses the first research question outlined in chapter one.

The second and the third objectives of the study address the second research question that investigates the characteristics of Muslim Bangladeshi immigrant women operated businesses in Toronto. The second objective is to describe and compare characteristics of home-based and non-home-based businesses operated by Bangladeshi immigrant women with a particular focus on women's reasons for starting their businesses. The analysis aims to identify the social and economic circumstances that influence women's decisions to adopt different pathways to entrepreneurship and enter into home-based and non-home-based businesses. The study also aims to investigate how cultural and Islamic practices influence women's entry into and work in home-based and non-home-based businesses.

The third objective of the research is to explore the ways in which Bangladeshi women's productive work in ethnic businesses is linked to social reproductive work. The study will

investigate whether domestic and family responsibilities differ based on the location of the women's entrepreneurial activities at home and outside the home. The purpose of this analysis is to provide insights into how conventional gender-based spatial divisions and binaries of men and women's labour are (re)inforced, challenged and negotiated depending on the location of women's paid work.

The fourth objective of the study is to identify similarities/differences in the ways that women access ethnic and class resources and adopt business strategies to reach markets for their good/services when their home and business are separated and overlapping – through applying a gender perceptive to the 'interactional' theory of ethnic entrepreneurship. The purpose of this analysis is to respond to the third research question by reassessing some of the generalized notions regarding immigrant women's social networks, resource mobilization and access to markets. Overall, through a comparative analysis, the research explores the multiple and intersecting subjectivities of Bangladeshi Muslim women to understand how different social positions shape their entrepreneurship experiences in home-based and non-home-based businesses.

## Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodological approaches and choices through which I framed my research, and the techniques and procedures which I used to explore the identities and experiences of Bangladeshi Muslim immigrant women who operate businesses – in the home and outside the home - in Toronto. This chapter provides detailed accounts of the four interrelated elements - *ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods* – that shape social research. *Ontology* is the concept of ‘being’, that is statements about the nature of existence and reality. *Ontology* refers to “the fundamental assumptions scholars make about the nature of the social and political world and especially about the nature of causal relationships within that world” (Hall 2003: 274). An *epistemology* is a theory about knowledge claim; about how do we know what we know and under what conditions knowledge can be known (RamaZanoglu and Holland 2002). *Ontology* embodies understanding *what is*, whereas *epistemology* tries to understand *what it means to know* (Gray 2013).

Each methodology links a particular *ontology* and a particular *epistemology* in providing the methods (techniques and tools) to produce knowledge of social reality. A method, according to Harding (1987 cited in Lofland 1995: 5), is “a technique for gathering and analyzing information by listening, watching and examining information ... and researchers’ choices of how to use these methods constitute their methodology”. In social research, a methodology describes the process to produce knowledge about social reality and the rationale to justify the knowledge claim as legitimate (Maynard 1994; Hall 2003). Methodological choice is thus driven by ontological and epistemological assumptions (Brannen 2005).

Decisions about methodology are key features in social research since claims of truth and valid knowledge are highly disputed and subject to critical scrutiny. A particular research question can be raised differently by scholars with varied philosophical underpinnings about reality and truth. The selection of a methodology and methods depends on numerous considerations: the research topic and research questions, the researcher's personal worldviews and politics, the context of the study and the characteristics of research participants (Scheurich 1997). As a researcher, my distinct views about social reality and the means of gaining knowledge shaped the methodologies of the research. My interests in Bangladeshi immigrant Muslim women's identities and the geographies of their paid and unpaid work, and my epistemological concerns regarding knowledge, power and representation influenced the research questions and the methodological framework I adopted in the research.

In the previous chapter, I explained how intersecting gender/class/ethnic/religious identities shape the ways in which immigrant women experience and negotiate the public/private binary as they engage in paid and unpaid work inside and outside the home. I outlined why it is important to explore how Bangladeshi Muslim immigrant women negotiate the private/public spatial dichotomy while operating ethnic businesses in the home and outside the home in Toronto. I argue that social and spatial processes conjointly shape the opportunities and limitations that Bangladeshi women experience while operating businesses in two different locations. Exploring these socio-spatial processes will acknowledge the diversity of Bangladeshi women's entrepreneurial experiences and problematize the homogenous representation of Muslim immigrant women as invisible and passive actors in ethnic businesses.

An attempt to gain knowledge about how paid work in different workplaces shapes Bangladeshi women's everyday lives involves questioning what it is possible to know

about the women's experiences and circumstances and how can we know it. The sensitive and delicate nature of Bangladeshi women's work lives requires the deployment of a methodology that can deal with the emotional and cultural understandings of the research subjects, a methodology that reveals social processes and spatial practices and one that allows for considering the women's competing interpretations of their experiences.

My research is grounded in feminist methodologies that focus on producing knowledge about women's identities and experiences. The aim of feminists is to make space for women in knowledge production. As Cotterill (1992: 594) states, "a major commitment of academic feminism has been to create a theory and method which centers on women's perspectives and experiences so that they can understand themselves and their social world". Feminist research is dedicated to generating questions and analyses from the perspective of women's lives, interests and experiences which were marginalized by patriarchal knowledge production until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Brooks 2007). Feminist scholarship emphasizes 'gender'-the socially ascribed roles of women. It aims to create knowledge that is grounded in gendered experiences of social, economic and political life (Walby 1989).

Central to feminist scholarship are the experiences of women and the 'gendered differences in spatial praxis' (Smith 1990; Rose 1986). Reflecting Lefbvre's (1991: 289) notion that "(social) space is a (social) product", feminist geographers highlight the multiple and contested meanings of everyday places that are produced through differentiated social relations and hierarchies of gender, class and other social categories (Massey 1994). Feminist research captures the simultaneous fluidity and stability of experiential social space by considering the multiple factors influencing the construction of home and workplace and their links to social relations of production and reproduction (Ley 2004). Incorporating "the experienced" worlds of

women into historically male-centric theoretical and empirical research, feminists demonstrated how the conventional public/private binary disregards women's intersecting identities and the spatial patterns of their paid and unpaid work (Smith 1990; Rose 1986; McDowell 2008). The emphasis on place in feminist research enabled me to explore how the location of the workplace matters in shaping Bangladeshi women's paid and unpaid work (Smith 1990; Hesse-Biber 2007).

This chapter is organized into six sections. In the first section, I outline a brief description of the methodological trends in feminist research and I illustrate the philosophical and methodological approaches that shaped my research methods. In the second section, I describe the rationale for using specific methods in the research. In the third section, I outline the data collection procedures. The fourth section provides a detailed description of the research participants. The fifth section outlines a reflective discussion of data collection processes. Finally, in the sixth section, I discuss the analytical framework and procedures adopted to analyze and interpret the information.

### **3.2. Feminist Approaches to Research Methodology**

Feminists have adopted several different philosophical standpoints to investigate women's experiences. Seeking knowledge of women's social reality involves three elements: the knower, the known and the process of knowing (Scott 1992). Feminist approaches draw on various strategies to examine the nature of knowing subjects, the object of study and the relation between them. I have chosen a methodological framework which is relevant to my research objectives and appropriate to investigate the research questions about Bangladeshi immigrant women. This section briefly outlines some of the major methodological trends in feminist research and a discussion of how they shaped the methodology for my investigation of relations between place of work and identities of Bangladeshi immigrant women.

### 3.2.1. Studying Women in the Positivist Era

The emergence of feminist scholarship in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was greatly influenced by the positivist paradigm which was then the dominant view concerning truth and reality particularly in producing knowledge about the natural world. Positivism relies on an *objectivist epistemology* entailing the idea that ‘reality’ exists independently of our consciousness and that there is an objective and concrete reality to discover (RamaZanoglu and Holland 2002). Research is an attempt to gain knowledge about this objective truth. Positivism is greatly influenced by Descartes’s philosophical views known as ‘Cartesian dualism’ suggesting a separation between the world as it really is and the world that an individual perceives (ibid). Cartesian dualism established a dichotomy between a conscious being (mind) and its object of knowledge (matter) and emphasized the mastery of a reasoning mind over the objects of its knowledge. The dominance of a reasoning mind has historically been the foundation of scientific research dedicated to producing truth about the natural world through the logical explanation of events and processes. Positivist science employed quantitative methods which allowed them to capture and measure a single truth about reality. Positivist quantitative research was, and still is committed to identifying systematic natural patterns through hypothesis testing, the use of numerical data, maintaining procedural objectivity and generalization of social phenomena (ibid).

By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, positivist *epistemology* and scientific reasoning became prominent in social science research. Feminist researchers relied on census data and other sources of demographic data (e.g.; UN data, World Bank data) and large-scale census and survey data to compare women’s social, economic and health conditions to those of men (RamaZanoglu and Holland 2002). Feminists initially recognized positivist reasoning of truth as valuable and

useful to explain women's gendered social realities and their unequal status in the society and to claim the gendered division of labour or women's subordination to be universal (Haraway 1991). Feminist scholars however, realized that 'gender' and/or women's 'subordination' does not hold the same meanings for all women in all places (Haraway 1991). Feminists were also intrigued by anthropological research that underscored the fluidity and complexity of gendered social life (Hesse-Biber 2013). Quantitative data and statistical analysis did not take sufficient account of the contexts of women's experiences and their interpretations of experiences.

### **3.2.2. Social Constructivism and the Feminist Standpoint Epistemology**

Drawing upon the idea that social events and processes cannot be explained through just one concrete truth; feminists argued that scientific reasoning is not innocent of gender subordination and is characterized by male supremacy (RamaZanoglu and Holland 2002). Based on the idea that reason itself is socially constructed, feminists adopted a constructivist *epistemology* grounded in the assertion that truth is socially constructed and that the knower does not hold a neutral and value-free position in pursuing truth (Smith 1989). This observation led to the emergence of feminist standpoint theory, through which feminists acknowledge that knowledge production is embedded in social power relations (Haraway 1988).

By the late 1980s, constructivist *epistemology* became central to feminist research particularly with the influence of the phenomenological movement in philosophy which suggested that "all knowledge of the world is grounded in processes of immediate experiences and these processes need to be subjected to careful description" (Hammersley 2013: 27). What people know comes out of their experiences and how they make sense of their experiences is shaped by the particular cultures in which they live. Diverse ways of thinking and interpreting experiences exist in different societies and even in the same society (Kandiyoti 1999).

Constructivism recognizes multiple truths, subjective knowledge and “culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world” (Gray 2013; Crotty 1998: 67). Harraway (1988: 190, 1993) uses the term ‘embodied vision’ to explain how a knower’s vision is embedded in a particular social and physical place and thus, automatically inhabits a specific vantage point with regard to the subject of study. Knowledge of social reality is therefore, always situated and partial. Under the influence of a constructivist epistemological paradigm, investigating the experiential reality of women’s lives became central to the feminist methodological approach. Smith (1989, 1997) suggests that society has material and knowable reality, and that reality can be known by exploring the concerns and actions of people that form the society and keep social life going.

*“Feminist knowledge is actively situated in living and knowing. What women know and experience as reality is socially constructed. Reality exists independently of people’s consciousness of it, but the connections between what is real, and what is thought and what is experienced cannot easily be disentangled” (Smith 1997: 393).*

Placing culture and history at the center of the investigation allowed feminists to produce knowledge about the varied experiences of women occupying diverse socio-spatial positions. Feminist research grounded in constructivism started to re-evaluate and unsettle taken-for-granted assumptions about women’s gendered lives and demonstrate how gender intersects with other markers of identities such as class, race, ethnicity and religion in shaping women’s experiences (Spivak 1988; Hooks 1994). This perspective emphasizes the ways in which women experience specific places (McDowell et al. 2008, 2015; Valentine 2007). The debates surrounding the gendered division of labour and its presumed association with public and private places took a more critical form by investigating the spatial practices of diverse groups of women including immigrant women living in Europe and North America (Hooks 1994; Raghuram 2008; Pratt 2004).

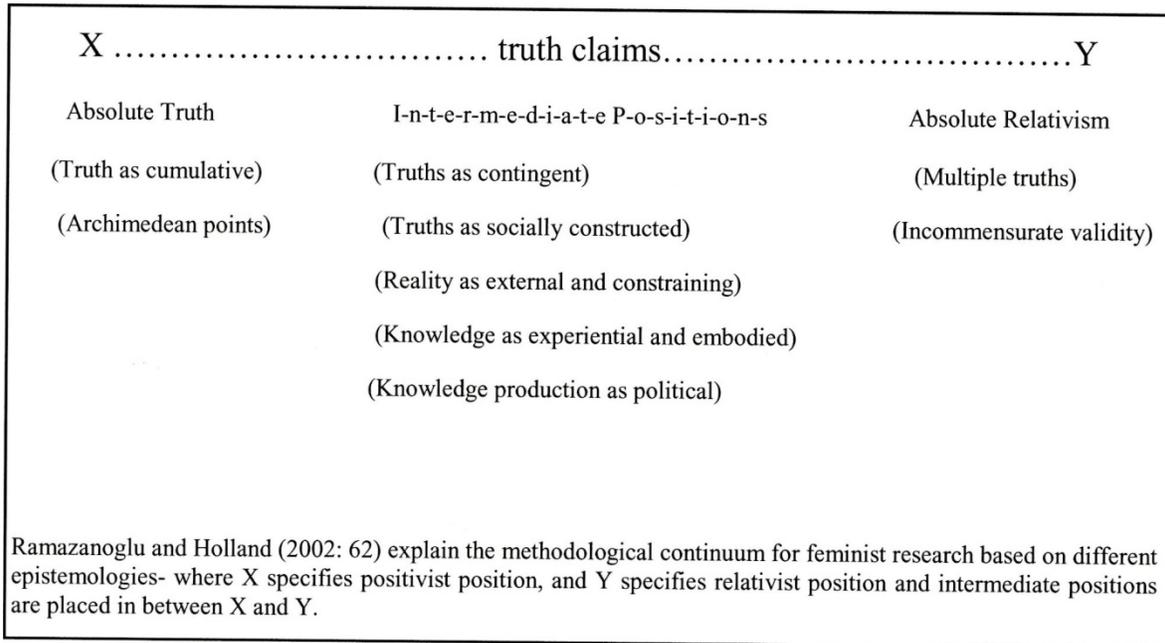
The most notable aspect of constructivist feminist research is the rejection of quantitative methods and the adoption of qualitative methodologies. Feminists criticized quantitative research for seeing the world in terms of numbers and explaining the connection between events and processes through statistical relationships (Hammersley 2013). Instead of quantitative methods, feminists relied on qualitative methods that emphasize subjective interpretation of world and people's complex lived experiences (ibid). Feminist research rejects the role of a researcher as an objective and neutral vehicle for exploring others' experiences or as a passive observer whose emotions and interests remain detached from his/her actions (Dutta 2006). Such rejection led feminist research to focus on qualitative methods that reveal the intersubjective and constituted nature of the meanings research participants give to their experiences.

### **3.2.3. Discursive Truth and Women's Experiences in the Postmodern Era:**

By the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, feminist thinking about truth and knowledge production took a new turn with the emergence of postmodern and poststructural theories grounded in a *relativist epistemology* that rejects the idea that truth can be produced through research. Central to relativism is the notion that "there are no general rules of validity that can establish a direct relationship between knowledge claims, experiences and actual social reality" (RamaZanoglu and Holland 2002). Reality is constituted and conditioned through language and linguistic expressions and there is no concrete truth beyond the linguistic discourse. Relativist feminists do not relate experiences with reality. Rather, they consider analyses of women's experiences as individual readings of texts, images and events.

Feminist research grounded in a relativist *epistemology* deconstructs people's ideas about the relations between experience and reality. It focuses on the strategic use of language and performativity that constitute social reality (Luper 2004). Relativist feminism emphasizes

discourse analysis of qualitative documents and visual symbols (i.e.; historical documents, literature, interview transcripts and images) to illustrate how women’s experiences are constituted as truth by silencing other types of experiences.



**Figure 3-1: A Methodological Continuum for Feminist Research**

Feminist methodology and the study of intersectionality have been shaped by three different philosophies: positivist, constructivist, and relativist. Scholars have debated the ontological basis of recognizing different social categories and their intersections (McCall 2005). McCall (2005) proposes: inter-categorical, intra-categorical and anti-categorical analyses. Inter-categorical complexity, grounded in a positivist epistemology of objective reality, uses existing social categories without problematizing the basis of categorization. Anti-categorical complexity, grounded in a relativist epistemology, deconstructs analytical categories and refuses to use social categories to explain social reality. Anti-categorical analysis claims that fixed social categories

produce “inequalities in the process of producing differences” (p. 1773). Although anti-categorical analysis brings the fluid and unstable aspects of subjects and structures to the forefront of discussion, it does not address how social constructions of categories have real consequences in shaping people’s experience. For example, anti-categorical analysis fails to recognize and investigate the race, class and gender based discrimination and inequality that black women and racialized immigrant women experience in the labour market.

Finally, intra-categorical complexity, grounded in social constructionist epistemology and situated in the middle of the continuum, analyzes social categories strategically to investigate the lived experiences of specific groups. Maintaining a critical stance towards social categories and boundary-making processes, the approach recognizes “the stable and even durable relationships that social categories represent at any given point in time” and in any context (p. 1774). This critical approach enables researchers to reveal the identities and lived experiences within diverse groups. McCall (ibid) notes that the boundaries between these three methodological notions are not fixed so that intersectionality research can draw from all these approaches.

Many feminist scholars argue against the two extreme positions, namely positivism and relativism, since positivism implies absolute truths about social reality and relativism implies that systematic knowledge of the social world is unattainable (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002; Hammersley 2013). Since both positivist and relativist epistemological positions are incompatible with feminist politics and the quest for knowledge of women’s varied experiences, mainstream feminist research adopts intermediate position(s) drawing on constructivist *epistemology* to investigate women’s experiences (Figure 3-1). However, the debates surrounding the methodological approaches to feminist research are ongoing and subject to change.

### 3.2.4. Methodological Choices for this Research

Drawing on Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002), I agree that research is a continuous process embedded in a researcher's concerns. I am aware that my mindset about who I am, where and how I position myself, how I negotiate the world and how I resist power shapes the objectives and the methodology of this research. My assumption that I can produce knowledge about the experiences of Bangladeshi Muslim women lies in my *ontological* and *epistemological* views. I reject the idea that there is one objective reality and that I as a researcher can discover and produce accurate knowledge about a single truth. I also reject the postmodern relativist *epistemology* suggesting that there is nothing beyond discourse. This philosophy will not elucidate Bangladeshi women's material experiences of home and workplace, negotiations and challenges while carrying out business activities and reproductive work.

My views regarding knowledge production are shaped by a constructivist *epistemology* and its underlying ideas of multiple realities and the subjective nature of truth. I believe that knowledge is rooted in particular spaces and times, contextually grounded and culture bound, and shaped by the perspectives of the knowledge producer (Lather 1988: 570). A social constructivist approach reflects theoretical debates about the multiple, fluid and intersectional identities of women. As discussed in the previous chapter, social categories of gender, race and class are not fixed but socially constructed and experienced, lived and negotiated by individuals in diverse ways in different socio-spatial contexts (Valentine 2007; Anthias 2002; Collin 2000; Crenshaw 1991). The studies of immigrant women including Muslim women reveal how the intersectionality of identities hold multiple realities. They do not imply uniform meanings or consequences for individuals. Rather, intersections form and change across socio-spatial situations (Anthias 2012; Warner 2008; Valentine 2007).

Drawing on Smith's (1990) notion of 'lived experience', I suggest that what is real about identities is constructed; it is the product of human thoughts and actions and that these thoughts and actions have material impacts on human's lives. "Reality and conceptions of reality are constructed through people's social practices in the actual locations in their lives" (RamaZanoglu and Holland 2002: 72). Social identities such as gender, race, ethnicity, class and so forth are socially constructed but real in their consequences. The constructions of social identities and their consequences are however, context specific and changeable (Valentine 2007; Haraway 1988). A socially constructed approach to truth recognizes multiple meanings of human experiences and provides a philosophical basis for delving into the differences among Bangladeshi women and the similar and contrasting ways they experience entrepreneurship in different workplaces. My conviction that socially constructed identities have real consequences in different socio-spatial contexts led me to adopt an intra-categorical approach to intersectionality. I critically investigate how Bangladeshi immigrant women's domestic and work spheres shape - and are shaped by - socially defined identities. An intra-categorical analysis enabled me to explore how gendered notions of home and workplace are contested, re-defined and re-produced by Bangladeshi immigrant women.

Underpinned by the social constructivist philosophy, I take a subjective approach to knowledge production (Scott 1999; Harding 1991; Haraway 1988, 2003; RamaZanoglu and Holland 2002). Any research is subject to critical inquiry since one can produce particular truths out of many possible truths. The questions I raised in this research emerged from my interest in feminist theories about the interrelations of women's identities and spatial practices. As an academic, the debates surrounding women's productive and reproductive work and the

public/private dualism that inform women's inclusion and exclusion from particular places have always been my concern.

I designed this research to produce knowledge about Bangladeshi Muslim women's entrepreneurial activities in home-based and non-home-based businesses. The research examines how the location of paid-work shapes these women's experiences and identities. I aimed to compare the paid work and unpaid social reproductive activities of women in home-based employment and those who work in formal workplaces. My goal is to criticize essentialist assumptions about immigrant women in general and Muslim immigrant women in particular. I want to show the diversity of Bangladeshi Muslim immigrant women's experiences and everyday lives and how they sometimes differ from the stereotypes. As a woman and a member of the Bangladeshi community in Toronto, I have personal and emotional connections with this research. The research is not free from bias; it produced 'situated knowledge' shaped by my subjective positions and world views and the lived experiences of Bangladeshi immigrant women (Haraway 1988, 2003).

### **3.3. Methods in Feminist Research: Quantitative, Qualitative or Mix of both?**

As stated earlier, the turn from positivism to constructivism in the early 1960s greatly influenced feminist research methods. Quantitative and numerical analysis was replaced by qualitative methods to collect and interpret descriptive data. Qualitative methodology emerged in the 1950s as a competing research approach based on contrasting viewpoints about research practice<sup>27</sup>. Feminist research has been shaped by a general consensus that quantities and numbers inherently inform positivist objective truth and words and texts produce subjective truth.

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<sup>27</sup> The word 'quantitative' originated from the Latin term *quantitas* which means differences in amount while the contrasting term *qualitas* implies the qualities and the features of entities (Erickson 2011: 43).

Quantitative research permits the examination of the social world without interpersonal contact between the knower and the known (Guba and Lincoln 1994). Numbers and facts allow researchers to generalize trends that are independent of time, context and bias of the knower.

In contrast, the qualitative research paradigm is informed by the underlying notions of constructivist philosophy and its projection of experiential reality and truth. Qualitative research is “an umbrella term for an array of attitudes towards and strategies for conducting inquiry that are aimed at discovering how human beings understand, experience, interpret and produce the social world” (Sandelowsky 2004: 893). Qualitative methods are considered more suitable for investigating experiential reality as the methods go “beyond giving a mere snapshot of events and can show how and why things happen also incorporating people’s own motivation, emotions, prejudices and incidents of interpersonal cooperation and conflict” (Gray 2013: 161; Charmaz 1995). Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research is conducted through intense contact with the research participants in a natural setting or in a ‘field’ chosen for the study (Myers and Newman 2007; Patton 2005). The interpretive aspect of qualitative methodology implies that there is no pre-existing world that can be uncovered and measured, and researchers construct knowledge rather than finding it (Sayer 1992). Quantitative and qualitative methods due to their associations with positivist and constructivist paradigms respectively are often seen as oppositional and incompatible (Cope and Elwood 2009).

In geographic research, the scale of inquiry differentiates quantitative and qualitative methods (Sayer 1992). Quantitative methods are considered suitable for ‘extensive’ research that requires generalization, whereas qualitative methods are associated with ‘intensive’ research grounded in concrete places and times. Sayer (1992) has drawn this distinction between the breadth and depth of research. Extensive research investigates common properties and patterns

of large numbers of people or a representative sample of the population relying on quantitative methods such as descriptive and inferential statistics, and numerical analysis to identify general trends. In contrast, intensive research focuses on small groups to explore their perceptions, and the causality of social processes as they are experienced in specific socio-spatial contexts. Intensive research relies on in-depth descriptive analysis and does not aim to generalize. The goals of the research dictate the appropriateness of specific research methods.

Sayer (1992) however, mentioned that the distinctions between extensive and intensive research are not fixed and both approaches can be applied to test a theoretical claim about a social phenomenon. Recent work in geography, challenges the divide between quantitative and qualitative paradigms by integrating them in social research (Elwood 2010). Sui and DeLyser (2012: 113), suggest that methodological differences can be bridged by using multiple methods “aiming to integrate [different] perspectives”. In human geography using qualitative and quantitative methods in the same study has become a common practice (Wilson 2009; Elwood 2009; Cope and Elwood 2009).

There are debates about the quantitative/qualitative dualism in feminist research. Feminist research grounded in constructivist epistemology deploys diverse qualitative methods (e.g.; ethnography, interviews, focus group discussion etc.) to get at the experiences of women, to explore how women assign meanings to their experience and to interpret the meanings (Buch and Staller 2013). Scholars, however, criticize the taken-for-granted assumptions that quantities and numbers inherently inform objective truth and words and texts produce subjective truth (Creswell 2013; Schwandt 2000, 2009; Elwood 2010). They suggest that the qualitative/quantitative division is misguided since numbers can be used as interpretive tools and statistical methods can be useful for displaying information about texts, audiences, the

production and consumption of texts and so forth. Consequently, the frequency of certain words in qualitative texts can indicate their importance to the participants. It is not the nature of data (number, quantity or words) but how the researchers assign meanings to words and numbers and the intentions that inform their world views and research aims that matter. Schwandt (2000, 2009) criticizes the “paradigm wars,” that sustain opposition between qualitative inquiry and quantitative inquiry indicating how such opposition limits the “purpose and means of human inquiry” (2000, p. 210).

Many contemporary scholars including feminist geographers employ a mix of qualitative and quantitative data - termed methodological triangulation - in the same research to illustrate “multiple ways of seeing and hearing, multiple ways of making sense of the social world, and multiple standpoints on what is important and to be valued and cherished” (Clark and Creswell 2011: 20). Denzin (1978) first proposed the notion of methodological triangulation which he defined as “the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon” (p. 291). He proposed two types of triangulation: within-methods triangulation which “refers to the use of either multiple quantitative or multiple qualitative approaches” and between-methods triangulation which “involves the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches” (Johnson et al. 2007: 114). To describe between-methods triangulation, some scholars refer to paradigm triangulation that is the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in the same study. Others however, refer to data triangulation which implies “the use of both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods and analysis in studying the same phenomenon” (Hussein 2015: 4). Adopting either type of methodological triangulation depends on researchers’ interests, the objectives of the study and the research subject (Johnson et al. 2007).

Multiple methods research is often described as the ‘third methodological paradigm’, along with qualitative and quantitative research paradigms (Cameron 2011). Clark and Creswell (2011: 5) claim that the “use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone”. According to Jick (1979), methodological triangulation offers several advantages: it increases the validity of research findings, it facilitates creative ways of collecting data, it can produce thicker and richer data, it can lead to the integration of different theories, it can reveal contradictions and it provides comprehensive research findings. Methodological triangulation is a comparatively new but popular trend in contemporary feminist research. In the following section, I describe the implications of these methodological debates for the selection and execution of particular research methods in my research.

### **3.3.1. Selecting the Methods for this Study**

This research adopts a ‘data triangulation’ approach which uses both qualitative and quantitative data analysis (Duffy 1987; Sui and DeLyser 2012; Elwood 2009, 2010). As stated earlier, the use of quantitative data in feminist research has been debated extensively by feminist scholars. They have been concerned about violation of subjectivity in knowledge production (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002). In this regard, Johnson et al. (2007) suggest that quantitative data can be used in qualitative research as an additional source of information to enhance some aspects of the research. I agree with Schwandt (2000: 210) that “all research is interpretive, and we ... [can use multiple] methods that are suitable for different kinds of understandings”. Inspired by the work of feminist scholars who showed that quantitative methods can be used critically in feminist research, I deployed complementary combinations of quantitative and

qualitative methods to enable broader and more comprehensive interpretations of the research topic (see McDowell 2011c; Preston 1997, Kwan 2002, D’Addario 2012 and Rose 2016).

In line with feminist geographers, I suggest that the goal and purpose of the inquiry determines the relevance of specific research methods (McDowell 1992; Valentine 2007; Sui and DeLyser 2012). Even though my research is primarily framed by qualitative methods, I employed ‘between-methods triangulation’ to explore extensive and intensive perspectives on Bangladeshi immigrant women’s paid and unpaid work. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods allowed situating the experiences of women who operate home-based and non-H-B businesses within the broader socio-economic context of the Bangladeshi immigrant population in Toronto.

I used quantitative methods to provide background information for the research. Statistical analysis of Canadian census data from 2006 created a demographic and socio-economic profile for Bangladeshis in Toronto and provided a broad picture of Bangladeshi women’s demographic characteristics, immigration, settlement and employment in Toronto. Analysis of the census data identified the general trends regarding the Bangladeshi women’s engagement in wage employment, self-employment and unpaid work in Toronto.

I used qualitative methods because of their ability to “explore individuals’ experiences and how these experiences are influenced by their position in the social structure” (Mullen 2005: 47). Qualitative methods capture how Bangladeshi immigrant Muslim women’s identities intersect within and across various social categories of difference and how they negotiate identities to operate businesses at home and in the formal workplace. Qualitative methods provided women with opportunities to narrate their multiple social positions and experiences

relating to ethnic businesses. With few exceptions, most studies grounded in an intersectional approach apply qualitative methods. McCall (2005) suggests that personal narratives are more effective in unfolding social relations, identities and activities. I agree with McCall (2005) that studying multiple identities requires qualitative and interpretive analysis of different attributes of specific social group(s) in specific locations.

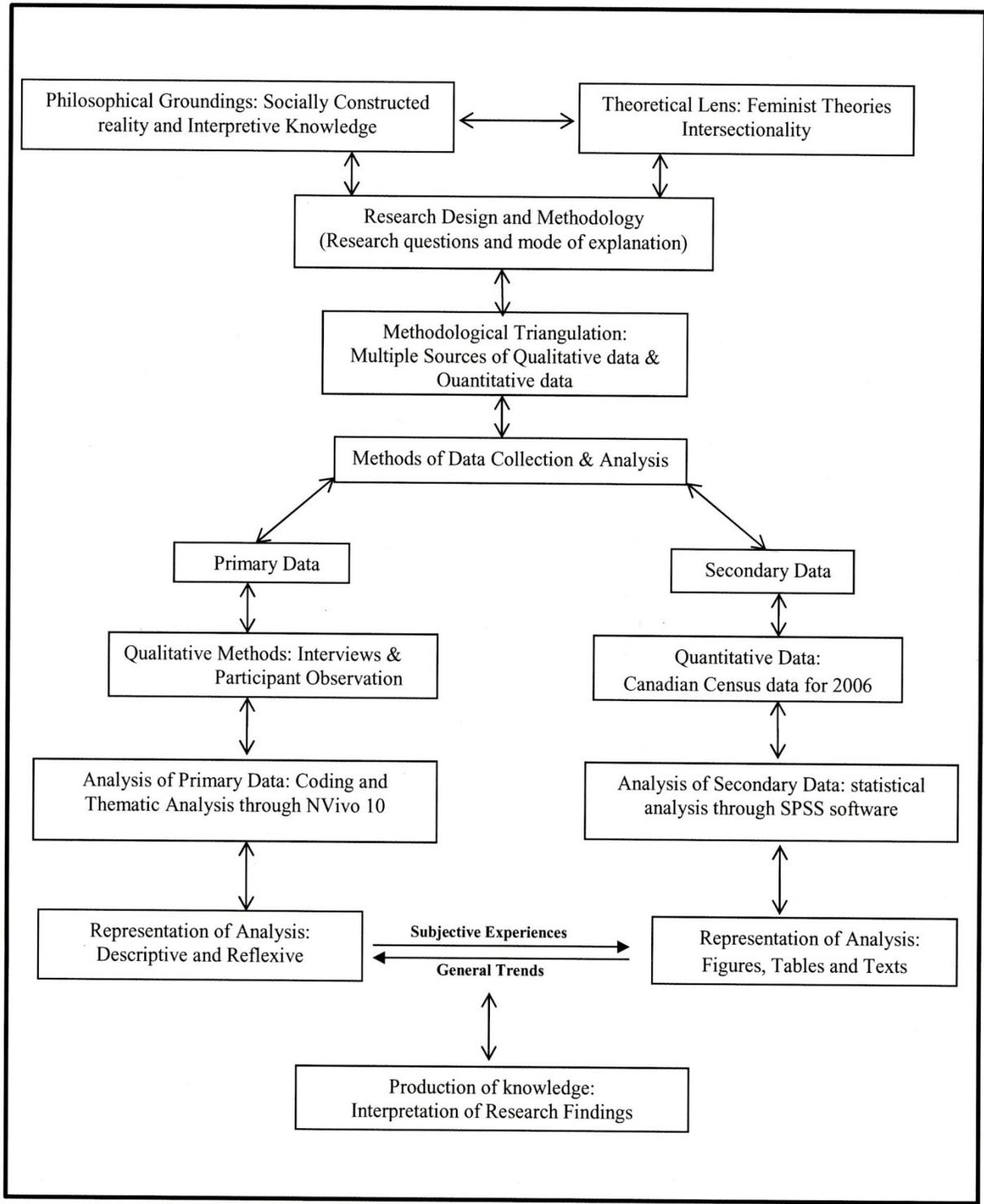
I employ a qualitative ‘case study’ to explore in-depth information about the research subject. The potential for generating in-depth information, nuances and patterns of a particular phenomenon by focusing on a small group of people and drawing conclusions about that group based on the specific contexts in which the group is situated led me to adopt the qualitative case study approach. The case study allowed for a detailed examination of home-based and non-home-based business operators (Denzin and Lincoln 2000). I strategically designed an instrumental case study<sup>28</sup> to explore the experiences of Bangladeshi Muslim immigrant women who are engaged in home-based and non-H-B businesses - so that I can compare their migration, settlement and labour market experiences, entrepreneurial activities, and reproductive work. A comparative study allows me to examine intra-group differences in identity construction and entrepreneurship experiences. As Crenshaw (1995: 93) states, “the problem with identity politics is not that it fails to transcend difference, ... but rather the opposite-that it frequently conflates or ignores intra-group differences”. The comparative case study is designed to explore the diverse social positions and entrepreneurial experiences of Bangladeshi women and problematize their homogenous representation in the ethnic entrepreneurship literature.

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<sup>28</sup> An instrumental case study allows for an understanding of the general processes that encompass several instances of the phenomenon (Denzin and Lincoln 2000). An instrumental case study allows the researcher to gain insight into a larger issue so as to derive a theory, however, instrumental case studies [mainly] serve to deepen an understanding of the specific case” (Stake 2000: 440 cited in Rose 2016).

I employed interviews and participant observation to conduct an in-depth investigation of the case study. Qualitative methods allowed me to 1) document the complexity in women's experiences through intense contact with them within a real life setting, 2) explore how the research subjects interpret their work and workplaces, 3) understand the unique circumstances within which their experiences, actions and meanings take shape and 4) generate themes of analysis and new insights from the accounts of the participant's experiences (Miles and Huberman 1994).

Data triangulation benefitted the research in several ways. Multiple methods allowed deeper understanding of the context of the case study. Data from the 2006 census of Canada provided information about general trends in Bangladeshi immigrants' settlement and labor force activities in Toronto that could not be ascertained from qualitative information (Kwan 2002; Rose 2016). Similarly, participant observation and interviews provided in-depth information about Muslim Bangladeshi immigrant women's engagement in home-based and non-H-B businesses which census data analysis could not explain.

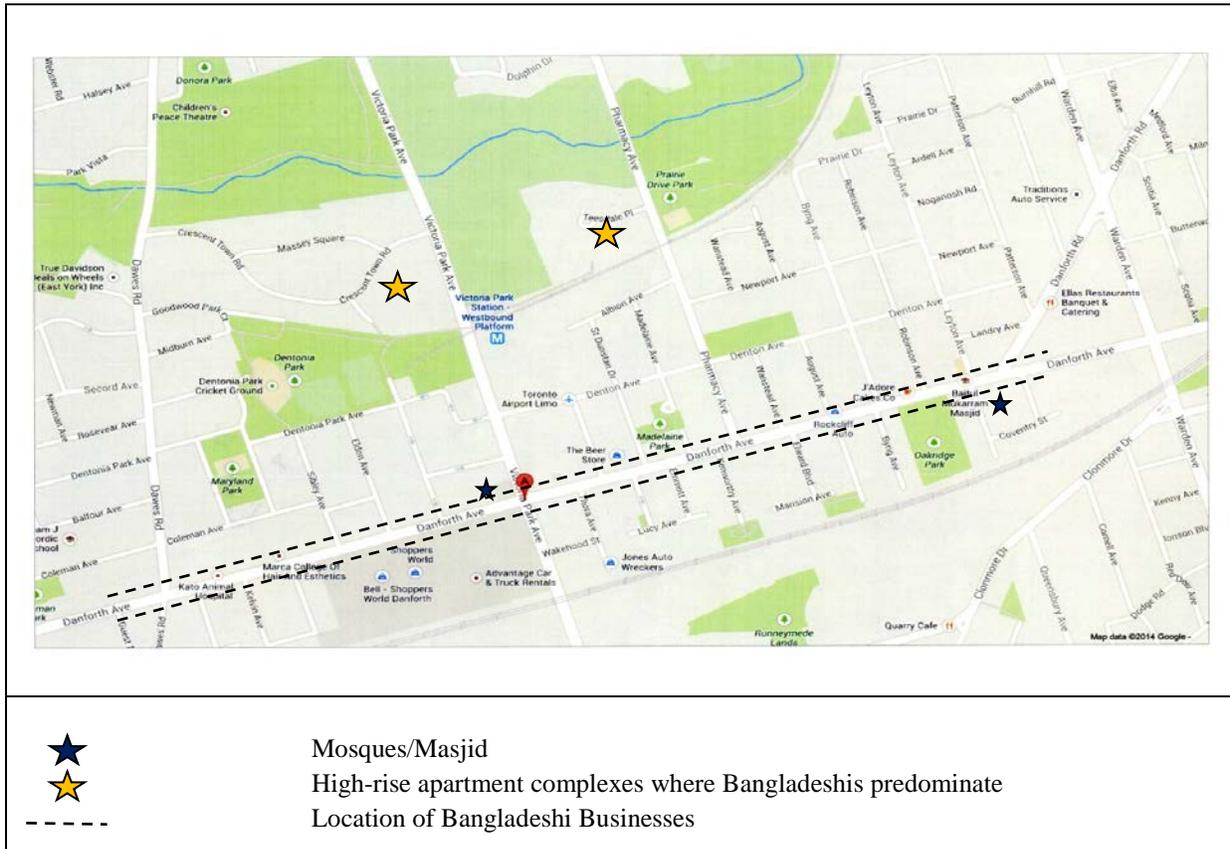


**Figure 3-2: Methodological Framework of the Research**

The multiple methods complemented each other by providing extensive and in-depth information about Bangladeshi women. They also uncovered contradictions between general trends and individual experiences. The overlapping and contradictory insights derived from multiple methods may strengthen research findings and compensate for flaws and inadequacies of information derived from a single research method (Elwood 2009; Johnson et al. 2007). Adopting multiple methods, the research emphasizes creative ways of doing social research that integrates qualitative and quantitative methods to provide multiple modes of representation (Elwood 2009, 2010; Sui and DeLyser 2012). Figure 3-2 shows a schematic diagram of the methods deployed in the research.

### **3.3.2. Selection of the Study Area**

To conduct this qualitative case study, I selected a Bangladeshi neighborhood near the intersection of Danforth and Victoria Park Avenues where the largest residential concentration of Bangladeshi immigrants in Toronto is located (Map - 1). This study area was chosen to situate the ‘case study’ within the major Bangladeshi settlement in Toronto (Ghosh 2014; Maitra 2013; Akbar 2009, Halder 2012). The residential area near Victoria Park subway station is commonly known as Bengali ‘Para’ (neighbourhood) among the Bangladeshis in Toronto. Many Bangladeshi immigrants reside in high-rise apartment buildings on both sides of Victoria Park subway station. Teesdale Place, Crescent Town and Macey Avenue apartment complexes comprise the core of Bangladeshi settlement (Map 1). Bangladeshi immigrants also reside in nearby single detached houses, town houses and rental apartments between Pharmacy Avenue and Dawes Road along Victoria Park Avenue and adjacent streets (Ghosh 2007; Halder 2012).



**Map 3-1: A Snapshot of the Research Field**

Most Bangladeshi businesses and major Bangladeshi religious, social, cultural and economic institutions<sup>29</sup> in Toronto are located along Danforth Avenue within walking distance from Bengali ‘Para’ (Map 1). The Bengali ‘Para’ surrounding Victoria Park subway station and the Bangladeshi businesses and institutions on Danforth Avenue conjointly comprise ‘Bangla Town’. The two major Mosques (*Baitul Aman Masjid and Baitul Mukarram Masjid*) in Toronto

<sup>29</sup> Bangladeshi businesses on Danforth Avenue include grocery stores, clothing stores, jewelry stores, book stores, photo studios, entertainment stores, food and confectionary stores, restaurants, money exchange offices, remittance transferring banks, computer stores, music and video stores and beauty parlors. In addition, Mosques, medical centres, political offices, offices of Bengali newspapers, cultural institutes, Bangladeshi community based organizations and other ethnic organizations are also located on Danforth Avenue.

are located in this area. Institutional completeness shapes Bangladeshi settlement near the intersection of Victoria Park and Danforth Avenues. Proximity to the subway, Bangladeshi stores, and religious and cultural institutions encourage Bangladeshi immigrants to settle in 'Bangla Town' (Ghosh 2005; Halder 2012).

Conducting the case study in 'Bangla Town' enabled me to investigate the circumstances unique to Bangladeshi settlement that shape the everyday lives and business experiences of the research participants. The study area offers valuable insights into the broad picture of Bangladeshi ethnic businesses and Bangladeshi women's involvement in these businesses in Toronto. The socio-spatial setting of 'Bangla Town' provided an opportunity to explore how proximity to co-ethnics and ethnic institutions - which are emphasized in major theories of ethnic entrepreneurship - influence the emergence and activities of home-based and non-H-B businesses operated by Muslim Bangladeshi immigrant women. The study also allowed me to investigate how cultural and religious practices within 'Bangla Town' impact Bangladeshi women's business activities inside and outside the home.

### **3.3.3. The Research Practice**

This research is shaped by feminists' concerns about the power differentials associated with the research process. Investigating women's diverse experiences, feminists put strong emphasis on the politics of knowledge production, particularly on the relationships between power and knowledge. Drawing on Foucault's (1982) concept that "power is enacted through the organization of knowledge and knowledge is constructed as a form of domination" (Mohammad and Sidaway 2013), many feminists recommend critical analysis of the very process of knowledge production. Three major concepts in feminist research practice - positionality, power, and reflexivity - shaped all stages of the research.

Positionality “refers to the shaping of perspectives by identifiers such as class, occupation, gender, “race”, sexual orientation, etc. (or several of these in interaction with each other) as well as location in time and space” (Rose 2001:23). Acknowledging a researcher’s positionality is key to grounding knowledge, since it allows the relationship between the researcher and the researched to be made visible and open to debate (Haraway 1991; 1995). In a research context, Haraway (1991) suggests, researchers and the researched inevitably engage in social relationships with each other and these relationships are rarely equal. Inequalities often result from the material and analytical power of the researchers that gives them the opportunity to direct the opinions of the participants and manipulate the research findings (Kobayashi 1994). The transparency and subjectivity inherent in the research process is only revealed by acknowledging power differentials. To neutralize power differentials between the researchers and the researched, feminists emphasize non-exploitive and critical research practices and valorize the voices of the researched (women) in their analyses and representations.

‘Reflexivity’ is used in feminist research to acknowledge that the construction of knowledge as situated (Hickey and Lawson 2005). Reflexivity requires critical disclosure of the researcher’s positionality and research objectives, achievements, and limitations. Reflexivity implies providing detailed information about the research process so that readers identify how researchers’ social characteristics, motives and interests affect knowledge production. Kobayashi (2005) points out that reflexivity does not by itself reduce power differentials between researcher and participants. I concur with Snape and Spencer (2003) that although reflexivity does not erase the exercise of power from the research process, “ it conveys varying attempts to unpack what knowledge is contingent upon, how the researcher is socially situated and how the research agenda and process has been constituted”.

I agree with the notion that one cannot separate oneself from the research that she/he conducts. I was aware that I might bring certain biases resulting from my own experiences, expectations and ‘world views’. I aim to be transparent and reflexive about my social positionality, and my choices of methods and analytical frameworks to interpret and represent the experiences of the research participants. As a Bangladeshi immigrant woman I share common ethnicity and language with the women who participated in the study. However, I am aware that as a PhD candidate and a researcher I possess different social identities than my research subjects. I agree with Abu-Lughod (1993: 5) that “constructions of self and others are rarely innocent of power”. I acknowledge that I framed the research on the basis of the concepts, methods, views, ideas and ethics that I have learned during my academic training at York University.

Because of the conceptual and linguistic differences, the cultural meanings of various terms such as ‘identity’, ‘intersectionality’, ‘gender’, ‘productive’ and social ‘reproductive’ work, as well as, expressions of beliefs, emotions, gesture, and disappointments, were sometimes difficult to interpret, as such expressions are unique to specific languages. To explain the cultural meanings of the terms and concepts that are important to participants’ experiences, I use Bengali words in italic font in the text and add foot notes to explain the meanings. Although, I presented participants’ experiences according to my own analytical viewpoints, I self-consciously tried to represent their ‘voices’- their own descriptions of everyday lives as provided in quotations. I discuss my positioning as a researcher in relation to my fieldwork and outline my relations and experiences with the research participants. I aim to be transparent about the politics and power associated with observing, interviewing, analyzing and representing the experiences of the

research participants. The following section reflects on the methods deployed for collecting qualitative data in this study.

### **3.4. Qualitative Methods of Data Collection**

#### **3.4.1. Participant Observation**

Participant observation - the central defining method in cultural ethnography- combines a way of observing social events involving a group of people in a particular place and a way of actively participating in social events (Bernard 2011; Fife 2005). Participant observation is defined as “a method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions and events of a group of people as one means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture” (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011:1). Participant observation requires the researcher to spend time living or working in a community that is being observed to collect information about activities, events and behaviors of a group of people. Interpretation of the events and experiences however, depends on the researcher’s own positioning within the group and his/her theoretical lens and subjective understandings of people’s everyday experiences within the group context.

As I mentioned earlier, I selected ‘Bangla Town’ - near the intersection of Danforth and Victoria Park Avenues in Toronto as the location to conduct the case study of Bangladeshi women’s ethnic businesses. I had never lived in this area and had only vague ideas about the population living there. I conducted participant observation to gain a better understanding and more knowledge about the Bangladeshi population and the women who are involved in businesses. I communicated with a Bangladeshi community-based organization, South Asian Women’s Rights Organization (SAWRO), which is in the heart of the Bangladeshi residential concentration and provides employment and social services to Bangladeshi women. This

organization had helped me to recruit research participants in 2008 when I was a master's student at Carleton University.

My familiarity with SAWRO helped me gain help from the organization to conduct participant observation. When I met the Executive Director of SAWRO and informed her that I would like to work for the organization as a means to conduct participant observation, she generously agreed. I worked with the research team of SAWRO, helping to write research reports, an activity that allowed me to participate regularly in the meetings and events at SAWRO and interact with Bangladeshi women. I was happy to contribute to SAWRO's activities and at the same time gather information for my research. The Executive Director also agreed to be a key informant and promised to help me identify potential participants for the interviews.

I worked with SAWRO for six months, from June 2012 to November 2012. During this period, I attended SAWRO workshops, computer training programs, general meetings, and cultural, religious and social events. My association with SAWRO provided a number of advantages. First, it allowed me to interact with Bangladeshi women and observe their various activities and behaviors. I also learned about their concerns and worries regarding employment and other aspects of their lives. Second, it was an opportunity to attend community events and social gatherings and talk to different people providing a broad understanding of the Bangladeshi community in Toronto. Third, participation helped me to gain the trust of community members, particularly the women who came to SARWO for workshops and training programs and their trust helped me to recruit interview participants.

The ways in which Bangladeshi women and other community members constructed me and my presence in the 'Bangla Town' and SAWRO events were shaped by my own and their social locations. The dilemma of my insider/outsider positionality became apparent during participant observation (Smith 1999; Mohammad 2001). According to Mohammad (2001: 101):

*“‘Insider’/‘outsider’ refers to the boundary marking an inside from an outside, a boundary that is seen to circumscribe identity, social position and belonging and as such marks those who do not belong and hence are excluded”.*

A researcher studying his or her own community is often considered to be an 'insider'. Like other researchers (Ghosh 2005; Mohammad 2001; Dutta 2006), I suggest that the degree to which a researcher marked by national and ethnic identity is inside or outside a population is not fixed. The insider/outsider dualism overlooks the intersecting identities, power differentials and experiential differences between the researcher and the researched through which 'insider' and 'outsider' positions are constructed. As Nast (1994: 57) suggests, “we are positioned simultaneously in a number of fields; we are always, at some level, somewhere, in a state of betweenness, negotiating various degrees and kinds of difference-be they based on gender, age, class, ethnicity, “race,” sexuality, and so on”.

Dutta (2006) reports about her overlapping in-between positions in relation to her research participants in India. A similar dilemma of blurred and shifting insider/outsider positions was experienced by Ghosh (2005) when researching Indian Bengali and Bangladeshi immigrants in Toronto. Similarly, during my research I occupied a range of overlapping positions - often insider, often outsider, often in between - which were always shifting. My intersecting gender, class, national and ethnic identities influenced my position as 'deshi' (Bangladeshi) and 'bideshi' (outsider) and both at the same time. My Bangladeshi identity, knowledge of the Bengali language and affinity with Bengali culture made it easier for me as a

'deshi' to gain access to SAWRO, interact with Bangladeshi women, and immerse myself in the women's everyday experiences. At the same time, my identity as a researcher, a university faculty member in Bangladesh and a PhD candidate at York University differentiated me from the women with whom I interacted.

There was not much commonality between me and the women I regularly met at the SAWRO office since most were married and mothers while I am unmarried and completely naïve about domestic and parental issues. Many women described me as a career-oriented person and wished that they could have my life and build their own careers. At these moments I felt uncomfortable and out of place. I tried to overcome this discomfort by talking about Bangladeshi politics, movies, food, and media reports which I thought would ease social interactions. As an insider, I know Bangladeshis in general like to discuss social and political issues. Discussions about nostalgic memories, TV serials and movies helped me to connect with women who tried to distinguish me from themselves by emphasizing my education and career. Some women however, immediately equated me with their sisters and daughters and praised me for conducting the research. A few women invited me to their homes for lunch and dinner. At these moments, I felt welcomed in 'Bengali Para'.

Participant observation goes beyond visual observation through careful listening to people and understanding their silence (Fife 2005). While working at SAWRO I observed how women are dressed, how they talk, what they discuss, who is talkative and expressive, who takes a leading role in the social and cultural events and who is less involved. I noticed the similarities and dissimilarities among women regarding their employment decisions. I carefully listened to their conversations and use of language and expressions to understand their values and feelings. I carried out activities with the women such as decorating the community hall for social events,

and organizing a community picnic. I had to learn social and organizational skills to participate with these women.

Working with SAWRO members was a bit challenging. The members of SAWRO knew that I was working for the organization because of my own interests and that I would leave once the data collection was complete. They always treated me as an outside researcher. I understood their sentiments and maintained a distance from important decision making processes. I only helped the research team to prepare a presentation for the annual forum. During my presentation at the annual forum of SAWRO, the Executive Director introduced me as a representative of the organization. I also presented myself as an insider during my talk at the forum which I did consciously to create a good impression within the community. I knew that the more people saw me as an active member in the organization, the more they would open up with me. Parr (1998) describes how presentation of the researcher's 'body' by 'appropriate' dress, gesture and behavior is a crucial part of the research process in a social setting. This notion mirrors my experience because I intentionally wore Bangladeshi traditional dress at SAWRO to present myself as an insider. This is how my social positions and my interests shaped my positionality within the community. My subject positions as a researcher and as a member of the Bangladeshi community were constituted in spaces of betweenness. I was never an 'outsider' or 'insider' in an absolute sense; rather I floated around "in between".

Participant observation provided "intuitive understanding" of Bangladeshi immigrants' social, cultural and religious practices in Toronto (Bernard 2005: 141). My observation and interactions with the women helped me to revise interview questions and to recruit a few women involved in home-based businesses for interviews. At the organization, I had an opportunity to observe and interact with them before and after the interviews. As a participant observer, I

selected Teesdale Place and Crescent Town housing complexes located near Victoria Park subway station (Map 1) and surrounding areas as the ‘field’ where I observed people, events and activities and interacted with others. Often, I walked on Danforth Avenue to observe how women conduct business activities: interact with people and sell products. My insights into the practices of the Bangladeshi community were shaped to some extent by my experiences in this ‘field’.

### **3.4.2. In-depth Interviews**

Participant observation provided the opportunity to gather detailed information about the social and cultural contexts and everyday lives of Bangladeshi Muslim women, however, it did not enable me to explore the personal experiences and distinctive perspectives of women who do not participate in SAWRO activities. I collected information through in-depth semi-structured interviews. In-depth interviews allowed me to elicit the wide range of information required to understand the characteristics of the businesses operated by Muslim Bangladeshi immigrant women and to explore how business type and place of work shape women’s identities and experiences of life in Toronto.

Qualitative interviewing is a face-to-face social interaction between a researcher and one or more research participants through which the researcher and participants engage in conversation and mutually construct and produce intersubjective knowledge (Scheurich 1997; Bogdan and Biklen 1982). Patton (1990: 278) writes that “the purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in and on someone else’s mind ... to access the perspective of the person being interviewed”. Qualitative researchers implement in-depth interviews “to get people’s witness accounts of the social world’, to encourage interviewees to reflect on their experiences or belief, or to provide segments of talk that researchers can analyze to learn about their inner world” (Hammersley 2003: 120). Interviewing is a self-conscious social ‘performance’ in which various

social interpretations transfer from one acting individual to another through both verbal and nonverbal channels and codes (ibid). Schostak (2005) uses the term 'inter-view' to explain how the words and texts produced through an interview are inevitably shaped at the intersection of two different worlds, one of the researcher and the other of the researched.

The exchange of information between the researcher and the researched however is not equal since there are essential differences in roles. The researcher remains in charge of posing questions, regulating the direction of conversation, and emphasizing particular topics that are important for the research (Dutta 2006). Winchester (1996) argues that through the process of posing and directing questions, researchers unpredictably open up dialogues about different aspects of the respondents' life stories and capture the views and feelings of respondents that emanate instantly and naturally in ways that no other research methods allow.

There are a number of criticisms of interviews. Some argue that a research interview is a professional conversation - a conversation with a purpose that involves intentions, negotiations, and interpretations (Lincoln and Guba 1985: 268). During the interview process, the researcher and the participant constantly perform and evaluate their own and each other's performance adjusting questions and responses throughout the interaction (Schostak 2005). "Each interview [therefore offers] a partial (both incomplete and biased) view of particular states of affair or events" (Schostak 2005: 15). In addition, the researcher and the participants may not understand the research topic and the questions in the same way. The intentions of the participants to hide information about their personal experiences and other sensitive matters or to provide false information about what they really believe and practice can generate wrong and deceptive information about their experiences (Mishler 1986).

For this research, the advantages of in-depth interviews outweighed their limitations. Interviews engage the researcher and the participants in conversation which is a fundamental mode of human interaction for getting to know others' experiences and feelings. Interviews - posing and answering questions- allow participants to speak in their own terms and to describe their accounts and situations in various ways (Hammersley 2013). Respondents' diverse and varied experiences produce new themes, ideas and concerns that may challenge preconceived notions (ibid). Hence, interviews are a crucial data collection method to build up new grounded theories from people's interpretations of their experiences (Olsen 2012). I conducted twenty-eight semi-structured in-depth interviews with Muslim Bangladeshi immigrant women who operate different types of ethnic businesses. Among the respondents, sixteen women were involved in home-based businesses and twelve women had businesses in formal workplaces at the time of the interviews. I also interviewed two women who work at Bangladeshi community based organizations. They served as key informants in this study. One woman works at Bangladeshi-Canadian Community Services (BCS) and the other works at SAWRO.

In-depth interviews enabled me to investigate<sup>30</sup> and compare how operating businesses at home and outside the home affects Bangladeshi women's identities, including responsibilities for unpaid work, household decision making processes, cultural and religious practices, resource mobilization for business, negotiation between personal goals and family needs, and negotiation between personal views and community expectations. Crucial aspects of the relations between workplace and home, these topics provide insight into the ways that workplace location influences women's identities.

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<sup>30</sup> My long time experiences in interviewing as a researcher equipped me with the personal skills necessary to pose relevant questions effectively and strategically and listen to respondents' views and feelings with patience and interest.

### **3.4.3. Sampling Strategies, Validity and Representativeness**

I gained access to potential interview participants while working at SAWRO where I explained the objectives of the research to the Executive Director (ED). I asked her to disseminate information among the women who attend training programs and come for housing and settlement services. I distributed a leaflet describing the research to recruit interview participants (Appendix - B). The ED encouraged women to take part in interviews by vouching for my honesty and reliability as a researcher and emphasizing my long-term relation with the organization as a member of the Bangladeshi community. The ten women I interviewed through SAWRO were involved with the organization's programs and events. To increase diversity in the sample of interview participants, I adopted a deliberate snowball sampling technique. In interviews, I asked about other women in the neighborhood who had similar or different businesses. They referred me to six women who agreed to participate in the research. Recruiting interview participants from SAWRO was relatively easy and quick because of my involvement in the organization.

The sixteen women I interviewed during my active participation in SAWRO operated home-based businesses. I could not gain access to women who operate non-H-B businesses through SAWRO. This situation led me to adopt different approaches and techniques to make contact with these women. First, I implemented a reputational sampling technique by asking the women and men I met at social and cultural events to introduce me to women who had businesses in the neighbourhood. One male restaurant owner provided contact information for two women who operate restaurants. I used purposive sampling to contact women who have businesses outside the home. I approached women who operated businesses in the area near the intersection of Danforth and Victoria Park Avenues. I distributed the leaflet about my research

and the consent form to assure them that the research was only for academic purposes. Through my regular visits to the business locations and constant persuasion, I managed to interview nine women who operate different types of businesses in the commercial area.

The validity and representativeness of the knowledge from samples developed by reputational methods have been criticized. Validity is “the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers” (Hammersley 1990: 57). Validity is epistemologically problematic in qualitative interviews since ‘reality’ is always viewed through the perspectives of the researcher and the participants in an interview situation (Hammersley 1992; Sui and DeLyser 2012). Patton (2002: 244) argues that there are no fixed rules for sample size in qualitative research. Qualitative researchers do not seek a representative sample to generalize social phenomenon, rather they study a sample to understand the causal mechanisms that underpins their distinct experiences (Sui and DeLyser 2012). As Winchester (1999: 62, cited in Wong 2003: 88) argues:

*“the validity of qualitative interviews cannot rest on their representativeness or whether they are capable of generalization in an empirical way. Rather, their validity rests on whether they can help elucidate structures and causal mechanisms, which underpin observable behavior”.*

The sample of women whose experiences and perspectives I explored through interviews does not offer a generalizable representation of the population of Bangladeshi Muslim women in Toronto. As a researcher, I argue against the notion of generalization. I believe that “if there is a ‘true’ generalization, it is that there can be no generalization” (Lincoln and Guba 1985: 124). I agree with Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006: 192) that the goal of a qualitative case study is to understand social processes or “the “meanings” individuals attribute to their given social situation, not necessarily to make generalizations”.

While recruiting interview participants, I did not confine myself to SAWRO networks. I participated in community events and festivals, I visited Bangladeshi social and cultural institutions in Toronto, and I also participated in Bengali New Year and Eid celebrations in Bangla Town. My association with SAWRO biased my sample of home-based workers towards women who have been involved with the organization. Since most of the women I met at SAWRO reside in Teesdale Place, snowball sampling biased the sample towards women who operate home-based business in this housing complex.

Though I approached almost all Bangladeshi women operating non-H-B businesses near the intersection of Danforth and Victoria Park Avenues, only those who are knowledgeable about academic research and those who found some connections with me, often on the basis of our regional origin or attendance at the same educational institutions in Bangladesh, agreed to participate in the interviews. The limited diversity within the sample decreases its applicability in different contexts (Tansey 2007). However, working with a small sample allows in-depth understanding of social processes in a given local context (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2006). The significance of this research is not in generalizing and reproducing the experiences of the women who participated in the interviews but in interpreting their personal experiences as meaningful and valid and exploring the circumstances that shaped their experiences.

### **3.5. Characteristics of the Interview Sample**

This section provides a description of Bangladeshi immigrant women who were interviewed to highlight their socio-economic characteristics, migration histories and settlement patterns in Toronto. The social characteristics of women who operate businesses at home and those who operate businesses in formal workplace are compared. The discussion also highlights their class and religious identities and their employment experiences in Bangladesh. The

background information informs the analysis of how the two groups of business operators establish and operate their businesses while negotiating gender roles and identities in Toronto.

Women who work in ethnic businesses are from diverse backgrounds and they are engaged in varied types of businesses (Table 3-1). There are a few differences between home-based and non-home-based business operators in terms of age, education, work experience, and period of migration. The ages of the women range from twenty-four to sixty years. Younger women, less than 35 years old, are more likely to work in home-based businesses and older women are more likely to operate non-home-based businesses. All but one of the women was married. Twenty-four women had children whilst four women did not have any children.

The home-based businesses include catering, beautification, child care, sewing, home decoration, and teaching music and computer programs. Seven of the sixteen women are involved in multiple home-based businesses. All of the home-based businesses are ‘informal’<sup>31</sup> in character, functioning outside the government regulatory framework and thus, missing from any official record and data about entrepreneurship. Among home-based workers, seven women have additional employment outside the home. On the other hand, twelve women who operate businesses on Danforth Avenue are engaged in formal retail and service businesses and none of these women have any additional employment besides their businesses.

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<sup>31</sup> By informal activities I mean activities aimed at producing a positive effect on income (for the person executing the activities and/or for the person receiving the results, for which the terms of legislation and regulations (planning requirements, social security legislation, collective labour agreements, and the like) applicable to the activities are not being met ... the decisive characteristic of the informal economy which distinguishes it from the formal economy is the lack of government control (Renooy 1990: 24 - 25 cited in Kloostermal et al. 1998: 252).

**Table 3-1: A Snapshot of the Interview Participants**

Interview Participants	Age Range	Marital Status	Education	Year of Arrival in Canada	Type of Self-employment	Additional Employment
<b>Home-based Business Operators</b>						
IP-3 Selina	25-34	Married	College Diploma	2010	Beautician	N/A
IP-4 Priya	35-44	Married	University Degree	2009	Catering	Work in a Restaurant
IP-5 Sumaiya	35-44	Married	University Degree	2010	Music teacher and Child care	N/A
IP-6 Morjina	45-55	Married	High School	2006	Catering and Sewing	N/A
IP-7 Tuli	25-34	Married	College diploma	2005	Catering and Child Care	Work in SAWRO
IP-8 Parveen	25-34	Married	High School	2003	Sewing	N/A
IP-9 Sufiya	35-44	Married	College diploma	2006	Catering	Work in McDonald's
IP-10 Mira	35-44	Married	College diploma	2010	Catering and Child Care	N/A
IP-11 Nipun	35-44	Married	College diploma	2011	Catering	Work in a Clothing Store
IP-13 Najneen	35-44	Married	University degree	2004	Sewing	Work in a Factory
IP-17 Sabina	20-24	Married	University Degree	2008	Child care and Sewing	Work in a Restaurant
IP-18 Ritu	25-34	Married	University degree	2009	Child care and Home décor	N/A
IP-19 Yasmin	25-34	Married	University Degree	2006	Catering and Child Care	N/A
IP-21 Shimin	25-34	Married	College diploma	2005	Sewing	N/A
IP-22 Farah	25-34	Married	University Degree	2010	Computer Teacher	Work in SAWRO
IP-29 Kamrun	35-44	Married	University Degree	2011	Catering	N/A
<b>Non-Home-Based Business Operators</b>						
IP-1 Nupur	45-55	Married	College Diploma	1985	Restaurant	N/A
IP-2 Rupali	45-55	Married	High School	1999	Retail Store	N/A
IP-12 Shahin	45-55	Married	College Diploma	1985	Beauty Parlor	N/A
IP-14 Rebeka	35-44	Single	University degree	1999	Restaurant	N/A
IP-15 Jinat	25-34	Married	College Diploma	2007	Beauty Parlor	N/A
IP-16 Habiba	25-34	Married	High School	2000	Jewellery Store	N/A
IP-23 Nishat	45-55	Married	High School	1993	Retail Store	N/A
IP-24 Laili	35-44	Married	College Diploma	1993	Retail Store	N/A
IP-25 Soniya	35-44	Married	College Diploma	2001	Retail Store	N/A
IP-26 Mariyam	55-64	Married	College Diploma	1998	Retail Store	N/A
IP-28 Dipika	35-44	Married	University Degree	2003	Retail Store	N/A
IP-30 Anita	35-44	Married	University Degree	2005	Retail Store	N/A

Of the participants (n=28), the largest proportion of women (42.9%) had a college diploma, 39.3% women had a university degree and a small proportion of women (17.9%) had only graduated from high school, which indicates that educated women with a college or university degree participated in the research. Li (2001) found that immigrants with a higher level of education are more inclined towards self-employment in Canada. In contrast, the 2006 census of Canada suggests that the overall effect of educational attainment on Bangladeshi immigrants' involvement in self-employment is modest and statistically insignificant (see chapter 4). However, how gender affects the link between educational attainment and immigrants' propensity for self-employment is understudied. Based on a case study, Maitra (2013) describes how university educated South Asian immigrant women adopt home-based businesses when they fail to obtain paid employment in Toronto. No study indicates how educational attainment affects immigrant women's involvement in home-based and non-H-B businesses. Among the Bangladeshi women who participated in this research, most university-educated women operate home-based businesses; many women who operate home-based businesses are more educated than those who operate businesses in formal workplaces.

The 2006 census of Canada suggests that the largest proportion of Bangladeshi immigrants residing in the Toronto, CMA arrived between 1990 and 2006, the period when the majority of Bangladeshi immigrant women (92.9%) interviewed in this study arrived (Table 1) However, the length of stay in Canada differs between the two groups of women. Most Bangladeshi women who operate home-based businesses are recent immigrants that arrived after 2005 and their length of stay in Canada is shorter than that of most women who operate non-home-based businesses. All home-based business operators migrated to Canada after 2000. On the other hand, seven non-home-based business operators migrated to Canada before 2000. Two

had lived in Canada for close to 30 years and five for more than 15 years. The rest of the non-home-base business operators migrated after 2000.

### **3.5.1. Employment Status in Bangladesh**

The interview participants are educated middle class Bangladeshi women, whose financial security was provided by male family members when they lived in Bangladesh. Less than half of the Muslim Bangladeshi immigrant women that I interviewed (42.9%) had participated in the paid labour market in Bangladesh. The proportion of women who were employed in Bangladesh is higher among home-based business operators than for those who operate non-home-based businesses. Among home-based business operators, five women used to teach in primary schools, four women worked in private companies and seven women were homemakers. On the other hand, among non-home-based business operators, only three women had employment in Bangladesh; two worked as beauticians and one was a primary school teacher. Nine of the twelve women who operate non-home-based businesses did not have paid work in Bangladesh before migrating to Canada. Women who had paid work in Bangladesh identified themselves as complementary earners. A few women obtained paid work as a hobby to pass the time or as a source of pocket money. Regardless of their employment status both groups of women mentioned that their husbands or male family members had been the primary breadwinners in their households in Bangladesh.

To understand the links between social identities and the employment status of research participants prior to migration, it is useful to review the circumstances in which women engage in paid work in Bangladesh. Women's participation in paid work in Bangladesh is significantly shaped by patriarchal gender and religious norms and class status (Feldman and McCarthy 1983; Kabeer and Mahmud 2004; Dil 1985). Differences in women's labour force participation are also

apparent between rural and urban contexts (Dil 1985). Bangladesh, the second largest Muslim country (by number of population) in the world, is “an extremely patriarchal society<sup>32</sup>” where traditionally, working outside the home has been prohibited for women (Kabeer and Mahmud 2004; Balk 1997; Kabeer 1988). The Islamic notion of ‘purdah’<sup>33</sup>/veil acts as a religious justification to exclude Muslim women from paid work and visible social roles. The saliency of ‘purdah’ among Bangladeshi women depends on their class and social status. Historically, observing ‘purdah’ has been more prominent among women with higher social status. As Karim (1963) notes “seclusion was expected of women of good social status ... They accepted their seclusion for the sake of their own prestige and for the maintenance of social distance.”

In the pre-colonial and early colonial periods, social status in East Bengal (now known as Bangladesh) was typically determined by ownership of land (Halder 2012; Chain et al. 1979). In the late 19th century, the class system of British East Bengal went through a major transformation with the rapid spread of English education. The land-based social class system was gradually replaced by an education- and occupation-based class system (Halder 2012). Under colonial rule, a new middle class with British education - described as ‘salarial’ and ‘*bhadralok*’ (gentleman) class - emerged who served the colonial administration (Alavi 1989: 17). This newly formed middle class was characterized by their administrative and office jobs

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<sup>32</sup> In Bangladesh, patriarchy describes a distribution of power and resources within families such that men maintain power and control of resources, and women are powerless and dependent on men. The material base of patriarchy is men's control of property, income, and women's labor. The structural elements of patriarchal control are reinforcing and include aspects of the kinship system, political system, and religion (Cain et al. 1979).

<sup>33</sup> *Purdah*, which literally means curtain, refers to the physical segregation of living space, as well as the covering of body and face. In broader terms it also refers to the modest and deferential behavior of women and the restrictions on their movements (Chowdhury 1992: 338). *Purdah* functions as a system of social control that emphasizes the separation of women from men and the seclusion of women from the world outside the home. Whereas the outward symbol of *purdah* is the veil, in Bangladesh, *purdah* operates through a more generalized system in which women are confined to the household compound (*ghare*), away from the outside (*baire*) world of men. The seclusion of women is supported by a powerful ideological apparatus whereby women are socialized into modesty and submission, and family honor (*izzat*) rests on the ability of the family to seclude its women (Kibria 1995: 293).

and their distance from agrarian and physical labour. The legacy of this education- and occupation-based class system persisted when East Bengal with its Muslim majority turned into East Pakistan as a part of the Muslim Pakistani state in 1947 (Halder 2012). The urban salaried middle class expanded following the independence of Bangladesh in 1971<sup>34</sup> (Siddiqui 1990). It is primarily urban since land ownership and family lineage still influence class hierarchy in rural areas (ibid).

Class structure has a profound impact on women's engagement in paid work (Dil 1985; Cain et al. 1979). In patriarchal Bangladeshi society, women's social status is determined by their male family members' status. Wives, daughters and children of educated professionals automatically enjoy middle class privileges. Their class privilege in turn provides middle class women with educational opportunities. Research suggests that while poor women in Bangladesh engage in paid work to survive and combat poverty, middle class women often consider their paid work as a symbol of class status (Dil 1985). They take up employment as complementary earners. In most cases, middle class employed women have one or two maids to help them with household work (ibid). Engagement in paid work does not free women from patriarchal control. As Dil (1985: 52) explains:

*“Freedom from economic want, higher levels of education and help with household work do not, however, indicate a greater degree of independence of middle and upper class women [in Bangladesh]. Like poorer women their lives are also controlled by males – fathers, husbands and even sons- at different stages in their lives. All important choices in the course of a woman's*

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<sup>34</sup> “In 1947, the independence of India from British colonial rule resulted in the creation of a new homeland for the Muslims of India by carving out the eastern and northwestern corners of the country, which came to be known as East and West Pakistan, respectively. Thus, in the formation of Pakistan, Islam was the sole principle of nationhood unifying two widely disparate regions, separated not only by geography but also by sharp cultural and linguistic differences. Reluctant to rely on religious allegiance alone, successive governments in Pakistan embarked on a strategy of forcible cultural assimilation towards the Bengalis. Over the years, such impositions allied to West Pakistani administrative, military, linguistic, civil, and economic control resulted in the nine-month long liberation war in 1971, and ultimately in the formation of Bangladesh” (Mookherjee 2006: 435).

*life are made by male relatives ... most of these choices are directed toward preparing a woman for marriage and motherhood”.*

Studying female garment workers, Kibria (1995) argues that women are not a monolithic group in Bangladesh; rather social and family contexts shape working women’s experience in varied ways. She found that women with poor rural backgrounds are more assertive about controlling their own incomes than working class urban women. Most studies, however, suggest that despite differences in women’s employment experiences across social classes, women’s work is still viewed in the context of the patriarchal system in Bangladesh (Kabeer and Mahmud 2004; Kibria 1995). In contemporary Bangladesh, as White (2010: 337) notes

*“while some still maintain that women should not work outside the home, for most people the major issues now are the kind of work, what and where it is done, and how women conduct themselves within it”.*

Islamic religious norms which represent “a strong apology for patriarchy” effectively discourage women from seeking paid work outside the home (Cain et al. 1979). Men are regarded as providers while women are constructed as home makers regardless of their participation in paid work. As Cain et al. (1979) note, this sexual division of labor applies to almost all women in Bangladesh, irrespective of their economic status and class location.

Mirroring the patriarchal social system, the research participants associated their middle class status and privilege in Bangladeshi with their husbands’ occupations. Both home-based and non-H-B business operators highlighted the comfortable and financially secure lives in Bangladesh achieved through male family members’ high paid job. Those who had paid work stressed that their income was not required for family maintenance. Irrespective of their employment status, women mentioned that their primary role was to take care of the family as wives, mothers and daughters. Most of them had maid(s) who helped with domestic chores

which confirms their middle class status. None of the participants was involved in businesses in Bangladesh.

### **3.5.2. Migration Goals and Experiences**

Most Bangladeshi Muslim women - twenty one out of twenty eight - came to Canada as dependants of their husbands. Four women migrated by marrying a Canadian citizen or permanent resident who sponsored them. Two women migrated to Canada as family class immigrants. Only one non-H-B business operator migrated as a principal applicant and her husband came as a spouse. Ghosh (2005) and Halder (2012) noted that most Bangladeshi women migrate as dependants of male economic migrants and as family class migrants. As information about immigrant class was not reported in the 2006 census, the immigration class of the participants could not be compared with the general trends among the Bangladeshi population in Toronto.

Twenty seven women came directly to Toronto. Only one woman – a non-home-based business operator- initially settled in Montreal, lived there for three years, and then moved to Toronto. Twenty six women came directly from Bangladesh which implies that for most Bangladeshi Muslim women who participated in the study, coming to Canada is their first experience of crossing an international border and confronting the unfamiliarity of a new place. Of the two women who came to Canada through step migration, one who operates a non-home-based business came from Norway where she lived with her husband for four years. The other woman who operates a home-based business lived in Sweden with her husband for two years and then migrated to Canada.

Feminist scholars argue that a focus on gender is required to understand the conditions under which women migrate and resettle in a new society (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994, 1999; Simon

and Brettell 1986; Willis and Yeo 2000). The migration process is inherently gendered and associated with different negotiations and outcomes for men and women (Boyd 1990; Dion and Dion 2001). Recent literature also sheds light on how intersectional relationship between gender, class and ethnicity affect migration (George 2005; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001). Supporting feminist analysis, the Bangladeshi women who took part in the research indicate that their migration decision making was shaped by gendered social relations and family negotiations (Cooke 2007).

The Bangladeshi Muslim women I interviewed had migrated to Canada with the desire to have a better and secure life with more opportunities and possibilities for their family members. Most of these women share the same dreams regarding the betterment of their situations through migration and as such there is no distinguishable difference in the motives for migration between the home and non-home-based business operators. Considering the patriarchal societal context in Bangladesh where women are generally constructed as wives and mothers, it is not surprising that most research participants who migrated to Canada as spouses translate ‘a better life’ as opportunities for their husband to obtain a better job and income and their children to obtain a better education. In most cases the decision to migrate was taken based on the projection of husband’s employment opportunities in Canada as they were the principal applicants. None of the women including those who had had jobs in Bangladesh mentioned that they migrated to Canada to get a better education or for better employment opportunities for themselves. Rather they equate a ‘good life’ with their husband’s and children’s expected opportunities in Canada.

While most participants described patriarchal gender relations, I agree with Wong (2003) that often “patriarchal gender relations and cultural norms are contested, negotiated, reorganized and reproduced by men and women as they migrate” and these negotiations need to be recognized. The story of Shahin - the only woman who migrated to Canada as a principal

applicant- illustrates the possibilities for Bangladeshi Muslim women to play a different role in migration. Shahin's husband was an established business man in Bangladesh but did not have enough money to migrate to Canada under the business class category. Since her husband did not have any professional experience to apply as an economic class migrant, she completed a course on beautification from a well-known beauty parlor in India so that she could apply under the skilled worker class. Although she took the decision to migrate to provide a better education for her daughter, her principal role in the migration process challenges the traditional patriarchal notion of migration in which men are almost automatically constructed as principal applicants.

Though most women I interviewed migrated to Canada as dependants of their husbands or other family members, they construct themselves not as passive migrants but as active agents who contributed to the wellbeing of their family by migrating to Canada. When explaining their migration to Canada, most of the women emphasize their roles and contributions as wives, mothers, daughters and sisters which they value the most. The story of Shahin provides an alternative narrative about the role of Bangladeshi women in the migration process, even though the women confirmed that the socio-economic status which most women were expecting to enjoy after migration would be achieved by their husbands' and other male family members' economic activities.

### **3.5.3. Settlement Patterns in Toronto**

Bangladeshi women's settlement process is shaped by social ties that are reconstructed or continued from their places of origin (Faist 2000; Kelly and Lusia 2005). Bangladeshi immigrants tend to develop residential clusters in the low income neighbourhoods in Toronto (Ghosh 2005; Halder 2012). Ghosh (2005) argues that Bangladeshi migrants arrange their initial accommodation by consulting with family, friends and relatives living in Toronto before leaving

Bangladesh. Their dependence on co-ethnic social contacts encourages Bangladeshi migrants to settle in existing Bangladeshi residential clusters in Toronto (Ghosh 2005). In accord with Ghosh's findings, most of the research participants confirm that arranging accommodation was an easy experience for them. Their social networks of friends and relatives who were in Toronto helped them in many ways - by renting a place, paying rent in advance on their behalf and in some cases by letting them stay in their houses for short periods of time. Friends and relatives helped familiarize the women with life in Toronto.

Nupur: I stayed for two weeks in my cousin's house. Actually, I did not want to. We told them to find a house for us before we come to Toronto but they said you are our relatives, at least stay here for 2 weeks. They told me that I may not like the house if they rent it for me. It is better that I look for a house by myself after coming here. Then we came to their house and started looking for an apartment and he helped us to rent an apartment ...

Sufiya: My husband's colleagues came to Canada before we came. One colleague came one year before and my husband had communication with him. Then my husband told him that we got VISA and coming to Canada and requested him to rent a place for us. So after coming here we stayed one week with them then moved to our place.

Settlement patterns of the participants suggest that even though most of them settled in 'Bangla Town' near the intersection of Victoria Park and Danforth Avenues, their housing characteristics differ considerably. All home-based business operators reside in Teesdale Place and Crescent Town high-rise apartment complexes in 'Bangla Town' – the area that is home to the highest concentration of Bangladeshi immigrants in Toronto (Ghosh 2005). All of these women settled in apartment buildings after arrival in Toronto and have been living there since. In contrast, none of the women who operate non-H-B businesses reside in the high-rise buildings. All non-H-B business operators reside in 'Bangla Town' but each of them lives in an owner-occupied house approximately 15 to 20 minutes driving time from their business locations on Danforth Avenue. Their residences are located between Pharmacy Avenue and Dawes Road

(Map 3-1). Three of these non-H-B business operators initially lived in the high-rise apartment buildings before buying a house.

Recall that the concentration of home-based business operators in Teesdale Place and Crescent Town apartment buildings resulted to some extent from the way I recruited interview participants through SAWRO which is located within these high-rise apartment complexes. Members of SAWRO referred women who have home-based businesses. The concentration of home-based business operators in Teesdale Place and Crescent Town apartments and non-H-B business operators outside these apartment complexes indicate that these two groups of women have varied housing experiences in Toronto.

The high-rise buildings where the home-based business operators reside are low cost housing in Toronto (Ghosh 2005). Halder (2012) observed a class-based polarization between Bangladeshis who reside in high-rise apartments and those who reside in owned housing within and outside the Bangladeshi neighbourhood in Toronto. Living in high-rise apartments in the Bangladeshi neighborhood is evidence of marginalization and downward social mobility (ibid). The 2006 census data reveal that a very small proportion of Bangladeshi immigrants in Toronto are homeowners while the majority resides in rental dwellings. Home-ownership requires financial resources (Edmonston and Lee 2013). Their housing tenures suggest that women who operate non-H-B businesses may have better financial situations than home-based business operators.

The social characteristics of Bangladeshi immigrant Muslim women in the study provide evidence of the social and spatial processes shaping their engagement in home and non-H-B businesses. The background information indicates that home-based business operators are more educated than non-H-B business operators with a higher percentage having a university degree.

They are also younger, migrated comparatively recently to Canada and have more experience in paid employment in Bangladesh than women operating non-H-B businesses. This observation inspired me to investigate why educated women with previous work experience are engaged in home-based businesses. I asked what circumstances encourage women who did not work before to operate non-H-B businesses. The differences between home-based and non-H-B business operators in terms of housing type and tenure suggest that they have different socio-economic status in Toronto. This observation provides a basis to explore how their post migration class locations and gender roles influence paid work and unpaid social reproductive work.

### **3.6. Reflection on the Interview Procedure**

I started interviews in June 2012 and they continued until the end of August 2013. The women who have home-based businesses were interviewed at the SAWRO office because most of these women were members of the organization and used to come to the office regularly to attend programs and meetings. It was easier for them to sit with me for interviews after finishing their activities. These women were already familiar with me as I met them a few times at various social events before the interviews. I arranged the interviews at the same office even for home-based workers who were not involved with the organization. SAWRO's proximity to the women's residence made it a convenient location. Since women work at home, I did not want to disrupt their work time by visiting them in their homes. I also did not want to interview them in the presence of family members who could influence their opinions or make them uncomfortable to talk about their everyday experiences. Interviews with the home-based workers took place during the weekends mostly in the evenings when they took a break from work. During the month of *Ramadan*, I conducted interviews in the afternoon because the participants needed to be free by evening to break their fast and perform the prayers.

The interview settings for the women who operate non-H-B businesses were quite different. The SAWRO office was not convenient for these interviews. All of the women preferred to be interviewed in their workplaces where they usually spent the day. I conducted interviews during weekdays and weekends. While, it did not take much time to arrange a meeting with the home-based workers because of my presence at the SAWRO office and my regular contact with the participants, it was challenging to arrange meetings with the women in formal work places because of their busy schedules and less familiarity with me.

When I met each interview participant, I explained the goals of the research and expressed my gratitude to each woman for taking part in the interviews. I presented and explained the consent agreement (Appendix - A) and then asked each participant to read it, and ask me if she had any question. I also translated the consent form in Bengali so that women understood the content clearly. I made clear that participants' identities would be confidential and that they could withdraw from the interview at any time during the interview. I guaranteed that I would maintain their anonymity in the research to protect their identity. Moreover, I assured the women that I would not discuss their opinions and statements with anyone else. Since most of the women reside in the same neighborhood, it was important to reassure them about the confidentiality of their opinions. I also promised to share the research findings with them. While most of the women signed the consent form amicably, a few women hesitated to sign the form though they wanted to share their experiences. As a member of the Bangladeshi community, my education, family background, and verbal commitments were more crucial than a consent form to gain the women's trust. Consequently, I had to add an amendment to my ethics application to get permission for using verbal consent. Going through this process delayed the

interviews for three months. After getting the permission to use verbal consent from the ethics committee, I was able to conduct the last ten interviews.

All interviews were one-to-one conversations which lasted from one and a half to three hours. I prepared a semi-structured interview guide beforehand with relevant topics (Appendix - C). I organized the interview guide in ten sections to learn about respondents' migration and settlement experiences, housing and current residence, employment experiences before and after the migration, reasons for starting the business and everyday business activities, nature of social networks, experiences in their workplaces, nature of social reproductive work, religiosity and cultural practices, views and comments about 'Bangla Town' and the Bangladeshi community, and business challenges and future plans. The selection of these topics was guided by my interest in the experiences that shape the women's identities and work lives in Toronto. The interview topics were organized to capture how settlement experiences led the women to adopt two different pathways to ethnic businesses. I did not ask any precise question or follow a sequence in questioning when I interviewed the participants. Rather, I adopted a semi-structured format of questioning that allowed the participants to describe their life stories. At the end of each interview, I skimmed through the interview guide to make sure we had covered all the topics. This interviewing format helped me to identify the experiences important to each participant and explore topics that are not included in the interview guide.

After the first six interviews a number of new issues appeared which were absent in the interview guide. For example, the first three respondents talked about workloads that reduced their opportunities for socialization. Two respondents described the importance of interaction with customers for the success of their businesses and another two respondents described how they recruited employees. Based on their experiences, I added new questions about these topics

that revealed the women's varied business practices and experiences. The topics varied between the women who operate home-based business and those who operate businesses outside the home since relevant issues were different. The different contexts of the women's businesses added new directions to the conversations which made the interviews interesting and exploratory. I conducted all the interviews in Bengali and used a voice recorder to record the interviews with the permission of the participants. I wrote notes about the interview situations, my reflections on the interview with each participant, and my initial analysis of the participant's stories during and after the interviews.

The interviews were characterized by an integral process of socialization where our actions and roles emerge out of unexpected circumstances and we instrumentally select and enact certain identities (Zurcher 1983). Interviews were not just a technical process of data collection; they consisted of a series of intricate subject positions navigated by me and the participants. It is often assumed that research participants share detailed information with a researcher from their own community (Hay 2000). My interview experiences indicate otherwise. My status as a Bangladeshi PhD student in a Canadian university conducting research about the experiences of Bangladeshi women actually created discomfort for some participants. For many of the Bangladeshi women that were interviewed, migration and settlement in Toronto had not been a pleasant experience and their hopes and dreams for a better life were not fulfilled. They viewed me as a privileged woman and some were hesitant to discuss frankly their employment and family issues. I tried to lessen my social differences with participants by highlighting migration and settlement experiences that we shared. As a researcher, I showed empathy by highlighting how difficult it was for me as an international student to cope with life in Toronto. I emphasized the challenges I also faced in finding employment in Toronto. I tried to relate my experiences to

those of my participants to make them as comfortable as possible about discussing their pain and disappointments. During the interviews, I shared different stories of my life and my family members to develop a trusting relationship with the women that allowed them to become comfortable sharing their stories. Throughout the interviews, I had to continuously negotiate the relations with the participants to gain access to their experiences. I do not claim that I got total access to their inner worlds but by developing friendly and emotional connections, I was able to obtain rich information during the interviews.

Some of the participants were diplomatic about expressing their religious beliefs and describing cultural and religious practices in the Bangladeshi neighbourhood. They did not want to say anything negative about the Bangladeshi neighborhood. In these instances, I shared my personal opinions about religious practices. Although I am not a practicing Muslim and do not wear a scarf or other form of 'hijab', I avoided expressing any opinions about participants' religious and cultural practices. As feminist scholars suggest, the researcher-researched relations are never equal since the researcher enjoys more control over the interview (Cotterill 1992; Kobayashi 1994). Occupying a privileged position as an interviewer, I (re)directed and controlled the discussions to avoid irrelevant topics. I also tried to balance power relations by acknowledging participants' help and support.

### **3.6.1. Interviews with the Key Informants**

Two key informants were chosen from two Bangladeshi community based organizations - SAWRO and BCS - on the basis of their lengthy experience working with Bangladeshis in Toronto and their extensive networks in the Bangladeshi population. While preparing my research proposal, I met both to gather information about ethnic businesses in the neighborhood and women's involvement with these businesses. When I asked them to be key informants for

the research, they happily agreed to provide information. Since their work involves identifying the social and economic issues of Bangladeshi immigrants in Toronto, they showed a keen interest in my research. They thought my research might provide reliable information about Bangladeshi women's social-economic integration which they would be able to use to write proposals for funding.

The key informants were my references in 'Bangla Town'. Their roles as 'gate keepers', made it easier for me to access Bangladeshi women in 'Bengali Para'. The key informants provided information about the labour market challenges Bangladeshi women face in Toronto and the factors that influence women's participation in home-based and non-H-B businesses. Establishing relationships with key individuals was crucial for recruiting research participants (Valentine 2001; Tansey 2007). I interviewed the key informants at their offices for 1 to 2 hours. I developed a separate open-ended interview guide for the interviews (Appendix - D). While interviewing them, I explored their perspectives about Bangladeshi women's labour market integration, neighbourhood environment, business activities, gender roles, and economic and social issues. I also explored the initiatives that community organizations have taken to help women gain employment in Toronto.

### **3.7. Analysis and Interpretation of Qualitative Data**

The objective of qualitative analysis is the search for meanings and patterns in participants' own accounts with the aim of letting the participants speak for themselves in the research (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2006). Immediately after finishing each interview, I wrote a reflective description of the interview process and then transcribed the recorded conversations. In the transcripts, I kept certain words and phrases in Bengali to emphasize cultural and 'traditional' meanings and expressions. I also took notes about the non-verbal aspects of communication such

as laughter, silence, hesitation and grunts to document how participants assigned meanings to their stories through different gestures. Once the interviews were transcribed, I started analyzing the transcripts systematically by coding the interviews<sup>35</sup>.

A code in qualitative analysis “is a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based ... data” (Saldaña 2009: 3). Coding involves the deconstruction of data segments through fragmenting and merging the segments into a set of categories “which relate conceptually and theoretically, and which make assumptions about the phenomenon being studied” (Jones 2007: 64). A major concern about qualitative coding is the fragmentation of a portion of information from its context and the classification of each portion with stable and bounded meanings since in real life the meanings of human conversation are not discretely bounded but have ‘fuzzy’ boundaries and multiple meanings (ibid). Coding has been criticized for reducing the data to some general phrases and words that disrupt the continuity of expressions and squeeze out the feelings and emotions of the participants within the interviews context (Tesch 1990).

In response to these criticisms, Coffey and Atkinson (1996: 29-31) propose that “coding is usually a mixture of data [summation] and data complication ... breaking the data apart in analytically relevant ways in order to lead toward further questions about the data”. Tesch (1990) states that “coding is much more than giving categories to data”. It is also about conceptualizing the data, raising questions, providing tentative answers about the relationships among and within the data and discovering the data. Qualitative coding is central to the development of grounded theory as proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). They describe the ways in which researchers

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<sup>35</sup> Twenty eight interviews with home-based and non-H-B business operators were coded. Interviews with the two key informants were not coded. Their interviews were used for background information.

closely read and reread transcriptions and identify patterns as the foundation of theoretical frames to delineate the study subject. Grounded theory proposes that codes, data and concepts are closely connected to each other and coding is a means of generating new concepts about a study phenomenon.

In this research, I considered coding as an interpretive act to establish a ‘critical link’ between interview data and social themes. Analyzing and interpreting the interconnections of multiple identities from qualitative data has been recognized as a methodological challenge in intersectionality research (Bowleg 2008). No coherent method has developed to identify interrelations between various identities from participants’ narratives. There is a dearth of literature on intersectionality from a methodological perspective (Bowleg 2008; McCall 2005; Cuadraz and Uttal 1999). Researchers draw on multiple techniques to analyze intersecting social positions from interview transcripts depending on the objectives of the research (Bowleg 2008).

I followed an inductive approach to explore the meanings in the interview data by implementing three cycles of coding: 1) open coding- disaggregating the data into categories, 2) axial coding - recognizing relationships between categories and 3) selective coding – identifying the core concepts (Strauss and Corbin 1998). I utilized computer aided data coding and analysis software ‘NVivo 10’<sup>36</sup> to build up coding and interpretation of the interview transcripts.

In the first cycle of coding, I identified patterns: similarity, differences, frequency, sequence, correspondence, and causation of actions as documented in the interview data. I

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<sup>36</sup> The use of NVivo minimized repetitive time-consuming manual tasks of coding and provided better data management and storage facilities. Researchers suggest that software aids provide “higher accuracy and greater transparency” (Welsh 2002), and “facilitates more effective and efficient analysis” (Coffey and Atkinson 1996). Before working with NVivo 10, I briefly coded the interview transcripts manually to gain an idea about the major patterns presented in the interview conversation. After manually coding all the interview transcripts, I formed a list of open codes which helped me to start the coding process with NVivo.

categorized these patterns with appropriate words and phrases. I searched for repetitive patterns to assign codes/nodes. New sets of codes emerged as I analyzed the interviews. While coding I asked reflective questions about the data segments and documented my reflections in memos. I frequently interrupted the coding to write theoretical questions stimulated by the transcripts to compare with the existing literature and allow new perspectives to arise.

In the second cycle of axial coding<sup>37</sup>, I started grouping the codes that share some common properties under broader themes and sub-themes. Themes resulted from the connections between various data segments. The themes of analysis changed and expanded as my ideas developed through repeated interpretation of the data. Through interpretation and reinterpretation, I finally developed a grid of interrelated themes and sub-themes consisting of overlapping codes. The major themes that are not mutually exclusive encompass:

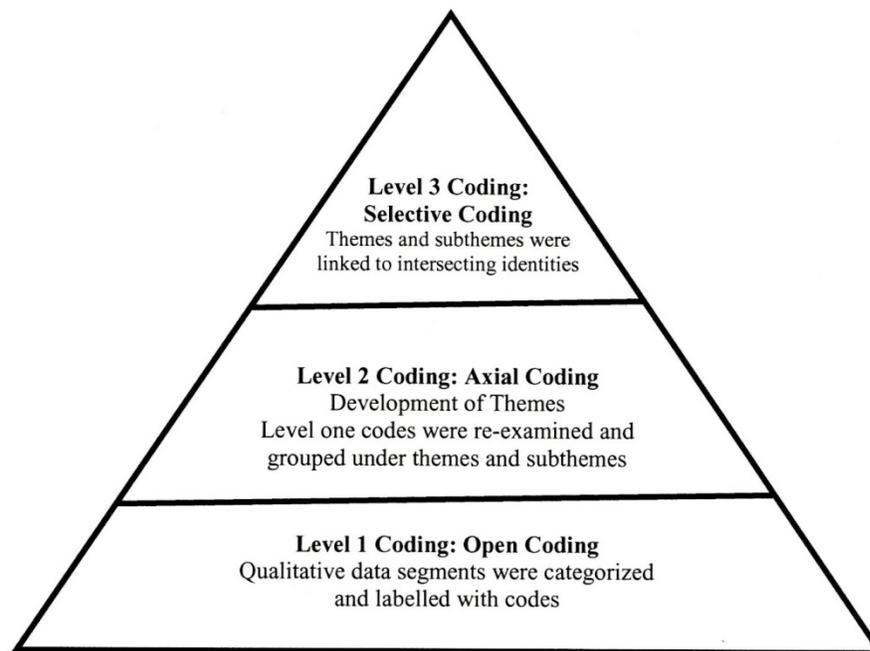
- the reasons for migration
- settlement experience
- employment experience in Bangladesh
- employment experience in Toronto
- entry into businesses
- family contexts and negotiations
- reproductive work
- business networks
- challenges and limitations in businesses
- customers and markets
- neighbourhood and community relations
- religious and cultural practices
- importance of business location

After creating the themes and subthemes, I identified how gender intersects with race, class, ethnicity and religion within the themes and subthemes. The third cycle of coding allowed for linking the themes and subthemes with theoretical notions of intersectionality. This inductive

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<sup>37</sup> Axial coding involved a close examination of the data segments to create links between different codes considering the context within which each code emerged and the opinions and interactions that engendered from it.

process allowed me to explore how identities intersect differently within and across various themes. For example, gender and class are prominent in migration experience; gender, class and race are linked to labour market experience, and ethnicity, gender and class are prominent in themes such as settlement experience, business networks and reproductive work.



This illustration broadly describes the stages of the coding process. The coding process is best viewed from the bottom up as the data are progressively refined to arrive at categories, subthemes, themes, and theories.

**Figure 3-3: The Steps of Coding**

I also created a node classification file<sup>38</sup> to incorporate the information about respondents' workplace and demographic attributes (Table 3-1). This technique allowed me to distinguish information provided by home-based and non-H-B business operators and compare the themes based on women's workplaces. In the final stage, I further refined the links among the

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<sup>38</sup> In NVivo, node classifications are used to store descriptive information about the people, places or other cases in the project. This information can be used to make comparisons or to gather material by attributes of the people and places. ([http://help-nv10.qsrinternational.com/desktop/procedures/create\\_node\\_classifications.htm](http://help-nv10.qsrinternational.com/desktop/procedures/create_node_classifications.htm)).

themes to develop my core arguments. Integration of these themes formed the conceptual background of my analysis through which I addressed the research questions.

Weston et al. (2001: 397) states that there is “a reciprocal relationship between the development of a coding system and the evolution of understanding a phenomenon”. The direction of quantitative analysis does not emerge from the mundane process of coding but it develops through the how and why one constructs the codes that refer to particular occurrences in the data. The themes I constructed are to some extent shaped by the theoretical and conceptual questions which I delineated before conducting the interviews and broader conceptual arguments that influenced the analysis of the transcripts.

### **3.8. Conclusions**

This chapter described the rationale for the methods used in the research and the detailed procedures of data collection and analysis. The selection of methods is influenced by my philosophical understanding of experiential reality and my positionality vis-à-vis the study’s research questions and objectives. I adopted research methods that enabled me to address the theoretical notions of intersectional identities in relation to ethnic entrepreneurship, explore links between identities and spatial processes informing immigrant women’s paid and unpaid work and capture the dynamic and fluid identities of Muslim Bangladeshi immigrant women who operate home and non-H-B businesses. The selection of research participants and the interview questions were shaped by my own subjectivities. My shifting insider and outsider positions in relation to research participants influenced the information I collected for the study. The research produced ‘situated knowledge’ constituted by me and my research participants’ intersecting social positions and experiences in Toronto.

The research emphasized the utility of multiple methods for studying the interrelations between intersecting identities and Bangladeshi women's business activities inside and outside the home. A mix of quantitative and qualitative methods provided multiple perspectives that enriched the analysis of the diverse factors shaping Bangladeshi women's paid and unpaid work in Toronto. While data from the 2006 census revealed general trends regarding Bangladeshi women's paid and unpaid work, qualitative interviews provided information about the subjective experiences of home-based and non-H-B business operators. The chapter also outlined how researcher's strategy in recruiting interview participants may affect the characteristics of research participants.

The chapter also illustrated the challenges experienced in conducting the research and the strategies adopted to reduce power differentials between the researcher and interview participants. I agree that social differences across gender, race and class can be produced and reproduced through field research (Kobayashi 2001; Haraway 1988; Mohanty 1991). The process of representing 'others' voices is influenced by the researcher's subjectivity and power because "we are all caught up in a web of contexts - class, age, gender, nationality, intellectual tradition and others – that shape our capacity to tell the story of others" (Ley and Mountz 2001: 235). Subjectivity is an unavoidable feature, when knowledge is created by a researcher, who possesses distinct social realities and particular visions and is targeting the attention and judgement of particular audience (Abu-Lughod 1993: 15).

In the study, I highlighted the 'voices' of the participants rather than imposing my own, though I admit that I interpreted the views of the participants. As a researcher, I have the power of authorship and the ability to propagate voices that corroborate arguments I intended to present. As Fine (1994) argues, qualitative analysis involves "carving out pieces of narrative

evidence that we select, edit and deploy to border our arguments”. What I write about the Bangladeshi women in my research is one version out of many possible versions of interpretations and will stay open for further inquiries and (re)interpretations.

## Chapter 4: A Profile of Bangladeshi Immigrants in Toronto

### 4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I profile the immigrant Bangladeshi community in Toronto based on 2006 census data<sup>39</sup>. The community profile provides information about Bangladeshi immigrant women in Toronto that is essential to understand the socio-economic and locational circumstances in which Bangladeshi women become involve in ethnic businesses. This chapter also updates information about Bangladeshi immigrants regarding their labour market participation and settlement patterns in Toronto. The information provided in this chapter situates the entrepreneurship experiences of the Bangladeshi women who participated in the research.

Previous studies show that Bangladeshi immigrants are residentially concentrated and they are one of the low income immigrant groups in Toronto (Ghosh 2005; Ornstein 2006). Bangladeshi women's labour market barriers in Toronto are reported in several studies (Akbar 2009; Halder 2012). However, no study has examined Bangladeshi immigrant women's engagement in paid and unpaid work in Toronto in detail. Little information is available about Bangladeshi immigrant women's self-employment and entrepreneurship. This chapter provides an updated and extensive profile of Bangladeshi immigrants focusing on women born in Bangladesh who have migrated to Toronto using 2006 census data. The aim is to draw out trends in their socio-economic characteristics, settlement patterns and labour market outcomes to gain an understanding of the broader context in which Bangladeshi women operate ethnic businesses in Toronto.

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<sup>39</sup> In 2011, the census was replaced by a voluntary survey, The National Household Survey (NHS), which has a global non-response rate of approximately 25 percent in the Toronto CMA. Due to concerns about the reliability of the data for specific social groups such as Bangladeshi immigrants, I used 2006 census data. These data were also available earlier than the 2011 NHS data. ([https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/ref/nhs-enm\\_guide/guide\\_5-eng.cfm](https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/ref/nhs-enm_guide/guide_5-eng.cfm))

Bangladeshi immigrants' labour market integration illustrates broader debates about the social and economic integration of immigrants in Canada. The labour market success of immigrants is regarded as a crucial parameter of their overall integration in Canadian society (Li 1997, 2001; Tastsoglou and Preston 2005; Reitz 2001; Anisef and Lanphier 2003). Studies show that there is an increasing gap in employment rates and earnings between the Canadian born and immigrants who arrived in Canada after the 1960s (Baker and Benjamin 1994; Li 2003).

The earnings of immigrants who arrived since the late 1960s have caught up slowly with the earnings of the Canadian born (Tu 2010; Bloom et al. 1995; Li 2003). Differences in earnings between immigrants and the native born persisted in the 1990s, even as the educational attainments of immigrants increased. Recent immigrants seem to suffer discrimination in the labour market that excludes them from high-paid and stable employment (Teelucksingh and Galabuzi 2005). Scholars argue that the poor labour market outcomes of immigrants who arrived after the 1960s are associated with the increased flow of immigrants from non-European countries in the 1960s and 1970s<sup>40</sup> (Teelucksingh and Galabuzi 2005). New cohorts of immigrants, the majority of whom are visible minorities, experience racial discrimination in the labour market that affects their earnings and occupations (Ham and Tran 2004; Ley 1999).

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<sup>40</sup> Canadian immigration policy denied entry of non-European immigrants till mid-20th century. Record shows that in 1966, 80-90% of newcomers to Canada originated in Europe and the United States, and United Kingdom was the leading source of immigrants (Ley 1999). The reformation of immigration policy in the 1960s and 1970s resulting from declining fertility and ageing of the population in Canada, allowed non-Europeans to enter in Canada based on their education and skills (Basavarajappa et al., 1993). The aim of the policy reformation was to bring immigrants with human capital to contribute to the service and knowledge-based economy (Basavarajappa et al., 1993). As a result, in 1996 the share of immigrants from Europe and America fall down to 20%. By 1970s the share of immigrants from non-European countries particularly, countries from Asia, Latin America and Africa, who are labeled as visible minorities exceeded that of European immigrants (Ley 1999).

Combining anti-racist and feminist analyses, scholars also highlight a gap between the labour market attainment of immigrant men and woman (Lightman and Gingrich 2013; Tastsoglou and Preston 2005). Socio-economic integration processes seem to be more challenging for immigrant women than their male counterparts. Immigrant women are less likely to be employed and more likely to be unemployed than their male counterparts and than Canadian born men and women<sup>41</sup>. In 2011, in the core working age group of 25 to 54 years old, 76.4% of immigrant women were labour force participants, compared to 83.6% of Canadian-born women (Hudon 2015). Based on the 2001 census, Chui (2011) found that among full-time workers, immigrant women had lower earnings than immigrant men and Canadian-born workers of both sexes.

Rcent studies confirm that race and gender affect immigrants' labour market outcomes (Frank 2013; Pendakur and Pendakur 2000; Thompson 2000; Li 2008). Research shows that different groups of immigrants fare differently in the labour market and their labour market outcomes vary across race and gender (Hou and Balakrishnan 1996). Visible minority immigrants are disadvantaged in terms of earnings compared with non-visible minority immigrants despite having higher levels of education (Pendakur 2000). The existing literature demonstrates that visible minority immigrants obtain employment in their pre-migration occupations at a slower rate than non-visible minority immigrants (Frank 2013). Tastsoglou and Preston (2005) note that immigrant women of color earned 20% less than non-racialized immigrant women in 2000. There are also wider gaps between the employment rates and earnings of racialized immigrant men and women than their non-racialized counterparts (ibid).

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<sup>41</sup> Status of Women Canada (<http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/index-en.html>).

Previous studies confirm that the immigrant population in Canada is diverse. Factors such as race and gender shape their labour market integration. Thus, deconstruction of immigrants along the lines of gender and visible minority status is crucial to understand the particular circumstances shaping their socio-economic integration in Canadian society (Tastsoglou and Preston 2005). Gender and race influence immigrants' involvement in self-employment. Analyzing 1991 census data, Li (1997) found that visible minority and white immigrants were more likely than their native-born counterparts to engage in self-employment<sup>42</sup>. Li (ibid) also noted that white immigrants were more likely to be self-employed than visible minority immigrants and men were more likely than their female counterparts to engage in self-employment.

Drawing on these insights, this chapter describes the demographic and socio-economic characteristics and labour market outcomes for Bangladeshi immigrants and compares them with non-visible minority/white and other visible minority immigrants in Toronto CMA using 2006 census data. The comparison of Bangladeshi immigrants with white and other visible minority immigrants identifies which socio-economic and demographic attributes distinguish Bangladeshi immigrants from white and other visible minority immigrants and how race and gender affect their employment rates and earnings.

The Toronto CMA is the location for analysis because of its unique demographic characteristics. The largest metropolitan area in Canada, the Toronto CMA, is home to a large immigrant population. In 2006, immigrants comprised 45.7% of Toronto's total population and among them 65% were visible minority immigrants (Census 2006). Toronto is home to the

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<sup>42</sup> Self-employed persons are those 15 years of age and over who worked in 1990 and for whom the job reported consisted mainly of self-employment. The figures include self-employed persons in an incorporated or unincorporated business, with or without paid help. Secondary and tertiary industries in the private sector include all industries in the total labour force except agriculture, other primary industries and government services (Li 1997).

largest number of Bangladeshi immigrants in Canada (55% of 26,455 Bangladeshi immigrants in 2006). Toronto - known as one of the most ethnically diverse and multicultural cities in the world - provides a rich location to study how Bangladeshi immigrants' employment is similar to and different from that of other groups of immigrants.

The first section of the chapter compares the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of Bangladeshi immigrants with those of white and other visible minority immigrants. The labour force activities and incomes of the three groups are compared and the impacts of race and gender on their participation in wage employment and self-employment are discussed. The analysis compares how much employment rates and incomes are commensurate with the educational qualifications of Bangladeshi, white and other visible minority immigrants. The socio-economic characteristics and labour market outcomes for Bangladeshi immigrant women are compared with those of their male counterparts and white and other visible minority immigrants of both sexes.

Attention is also given to the gendered division of unpaid household work. Immigrant women's responsibility for child care and household work in the post migration context may restrict their ability to upgrade language and employment skills and access to well-paid job opportunities (Preston and Man 1999; Piché et al. 1999). The comparative analysis investigates how the gendered division of unpaid work differs among Bangladeshi, white and other visible minority immigrants and its impacts on women's labour market participation.

The second section of the chapter reflects on current debates regarding the link between immigrants' labour market outcomes and their residential patterns. There are growing concentrations of visible minority immigrants in ethnic neighbourhoods in Canadian cities (Ley 1999; Walks and Bourne 2006). Analyzing the 2001 census data, Ghosh (2005) found that

Bangladeshi immigrants are one of the most residentially segregated/concentrated<sup>43</sup> immigrant groups in Toronto. Living in residential concentrations may adversely affect Bangladeshi immigrants' employment opportunities and earnings. To update Ghosh's (2005) findings, using data from the census 2006, I explored the degree of Bangladeshi immigrants' concentration at the level of census tracts in Toronto. Using descriptive analysis, I explore the median family incomes for the census tracts where Bangladeshi immigrants are concentrated to examine the link between Bangladeshi residential concentration and indices of low income.

Finally, the third section of the chapter explores the relative influence of selected demographic and socio-economic characteristics on Bangladeshi immigrants' employment status through a multinomial regression analysis. The analysis identifies some of the socio-economic characteristics that influence labour force participation by Bangladeshi immigrants. The quantitative analysis of 2006 census data, in addition to drawing out the general trends regarding Bangladeshi immigrants' socio-economic status in Toronto, updates earlier studies that explored how gender and visible minority status affect immigrants' socio-economic integration in Canada (Hou and Balakrishnan 1996; Ley 1999; Li 1997).

## **4.2. Characteristics of Bangladeshi Immigrants in Toronto: A Comparative Analysis**

### **4.2.1. Selection of Immigrant Groups and Variables**

I analyzed data from the 2006 census master file which has a larger sample size than other data sources and allowed me to identify Bangladeshi immigrants based on their country of

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<sup>43</sup> The terms residential segregation and concentration are most often used synonymously, although they refer to slightly different meanings. Segregation takes place when a specific group of people are separated from other groups, while concentration takes place when a large proportion of a particular ethnic group is clustered in a particular location (Ghosh 2005).

birth<sup>44</sup>. While selecting Bangladeshi, white and other visible minority immigrants from the 2006 census, attention was given to ensuring that the three groups are mutually exclusive. Bangladeshi immigrants are those who reported Bangladesh<sup>45</sup> as their place of birth. Initially, I wanted to select Muslim Bangladeshi immigrants because I am particularly interested in the paid and unpaid work of Muslim women. As religious identity was not reported in the 2006 census, it was not possible to use religion as a basis for selecting Bangladeshi immigrants. Given that Muslims comprise nearly 90% of the population in Bangladesh, it is likely that the bulk of Bangladeshi immigrants in Toronto are Muslims (see Halder 2012).

Place of birth, immigration status and visible minority status are used to select non-visible and other visible minority immigrants. Non-visible minority immigrants are those who were born in countries other than Bangladesh and Canada and identified themselves as non-visible minorities. Other visible minority immigrants are those who were born in countries other than Bangladesh and Canada and identified themselves as visible minorities. The main motive for selecting these three groups was to examine how the general trends of Bangladeshi immigrants differ from those of non-racialized and other racialized immigrant groups in Toronto. I agree with D'Addario (2012) that statistical data can be intentionally interpreted and categorized to reproduce gendered and racialized assumptions in society. However, understanding general social trends is an essential component of critical social research.

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<sup>44</sup> The 2006 public use microdata file does not contain information about Bangladeshi immigrants' place of birth.

<sup>45</sup> A very small percentage (4.5%) of Bangladeshi born population who identified their ethnicity as European, African and West Asian were excluded from the analysis. Those who identify their ethnic identity as Bangladeshi, Bengali and East Indian are selected as Bangladeshi immigrants as these ethnic identities reflect the identities of Bangladeshis during pre-colonial, British colonial and post-colonial periods (Halder 2012).

**Table 4-1: The List of Variables Used in Census Data Analysis**

<b>Demography</b>	<b>Family composition</b>
Sex	Census family structure
Age	Total number of children in census family
Marital Status	Children aged 0-5
	Primary Household Maintainer
<b>Immigration history</b>	<b>Labour force activities</b>
Age at immigration	Employment Class
Year of immigration	Full-time or part-time work (per week)
	Place of Work
<b>Education</b>	<b>Income</b>
Highest Certificate, Diploma or Degree	Median personal income (after tax)
	Total median family income (after tax )
<b>Language</b>	Low income family status (after tax)
Official language fluency	
Language of work	<b>Unpaid work (hours spent per week)</b>
<b>Housing</b>	Household work
Structural type of dwelling	Child care
Type of tenure	Senior care

The comparative analysis<sup>46</sup> of the census data examined nine sets of characteristics: demographic attributes, immigration history, family composition, level of education, language proficiency, housing characteristics, labour force activity, family income and unpaid work. In total, 23 variables (listed in Table 4-1) are used to compare Bangladeshi, white and other visible minority immigrants. The comparison provides a starting point to identify the labour market success of Bangladeshi immigrants in Toronto. The analysis of the varied effects of race and gender in Bangladeshi women's labour market outcomes provides a platform for investigating their subjective experiences.

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<sup>46</sup> The comparative descriptive statistics included Bangladeshi, white and other visible minority immigrants aged 15 and over to focus on working age population.

#### **4.2.2. Demographic Characteristics: Gender, Age and Marital status**

Certain streams of migration to Canada are highly gendered because of their associations with specific occupations (Rose 2016). The masculinization of agricultural and construction work and feminization of domestic service influenced the gender ratio of specific immigrant groups (Dobrolowsky and Tastsoglou 2006). For example, prior to 1960, the West Indian Domestic Scheme contributed to the feminization of Jamaican immigrant streams to Toronto (see Rose 2016; Henry 1968; Bakan and Stasiulis 1994). Rose (2016) found that the dominance of female Jamaican immigrants that continued up to 2006 shaped the social and economic integration of Jamaican immigrants in Toronto. Bangladeshi migration flows were also gendered. Halder (2012) notes that prior to 1990, Bangladeshi immigrant streams to Canada were dominated by men. Immigrants were mostly single or married men who migrated to Canada alone to work or pursue post-secondary education. Later, some of them sponsored their family members. The number of Bangladeshi immigrant women in Canada increased mainly through family reunification. After 1990, Bangladeshi skilled workers started migrating with their families. Consequently, family migration became common, balancing the gender ratio among Bangladeshi immigrants (Halder 2012). The introduction of selection criteria emphasizing education and occupation also allowed Bangladeshi educated women to migrate as principal applicants (ibid; Ghosh 2005; Akbar 2009). However, data from the 2006 census revealed that compared to those of white and other visible minority immigrants, Bangladeshi migration streams were male-dominated. Slightly less than one half of Bangladeshi immigrants (47.8%) in Toronto were women. In contrast, women represented slightly over one half of white (52%) and other visible minority immigrants (53%) in Toronto. The male-dominated migration streams

among Bangladeshi immigrants may be influenced by the patriarchal social system in Bangladesh where most men have more physical mobility than women (Halder 2012).

Age is a crucial factor in immigrants' participation in the labour force. Immigrants who are working age are expected to contribute to the economy (Teelucksingh and Galabuzi 2005). The distribution of population by age groups (Table 4-2) suggests that Bangladeshi immigrants in Toronto are a young and working age population. The majority of Bangladeshi immigrants (77.3%) were between 25 and 54 years of age. White immigrants tend to be older than Bangladeshi and other visible minority immigrants. Half of the white immigrants were 55 and above, whereas, slightly over one quarter of other visible minority immigrants were in the same age group. In comparison, the proportion of Bangladeshi immigrants aged 55 and above was much lower, only 7%.

**Table 4-2: Sex, Age and Marital Status for Bangladeshi, White and Other Visible Minority Immigrants in Toronto, Census 2006**

Demography	Bangladeshi Immigrants (%)			Non-Visible Immigrants (%)			Other Visible Minority Immigrants (%)		
	Female	Male	Both Sexes	Female	Male	Both Sexes	Female	Male	Both Sexes
<b>Sex</b>	47.8	52.2	100	52.1	47.9	100	53.1	46.9	53.1
<b>Age</b>									
15-24	16.9	14.8	15.8	5.5	6.2	5.9	12.0	14.1	13.0
25-34	31.8	16.8	24.0	8.6	8.4	8.5	18.7	16.6	17.7
35-44	30.9	34.4	32.7	15.8	16.2	16.0	25.1	25.5	25.3
45-54	14.2	26.4	20.6	18.9	19.5	19.2	20.3	20.8	20.5
55-64	3.5	4.8	4.2	20.4	21.5	21.0	12.4	12.7	12.5
65 and up	2.7	2.8	2.8	30.8	28.2	29.6	11.5	10.4	11.0
<b>Marital status</b>									
Single (Divorced, Widowed, Separated & never married)	20.8	23.5	22.2	39.6	29.7	34.9	41.3	34.8	38.2
Married	79.1	76.5	77.8	60.4	70.3	65.1	58.7	65.3	61.8

Among Bangladeshi immigrants, women tend to be younger than men. Almost half of women (48.5%) were between 15 and 34 years of age compared with 31.6% of men. Only 14.1% of white immigrant women and 30.7% of other visible minority immigrant women were equally young confirming the relative youthfulness of Bangladeshi immigrant women. When the three groups are compared in terms of marital status, Bangladeshi immigrants are more likely to be married. Of Bangladeshi immigrants, 77.8% were married compared with 65.1% of white and 61.8% of other visible minority immigrants. Marital status differs by gender. Among Bangladeshi immigrants, more women than men were married. In contrast, among white and other visible minority immigrants more men than women were married. The demographic information suggests that Bangladeshi women tend to be younger and married compared to their male counterparts and other visible minority and white immigrants of both sexes.

#### **4.2.3. Immigration: Age at Immigration and Period of Arrival**

There is no confirmed information about the number of Bangladeshi immigrants who arrived in Canada before the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. Bangladeshis used different national identities before and after partition from India in 1947. Before 1947, Bangladeshis were recognized as Indians and migrated with Indian passports. Between 1947 and December 16, 1971, Bangladeshis migrated with Pakistani passports (Halder 2012). As a result, it is difficult to identify when Bangladeshis started to migrate to Canada. It is estimated that before the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, around 150 Bangladeshis migrated to Canada (Rahim 1999). The large-scale migration of Bangladeshis to Canada started in the late 1980s.

**Table 4-3: Age at Immigration and Year of Immigration for Bangladeshi, White and Other Visible Minority Immigrants in Toronto, Census 2006**

Immigration	Bangladeshi Immigrants (%)			Non-Visible Immigrants (%)			Other Visible Minority Immigrants (%)		
	Female	Male	Both Sexes	Female	Male	Both Sexes	Female	Male	Both Sexes
<b>Age at Immigration</b>									
0-14	11.5	10.6	11.0	25.2	26.9	26.0	16.6	19.2	17.9
15-24	28.5	17.5	22.8	28.3	26.3	27.3	24.4	22.0	23.3
25-34	34.7	32.5	33.6	27.4	28.7	28.0	29.5	29.0	29.2
35-44	18.0	28.3	23.4	12.0	12.6	12.3	15.6	16.9	16.2
45-54	3.6	8.2	6.0	3.8	3.5	3.7	7.1	6.9	7.0
55-64	2.8	1.8	2.3	2.0	1.2	1.6	4.8	4.0	4.5
65 and up	.8	1.1	1.0	1.3	.7	1.0	2.0	1.9	2.0
<b>Year of Immigration</b>									
Before 1990	9.4	10.5	9.9	71.9	72.5	72.2	36.7	36.6	36.7
1990 – 1999	40.1	43.2	41.7	17.7	17.5	17.6	38.0	38.2	38.1
2000 – 2006	50.5	46.3	48.3	10.4	10.0	10.2	25.3	25.2	25.3

Bangladeshi immigrants are one of the most recent immigrant groups in Toronto. Almost half of them (48.3%) arrived between 2000 and 2006. The proportion of Bangladeshi recent immigrants was two times higher than that of other visible minorities (25.3%) and five times higher than that of white immigrants (10.2%). Comparative analysis shows that a higher proportion of Bangladeshi immigrants (62%) than other visible minority (52.4%) and white (44%) immigrants arrived in Toronto when they were working age (Table 4-3). Bangladeshi women tend to migrate at a younger age than their male counterparts. For example, 28.5% of Bangladeshi women were aged 15-24 when they arrived in Toronto compared with 17.5% Bangladeshi men.

The length of immigrants' residence in Canada affects their labour market participation and earnings (Bloom et al. 1995). Immigrants who arrived after 1990 had lower labour market participation rates and lower earnings compared to those who arrived earlier (Bloom et al. 1995;

Hum and Simpson 2000). Drawing on this debate, I compared the proportions of Bangladeshi, white and other visible minority immigrants who arrived before, during and after the 1990s.

The results show that an overwhelming majority of Bangladeshi immigrants, 7 out of 10, arrived in Toronto after 1990. The proportion of other visible minorities who arrived after 1990 is also high (63.4%) but lower than for Bangladeshi immigrants. The periods of arrival of white immigrants show a contrasting trend as the majority of them (72.2%) arrived before 1990 and the proportions of arrivals decreased after 1990. The comparative analysis confirms that visible minorities comprise the bulk of immigrants in Toronto who arrived after 1990. In contrast, the arrival of white immigrants has decreased overtime. The majority of Bangladeshi immigrants belong to the post-1990 migration stream, with half of migrating between 2000 and 2006.

#### **4.2.4. Education and Language Proficiency**

Education and proficiency in official languages influence immigrants' labour market outcomes (Chui 2011). Introducing the 'point system', Canadian immigration policy favoured a skilled and educated population with a strong potential to contribute to the country's economy (Lochhead 2003). Having a university degree is expected to increase employment opportunities and earnings for immigrants (Picot 2008; Tastsoglou and Preston 2005). The data show that educational attainment<sup>47</sup> differs by gender and visible minority status. Among the three groups, educational attainment in the form of university degree is the highest among Bangladeshi immigrants and the lowest among white immigrants, while, other visible minority immigrants fall in the middle. Bangladeshi immigrants are more likely to have a university degree than the other two groups of immigrants (Table 4-4). In 2005, among the population aged 15 and over,

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<sup>47</sup> Educational attainment is grouped into three categories high school level/less education, college/University diploma and university degree. University degree represents a degree or certificate at the bachelor's level or above.

half of the Bangladeshi immigrants (49.6%) in Toronto had a university degree whereas, less than a quarter of visible minorities (22.5%) and less than one third of white immigrants (28.8%) had a university degree. The proportion of university educated Bangladeshi immigrants is 27% higher than that of white and 20.7% higher than the proportions of white and other minority immigrants. Almost half (47.7%) of white and a large proportion of other visible minority immigrants (43%) had no more than a high school level education or less. The proportion of Bangladeshis in the same group was much lower, 31.6%.

**Table 4-4: Education and Language Proficiency for Bangladeshi, White and Other Visible Minority Immigrants in Toronto, Census 2006**

Education	Bangladeshi Immigrants (%)			Non-Visible Immigrants (%)			Other Visible Minority Immigrants (%)		
	Female	Male	Both Sexes	Female	Male	Both Sexes	Female	Male	Both Sexes
<b>Highest Certificate, Diploma or Degree</b>									
High School/none	38.6	25.1	31.6	52.1	42.9	47.7	44.7	40	43
College/University	19.7	17.9	18.8	26.9	33.0	29.8	28.9	27.3	28.1
Diploma									
University degree (bachelor, masters and PhD)	41.8	56.9	49.6	21.0	24.1	22.5	26.4	31.4	28.9
<b>Language</b>									
<b>First official language spoken</b>									
English/French	95.6	99.4	97.6	92.6	95.2	93.9	89.3	93.5	91.3
English/French	4.4	.6	2.4	7.4	4.8	6.1	10.7	6.5	8.7
Neither English nor French									
<b>Language of work</b>									
English or French	56.6	82.9	70.3	52.2	65.4	58.5	60.2	72.2	65.8
Other	43.4	17.1	29.7	48.8	34.6	41.5	39.8	27.8	34.2

When the data on educational qualifications are disaggregated by gender, a higher percentage of Bangladeshi men compared to men in the other two groups had a university degree. The trend is similar for women. The proportion of Bangladeshi women with a university degree was almost two times higher than that of white immigrant women. Compared with other

visible minority women, the proportion of Bangladeshi women with a university degree was 15.4% higher. The data also reveal that Bangladeshi women had lower educational attainments on average than their male counterparts. Fifteen percent more Bangladeshi men than women had a university degree. In the other two groups, the gender gap was not as large as it was between Bangladeshi men and women.

English/French proficiency also plays a significant role in immigrants' social and economic integration particularly in shaping their access to the labour market (Cottrell 2007; Hunjan 1997; Papademetriou 2007). An immigrant's ability to communicate, either in English or French, is also a major asset for civic participation. Findings from the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) show that employed immigrants with the highest levels of spoken English are more likely to have a high-skilled job than immigrants who have less English proficiency (Statistics Canada 2005: 7). The comparative analysis reveals that the majority in all three groups speak English or French (Table 4-4). A slightly higher proportion of Bangladeshi immigrants (97.6%) than white (93.9%) and other visible minority immigrants (91.3%) reported fluency in English or French. There are no substantial differences between genders in terms of official language fluency across all three immigrant groups. Substantially higher proportions of Bangladeshi immigrants than the other two groups reported English or French as the language of their work places. Use of language at work place varies between genders as more men than women in all three groups tend to use an official language and the gender gap is wider among Bangladeshi immigrants compared with other two groups. Overall, Bangladeshi immigrants, particularly men, do not seem to have language barriers in Toronto workplaces.

#### 4.2.5. Housing Characteristics

Housing characteristics reflect immigrants' labour market integration (Owusu 1998). Concentration in high-rise apartment buildings is often linked to immigrants' low incomes (Tu 2010). Bangladeshi immigrants are unique in terms of their housing situation in Toronto compared to the other two groups. As Ghosh (2005) suggested, an overwhelming majority of Bangladeshi immigrants resides in apartment buildings (Table 4-5). In 2005, 62% of Bangladeshi immigrants lived in apartment buildings compared with 28.6% of white and 35.9% of other visible minority immigrants. Data on housing structures indicate that visible minority status decreases the propensity to reside in single detached houses. Almost one half of white immigrants resided in single detached houses compared with 38.3% of other visible minorities and 18.7% of Bangladeshi immigrants.

**Table 4-5: Housing Characteristics for Bangladeshi, White and Other Visible Minority Immigrants in Toronto, Census 2006**

Housing	Bangladeshi Immigrants (%)			Non-Visible Immigrants in Toronto (%)			Other Visible Minority Immigrants in Toronto (%)		
	Female	Male	Both Sexes	Female	Male	Both Sexes	Female	Male	Both Sexes
<b>Structural Type of Dwelling</b>									
Single detached house	19.1	18.3	18.7	49.6	52.3	50.9	37.5	39.2	38.3
Apartment building	61.8	62.3	62.0	29.7	27.4	28.6	36.6	35.0	35.9
Other	19.1	19.4	19.3	20.8	20.3	20.5	25.9	25.8	25.8
<b>Type of Tenure</b>									
Rented	51.7	52.6	52.1	21.7	20.6	21.1	30.9	29.6	30.3
Owned by a member of the household	48.3	47.4	47.9	78.0	79.2	78.6	69.1	70.4	69.7

Home ownership is associated with economic success (Murdie and Ghosh 2009; Simmons 2010), since it implies sufficient financial resources to invest in buying a house (Edmonston and Lee 2013). Only a small portion of Bangladeshi immigrants were homeowners.

More than half of Bangladeshi immigrants resided in rental dwellings, whereas renters comprised only one fifth of white and less than one third of other visible minority immigrants. The figures confirm that the majority of Bangladeshi immigrants tend to reside in rental apartments. Bangladeshi immigrants lack the financial resources required for home-ownership. Their concentration in rental apartments indicates Bangladeshi immigrants' low socio-economic status in Toronto (Tu 2010; Murdie and Ghosh 2010).

#### **4.2.6. Family Composition**

Family structure influences the social and economic integration of immigrants. Shared interests and support from family members help immigrants combat labour market barriers and financial difficulties in the receiving society (Blau et al. 2003; Dion and Dion 2001). Immigrants' desires to enhance the well-being of their families often influence their entry into paid-work (Menjivar 1999, 2003; Vorley and Rosgers 2012; Tienda and Booth 1991). In addition, the roles of men and women in immigrant families shape their involvement in income-generating activities (Menjivar 1999; Wong 2006; Mahalingam et al. 2008). Large families often increase family responsibilities for immigrant women which in turn, limit their ability to participate in the paid labour market (Hondagnu-Sotelo 1997). In these ways, family structure influences immigrant men's and women's engagement in wage work.

In 2006, there were substantial differences in family structure among the three immigrant groups in Toronto (Table 4-6). Married couples with children were more prevalent among Bangladeshi immigrants than the other two groups. As high as 81.3% of Bangladeshi immigrants lived in a traditional nuclear family, as married couples with children. The proportion of other visible minority immigrants who lived in a traditional nuclear family (68.6%) was lower than for

Bangladeshi immigrants but higher than for white immigrants (54.6%). Bangladeshi immigrants were less likely to be lone parents than the other two groups. The highest percentage of lone parent families was reported by other visible minority immigrants (13.3%) followed by white immigrants (9.6%). Only 5.4% of Bangladeshi immigrants lived in lone parent families. Family structures differ along gender line. In all three groups, more men than women lived in a nuclear family and more women than men lived in a lone parent family. However, a substantially lower proportion of Bangladeshi immigrant women than the other two groups of women was lone parents (Table 4-6).

**Table 4-6: Family Composition of Bangladeshi, White and Other Visible Minority Immigrants in Toronto, Census 2006**

Family Composition	Bangladeshi Immigrants (%)			Non-Visible Immigrants (%)			Other Visible Minority Immigrants (%)		
	Female	Male	Both Sexes	Female	Male	Both Sexes	Female	Male	Both Sexes
<b>Census family structure</b>									
Couple with children	79.6	83.0	81.3	51.9	57.2	54.6	64.1	72.8	68.3
Couple without children	13.0	13.6	13.3	34.7	37.1	35.9	17.8	19.1	18.4
Lone parent family	7.5	3.4	5.4	13.5	5.7	9.6	18.1	8.0	13.3
<b>Total number of children in census family</b>									
No kid	12.4	12.4	12.4	34.7	37.1	35.9	15.1	16.7	15.9
1-2 kids	63.8	61.1	62.3	56.8	53.9	55.4	53.3	53.4	53.3
3-4 kids	17.9	16.4	17.1	8.2	8.6	8.4	15.0	15.8	15.4
5 and up	6.0	10.2	8.2	.4	.3	.4	16.5	14.1	15.4
<b>Children aged 0-5</b>									
No 5 year old kid	66.7	66.8	66.7	90.2	90.3	90.2	80.1	80.6	80.4
Have 5 year old kid	33.3	33.2	33.3	9.8	9.7	9.8	19.9	19.4	19.6
<b>Primary household Maintainer</b>									
Not primary maintainer or NA	89.5	29.8	58.4	65.4	27.8	47.4	74.9	40.9	58.9
Primary household maintainer	10.5	70.2	41.6	34.6	72.2	52.6	25.1	59.1	41.1

Compared with Bangladeshi and other visible minority immigrants, white immigrants tend to have smaller families (Table 4-6). Higher percentages of white immigrants (35.9%) than Bangladeshi (13.3%) and other visible minority immigrants (18.4%) lived as couples without

children. Bangladeshi and other visible minority immigrants are more likely to have large families with children. The majority of Bangladeshi immigrants (62.3%) had one or two children. The proportion of Bangladeshi immigrants (17%) who had three or four children was slightly higher than for other visible minority immigrants (15.4%) and two times higher than for white immigrants (8.4%). Less than 1% of white immigrants reported having five and more children in the family. Families with five and more children were more prevalent among other visible minority immigrants (15.4%) than Bangladeshi immigrants (8.2%). However, many Bangladeshi immigrants had pre-school aged children. One third of Bangladeshi women (33.3%) had at least one pre-school aged child, whereas, 19.6% of visible minority and only 9.8% of white immigrant women had at least one pre-school aged child. Having pre-school aged children has implications for Bangladeshi immigrant women's engagement in paid and unpaid work which I discuss in the following section.

#### **4.2.7. Labour Force Participation**

Human capital such as educational attainment and language proficiency are expected to increase employment opportunities and earnings (Ferrer et al. 2006; Picot 2008). The data show that the effects of education on the employment and incomes of immigrants were mediated by visible minority status and gender. Bangladeshi women were fairly successful in gaining wage employment and differences in employment rates among the three groups of women were not substantial (Table 4-7). More Bangladeshi immigrants (64.9%) than white immigrants (51.2%) were employees. This difference may be influenced by the age composition of the two groups, as nearly 77.3% of Bangladeshi immigrants were of working age (25-54 years) compared to 43.7% of white immigrants.

**Table 4-7: Labour Force Activities and Incomes of Bangladeshi, White and Other Visible Minority Immigrants in Toronto, Census 2006**

Labour force activity	Bangladeshi Immigrants (%)			Non-Visible Immigrants (%)			Other Visible Minority Immigrants (%)		
	Female	Male	Both Sexes	Female	Male	Both Sexes	Female	Male	Both Sexes
<b>Employment Class</b>									
Outside the labour market	41.2	15.0	27.5	44.8	30.9	38.1	34.0	21.1	27.9
Self-employed with or without paid help	4	10.7	7.5	6.6	15.2	10.7	4.7	10.7	7.6
Paid worker work for wage and salary	54.8	74.2	64.9	48.6	53.9	51.2	61.3	68.1	64.5
<b>Full-time or part-time weeks worked in 2005</b>									
Worked mainly full-time weeks in 2005	36.6	68.4	53.2	39.5	59.7	49.2	48.7	66.4	57.0
Not Applicable	45.3	18.6	31.4	46.3	32.3	39.6	36.6	23.8	30.6
Worked mainly part time in 2005	18.1	13.0	15.4	14.1	8.0	11.2	14.7	9.8	12.4
<b>Place of Work</b>									
Worked at home	4.6	3.5	4.0	5.4	5.7	5.5	3.8	3.9	3.8
NA/Worked outside Canada	45.6	28.1	36.5	48.9	45.2	47.2	38.7	32.5	35.8
Worked usual place	49.7	68.4	59.5	45.7	49.1	47.3	57.5	63.6	60.3
<b>Income</b>									
<b>Median Personal Income after Tax</b>	\$34,781	\$35,779	\$35,304	\$58,148	\$67,752	\$62,758	\$47,720	\$52,890	\$50,070
<b>Median Family Income after tax</b>	\$37,644	\$38,537	\$38,257	\$71,312	\$75,541	\$73,392	\$54,903	\$58,435	\$56,601
<b>Low income status after tax (family)</b>									
Non Low income family	64.4	66.0	65.2	91.8	92.8	92.3	82.6	83.7	83.2
Low income family	35.6	34.0	34.8	8.1	7.2	7.7	17.4	16.3	16.8

Employment and unemployment rates among Bangladeshi and other visible minority immigrants were almost equal. In comparison, white immigrants' employment rate was the lowest and their unemployment rate was the highest. Among men, Bangladeshi immigrants were the most successful in obtaining wage employment as their employment rate was 20.3% higher than for white immigrant men and 6.1% higher than for other visible minority immigrant men. Among women, the employment rate of Bangladeshi women was 54.7%, which was 7.5% lower than that of other visible minority women but 6.2% higher than that of white women (Table 4-7).

Nevertheless, Bangladeshi immigrant women's employment rate was lower than might be expected because of their youthfulness. More than three quarters were working age, 76.9%, higher than the percentages of white immigrant women and other visible minority immigrant women (Table 4-3).

A gap is evident in the wage employment of men and women. In all three groups of immigrants, more men than women were employed and women were more likely to be unemployed than their male counterparts. Participation in full-time and part-time employment also varies by gender. In all three groups, men are more likely to be full-time workers than their female counterparts. Studies show that immigrant women are more likely to do part-time work than immigrant men in Canada (Kalleberg 2000; Moss and Tilly 1996). Man (2004) suggests that household and childcare responsibilities prevent immigrant women from obtaining full-time employment. The low-pay and limited advancement that often characterize part-time employment also "ghettoize" women in low paid jobs (Creese and Wiebe 2012). From the 2006 census, it appears that obtaining full-time employment is more difficult for immigrant women than immigrant men regardless of their racial backgrounds. Compared with the other two immigrant groups, the gap in employment rates between Bangladeshi men and women is large. The gender gap in full time employment is also larger for Bangladeshi immigrants than the other two groups (Table 4-7). The proportion of Bangladeshi men (68.4%) who had a full-time job was nearly two times higher than that of Bangladeshi women. These data suggest that Bangladeshi women face more challenges than other immigrant women when looking for wage employment.

Home-based work is becoming increasingly popular in North America (Leonard 2001; Mirchandani 2000). Along with traditional low-skilled manufacturing and service jobs, many computer aided well paid jobs are taking place at home (ibid). However, data show that only 4%

to 5.5% of Bangladeshi, white and other visible minority immigrants in the Toronto CMA worked from their homes in 2005. A slightly higher proportion of white immigrants than Bangladeshi and other visible minority immigrants were home-based workers. The data suggest that a slightly higher proportion of Bangladeshi immigrant women than men worked from home but the difference between the two genders was not substantial. There is also little gender disparity in the populations of home-workers for the other two immigrant groups (Table 4-7)

#### **4.2.8. Income Inequality**

Although high proportions of visible minority immigrants possess a university degree, they often earn less than non-racialized immigrants (Pendakur and Pendakur 1998; Pendakur 2000). The 2006 data show that Bangladeshis' and other visible minority immigrants' educational qualifications and high rates of wage-employment do not provide an earning advantage. When the median family incomes<sup>48</sup> of the three groups are compared (Table 4.7), striking differences are observed. Compared to the other two groups, the median family income of Bangladeshi immigrants was much lower. Although Bangladeshi immigrants' educational attainments and labour force participation exceeded those of white immigrants, their median family income (\$38,257) was almost half that of white immigrants (\$73,392.). The median family income (\$56,601) for other visible minority immigrants' was also higher than that of Bangladeshi immigrants but lower than that of white immigrants. The income inequality suggests that visible minority immigrants still experience discrimination in the labour market (Bauder 2003; Reitz and Breton 1994; Li 2000; Tastsoglou and Preston 2005; Preston and D'Addario 2009; Simmons 2010; Galabuzi 2006).

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<sup>48</sup> Median income for census families after tax in 2005.

Previous studies found gender inequalities in income that disadvantage immigrants, particularly, visible minority women (Lindsay 2001; Tastsoglou and Preston 2005). Corroborating these findings, personal income<sup>49</sup> data from the 2006 census show that women in all three immigrant groups earned less than their male counterparts (Table 4-7). The gender gap in earnings between men and women is wider for white and other visible minority immigrants than for Bangladeshi immigrants. The earnings of Bangladeshi men and women are almost equally low. Among men, white men had the highest income followed by other visible minority men and Bangladeshi men. Although in each group, women had lower incomes than their male counterparts, white women's median income was higher than Bangladeshi and other visible minority immigrants' incomes. The income information suggests that gender and race significantly influence immigrants' incomes. The findings indicate that being foreign matters in the labour market but the magnitude of its effect depends on visible minority status.

Bangladeshi immigrants had incomes lower than might be expected on the basis of their educational attainments and rates of employment (Kunz et al. 2000; Galabuzi 2001). Their earning deficit indicates that they are probably concentrated in low-paid and precarious jobs. Their low incomes mean that the rate of low income families among Bangladeshi immigrants was much higher than for the other two immigrant groups. The poverty rate<sup>50</sup> for Bangladeshi immigrant families was 34.8%, which was five times higher than for white immigrants (7.7%) and more than two times higher than for other visible minority immigrants (16.8%) (Table 4-7). As family size<sup>51</sup> affects the measurement of low income, Bangladeshi immigrants' larger families

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<sup>49</sup> Median income for persons after tax in 2005.

<sup>50</sup> Total family income below the low income cut-offs after tax in 2005.

<sup>51</sup> Data for low income families are based on the Low Income Measure (LIM). The LIM is a fixed percentage (50%) of adjusted family income where adjusted indicates a consideration of family needs. The family size adjustment reflects the precept that family needs increase with family size. A family is considered to be low income when their income is below the LIM for their family type and size. (<http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/a26?lang=eng&id=1110015&p2=46#F6>).

contributed to the high rates of low income families. The high proportion of low income families among Bangladeshi immigrants further confirms that their wage employment is not commensurate with their educational attainment in Toronto.

#### **4.2.9. Self-employment and Entrepreneurship**

Self-employment data in the 2006 census represent only those who own and operate incorporated or unincorporated businesses<sup>52</sup> that are subject to formal registration and income tax (Census 2006). Confirming Li's (1997) findings, the comparative analysis indicates that race and gender influence the likelihood that immigrants are self-employed. White immigrants are more likely to be self-employed than Bangladeshi and other visible minority immigrants. One tenth of white immigrants were self-employed in 2006, compared with smaller proportions of Bangladeshi (7.5%) and other visible minority (7.6%) immigrants (Table 4-7). When the data are disaggregated by gender, more white immigrants of both sexes are self-employed than their Bangladeshi and other visible minority counterparts. The comparative analysis also reveals that more men than women were self-employed in all three immigrant groups just as Li (1997) found using 1991 census data. Bangladeshi immigrant women were less likely to be self-employed than their male counterparts and than white and other visible minority immigrants of both sexes. Bangladeshi women's involvement in self-employment is marginal, two and a half times lower than their male counterparts.

Comparing the earnings of self-employed white and visible minority immigrants and the Canadian born population from the 1991 census, Li (1997) found that self-employed visible minority immigrants earned much less than self-employed white immigrants. This finding

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<sup>52</sup> Incorporated companies that are privately owned are required to file a T2 corporate tax return and the unincorporated self-employed are those who file a T1 individual tax return (Green et al. 2016).

suggests that “immigrant status and visible minority status jointly produce an interaction effect that adversely affects the earnings of self-employed persons” (p.8). Li (ibid) also found similar gaps between the earnings of white and visible minority immigrants who were wage workers. Considering the disparities in earnings, he concluded that unlike white immigrants, visible minority immigrants encounter blocked mobility in the labour market. The findings outlined by Li (1997), suggest that self-employed Bangladeshi and other visible minority immigrants might have earned less than their self-employed white counterparts. The income deficit from self-employment might also contribute to the low median family incomes of Bangladeshi and other visible minority immigrants.

One limitation of the Canadian census is the absence of information about informal economic activities. Recent studies found that a significant number of immigrants in Toronto, particularly visible minority immigrants who experience discrimination in the labour market, engage in informal businesses to survive (Ghosh 2005; Maitra 2013). In 2013, a study of new comer Bangladeshi, Chinese and Somali households in Toronto conducted by the Wellesley Institute revealed that immigrants who are marginalized in the formal labour market often engage in informal economic activities. Informal economic activities are undocumented cash-generating economic activities; “a form of economic cash exchange without a receipt” (Akter et al. 2013: 26; Portes 1983). They include immigrants’ own entrepreneurial endeavors and their engagement in others’ entrepreneurial endeavors for cash without a record and they “fall across a wide spectrum from casual exchanges among neighbours through small businesses to undocumented employment in poor working conditions” (p.25).

Based on household surveys<sup>53</sup>, the study found that over two-thirds of respondents were involved in informal economic activities (Akter et al. 2013). Informal entrepreneurial activities were the main sources of household income for just under half of respondents and the only source of household income for 16% of respondents. Many respondents who were involved with informal businesses had paid employment. Their participation in the informal economy was a supplement to participation in the formal labour market rather than a substitute. Among those who had formal income, only one third relied solely on it. All respondents had to depend on a mixture of paid formal employment and informal economic activities to earn income. The findings confirm that income from formal employment was inadequate for most respondents to maintain their household costs.

Gender influences participation in informal economic activities. Unlike the 2006 census data for self-employment, the study by the Wellesley Institute reports that women were more likely than men to be engaged in informal businesses (Akter et al. 2013). In most cases they offered childcare or catering from their homes. Lack of employment opportunities and the need to combine paid and household work were identified as women's main reasons for operating informal businesses. These reasons are relevant for Bangladeshi immigrant women who have high rates of unemployment, large families and low family incomes. Women's informal business activities may be essential for the survival of Bangladeshi immigrant households.

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<sup>53</sup> The surveys were conducted with 453 newcomer households in the east end of the former City of Toronto using an interval random sampling method, multilingual format, and extended in-person structured interviews. Respondents were asked about their employment history and that of those in their household (Akter et al. 2013).

#### 4.2.10. Unpaid Household and Care work

Examining the effects of immigration on gender relations, scholars suggest that migration often consolidates the gender based division of household labour. Due to economic marginalization at their destinations, immigrant women often need paid work to ensure family survival (McDowell et al. 2007) but in most cases, they remain responsible for unpaid domestic and care work in the home (McDowell et al. 2007; Leonard 2001; Hoschild and Machung 2012). Immigrant women's entry into wage labour may also encourage them to take primary responsibility for household and care work to compensate for the violation of conventional gender roles after migration (Goldring 1996; Cooke 2007; Zhou 2005; Menjivar 1999). Continued responsibility for household work and caregiving reduces immigrant women's capacity to acquire language and other employment skills. Often they become home-workers to balance the need for earning with the demands of household work (Leonard 2001; Giles and Preston 1996). The distribution of unpaid household and care work among immigrant men and women is thus, an important factor affecting their labour market participation.

Immigrant women tend to invest more hours per week in household work than immigrant men<sup>54</sup>. More women than men, in all three groups, invested more than 15 hours per week in household work (Table 4-8). The proportion of women in all three immigrant groups who invested more than 15 hours per week in household work was two times higher than that of their male counterparts. The results reflect the persistence of traditional gendered divisions of household labour in immigrant<sup>55</sup> families.

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<sup>54</sup> The traditional gendered division of household labour is also evident among Canadian born populations.

<sup>55</sup> As religious background was not reported in the census, it was not possible to explore how religion impacts Bangladeshi, white and other visible minority immigrant women's paid and unpaid work.

**Table 4-8: Unpaid Work of Bangladeshi, White and Other Visible Minority Immigrants in Toronto, Census 2006**

Unpaid Work (per week)	Bangladeshi Immigrants (%)			Non-Visible Immigrants (%)			Other Visible Minority Immigrants (%)		
	Female	Male	Both Sexes	Female	Male	Both Sexes	Female	Male	Both Sexes
<b>Hours spent doing unpaid household work</b>									
Less than 15 hours	46	74.4	60.8	53.6	76.3	64.5	56.1	77.9	66.3
More than 15 hours	54	25.6	39.2	46.4	23.7	35.5	43.9	22.1	33.7
<b>Hours spent looking after children</b>									
Less than 15 hours	59	81.6	71	81.6	89.5	85.4	72.2	84.6	78
More than 15 hours	40.4	18.4	29.0	18.4	10.5	14.6	27.8	15.4	22.0
<b>Hours spent providing care to seniors</b>									
Less than 10 hours	97.9	98.5	98.1	95.2	97.3	96.2	95.2	96.9	96
More than 10 hours	2.4	1.5	1.9	4.8	2.7	3.8	4.8	3.1	4.0

Among women, Bangladeshi immigrant women are more likely than other immigrant women to do more than 15 hours of household work in a week. More than one half of Bangladeshi women (54%) did more than 15 hours of unpaid domestic work (Table 4-8). The equivalent figures are less than half for white (43%) and other visible minority immigrant women (46.4%). The findings indicate that women in all three groups are disproportionately responsible for household work compared with their male counterparts; however, responsibility for household work is greater for Bangladeshi women than the other two groups of women.

The gendered division of unpaid labour among men and women is also evident in the hours they spent in child care. More women than men spent more than 15 hours weekly looking after their children (Table 4-8). It appears that immigrant women regardless of their racial identities remain primarily responsible for household work and care giving.

The gender gap in child care is much wider for Bangladeshi immigrants than other immigrants. Of Bangladeshi immigrant women, 40.4% spent more than 15 hours per week for child care, compared with 18.4% for white immigrant women and 27.8% for other visible

minority immigrant women (Table 4-8). Bangladeshi women's greater participation in child care is linked to their family composition. Having one or more pre-school aged children has increased Bangladeshi immigrant women's responsibility for child care. Among the three groups of women, Bangladeshi women tend to be more responsible for child care and household work. Bangladeshi immigrant women's greater hours of household work and childcare suggest that many of them might have to juggle unpaid work and paid employment (Dumon 1981; Ng 1982).

The gender gaps among Bangladeshi immigrants in terms of hours devoted to household work and childcare suggest that gender roles are more rigid for Bangladeshi immigrants than for the other two immigrant groups. In contrast, fewer Bangladeshi women than white and other visible minority immigrant women spent more than 10 hours per week caring for seniors. A small proportion (2.8%) of the Bangladeshi immigrant population is over 65 years of age, there is less need for Bangladeshi women to care for seniors.

#### **4.3. Settlement Patterns and Labour Market Outcomes**

Settlement patterns of immigrants in Toronto have received significant attention from scholars. Immigrants who arrived in the last two decades are more likely to reside in ethnic enclaves in major Canadian cities (Tu 2010). The 2001 census data show that immigrants who arrived in Canada since 1990 are more likely than earlier immigrant cohorts to live in ethnic enclaves. By 2001, less than 30% of immigrants who had arrived in Canada during the 1980s lived in ethnic enclaves, compared with 40% of immigrants who had arrived in the 1990s. As recent immigrants are more educated than their previous cohorts, the proportion of well-educated immigrants living in ethnic enclaves has increased. In 2001, 40% of enclave residents were university degree holders and 34% held postgraduate degrees (Tu 2010). Several studies claim

that immigrants who reside in ethnic enclaves<sup>56</sup> do not fare well in the labour market compared with those who reside outside these areas (Walks and Bourne 2006). Research shows that visible minority immigrants tend to cluster in poor neighbourhoods with large proportions of low income families (Way 2004; Heisz and McLeod 2004; Walks and Bourne 2006). Bangladeshi immigrants, for example, develop residential clusters in the low income neighbourhoods in Toronto where they mostly reside in high-rise rental apartment buildings (Ghosh 2005; Halder 2012).

Ghosh (2005) used the 2001 Canadian census to explore the residential patterns of the Bangladeshi population. She identified dissemination areas<sup>57</sup> (DAs) where at least 100 Bangladeshis resided and found sixteen such areas in Toronto and she divided them into four Bangladeshi neighborhoods: Victoria Park, Regent Park, the Eglinton Avenue and Markham Road area in Scarborough and the Highway 401 and Don Mills area in North York. The Victoria Park neighbourhood has been recognized as the largest Bangladeshi concentration and the prime settlement area of Bangladeshi immigrants. In 2001, Bangladeshi immigrants comprised 18% of the total population in the Victoria Park neighbourhood and of them, 77% were recent Bangladeshi immigrants who had arrived between 1996 and 2001. Bangladeshis represented the largest group among new immigrants in Victoria Park followed by Pakistanis and Indians.

Ghosh (2005) found that median household incomes in the Bangladeshi neighborhoods were below the Toronto CMA average. Low-income households comprised 40% of all

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<sup>56</sup> A small geographic unit (i.e.; neighbourhood block, census tract) where a single ethnic group represents the largest proportion of the population (Zhou and Logan 1989).

<sup>57</sup> DAs are small areas composed of one or more neighbouring blocks, with a population of 400 to 700 persons (Ghosh 2005).

households in the Victoria Park neighbourhood which was more than double the average percentage for the Toronto CMA (17%). The percentages of low income households were even higher in the other three Bangladeshi neighborhoods, ranging from 52% to 73%. The four Bangladeshi neighborhoods identified by Ghosh (ibid) accounted for less than one fourth (23%) of the total Bangladeshi population in Toronto indicating that the majority of (77%) Bangladeshis did not settle in these ethnic concentrations. Nevertheless, Ghosh (2005) concludes that Bangladeshis were one of the most residentially segregated immigrant groups in Toronto in 2001.

A growing relationship between the spatial concentration of poverty and the clustering of visible minority immigrants in Canadian cities has been emphasized in recent studies (Murdie and Ghosh 2009; Hou and Picot 2004). Researchers argue that residential segregation of immigrants makes them vulnerable to discrimination and reduces their opportunities to gain the language and work skills required for labour market integration (Hou and Picot 2004; Tu 2010). Preston and Murnaghan (2005: 69) report that in Canada “incomes of visible minorities who live in neighbourhoods dominated by visible minority groups are lower than those of visible minorities who live in multi-ethnic neighbourhoods”. Warman (2007) analyzing the 1981–2001 Canadian census data found a negative relation between immigrant enclave residents and their earnings. Living in ethnic enclaves is negatively correlated with immigrants’ knowledge of official languages (Chiswick and Miller 2002). Immigrants who live in ethnic concentrations do not acquire language skills as quickly as those living outside which negatively affects their earnings.

Other studies suggest that living in ethnic enclaves does not hinder immigrants’ labour force participation in Canadian cities. Analyzing Canadian census data for the period 1981–1991,

Balakrishnan and Hou (1999) found that although some ethnic groups in Canadian cities tended to live in enclaves during the decade, the concentrated groups worked in higher paid occupations. Immigrants live in ethnic enclaves to enjoy the proximity of co-ethnics but work outside ethnic enclaves to earn higher wages (ibid). In another study, using Canadian censuses from 1981 to 1996, Hou and Picot (2003) found that the correlation between the intensity of co-ethnic neighbours and an immigrant's probability of employment was statistically not significant. The associations between exposure to co-ethnic neighbours and employment probability were usually very weak among Chinese immigrants, and even strongly negative among Black immigrants. They concluded that the impacts of enclave residence at the census tract level on immigrant employment and occupational segregation varies across ethnic groups. Walks and Bourne (2006), relying on census data for 1991 and 2001, found that a high degree of ethnic concentration is not necessarily associated with greater neighbourhood poverty in Canadian cities. Rather, the concentration of apartment housing sometimes contributes to the spatial concentration of poverty. Some immigrant groups are concentrated in poor neighborhoods where there are low-cost high-rise buildings, while other concentrated groups live in high status and high income enclaves.

Immigrants' period of arrival in Canada also affects the relationship between enclave residence and labour market outcomes. Tu (2010) examined the association between living in an enclave and male immigrants' labour market outcomes in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal using Census data from 1981 to 1996. He found that living in enclaves slightly reduces the labour force participation rate, but increases the probability of employment. Both associations are stronger for new immigrants who arrived in Canada in the preceding ten years than earlier cohorts who have lived in Canada for more than 20 years. Tu (2010) argues that in general,

enclave residence does not affect immigrants' labour force involvement. In fact, he showed that the probability of obtaining paid work is 1% to 2% higher for immigrants who live in ethnic enclaves than for those who live outside (Tu 2010).

Other scholars also found that enclave residence increases the probability of employment for immigrants (Rath 2002; Bartel 1989; Balakrishnan and Hou 1999). The Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) shows that ethnic enclave residents obtain employment faster than others (Goel and Lang 2009). Recent immigrant groups benefit from living in ethnic enclaves as they are more likely to be employed. Immigrants residing in ethnic concentrations often get a job in co-ethnic firms where they gain training and experience (Rath 2000; Balakrishnan and Hou 1999). Studies suggest that self-employment among visible minority immigrants is also associated with ethnic residential concentrations (Teixeira 2001; Teixeira et al. 2007; Lo 2006). "Enclave effects" (trust, co-ethnic ties and proximity) significantly contribute to increase immigrants' self-employment rates than natives (Borjas 1986). Ethnic solidarity and trust within enclaves allow individuals to start and operate a business even if they possess limited economic and financial capital (Fairchild 2010; Light 2004; Greve and Salaff 2005). The findings highlight the positive influence of ethnic enclaves on the emergence of informal and formal businesses.

In summary, previous studies revealed diverse relationships between ethnic concentrations and immigrants' labour market outcomes. Scholars agree that living in an enclave affects employment opportunities and earnings but these trends are not consistent for all immigrant groups. Some immigrant enclave residents fare better in the labour market than others. Social networks and business opportunities in the enclaves influence immigrants' employment opportunities. Therefore, the net effect of living in an ethnic enclave on immigrant

labour market depends on multiple factors. The examination of the settlement patterns for Bangladeshi immigrants using data from the 2006 census affirms the findings of Ghosh (2005) as well as provides new insights about the links between enclave residence and Bangladeshi immigrants' labour market outcomes.

#### **4.3.1. Settlement Patterns of Bangladeshi Immigrants in Toronto**

To delineate Bangladeshi concentrations in the Toronto CMA Ghosh (2005) identified DAs in which at least 100 Bangladeshi resided in 2001. Using 2006 census data, I have updated Ghosh's analysis of Bangladeshi immigrant settlement Toronto. Drawing on the study by Tu (2010), I explored the extent to which Bangladeshi immigrants are spatially concentrated at the level of census tracts<sup>58</sup>. Census tracts are larger in terms of area and population size than DAs. To measure the concentration of Bangladeshi immigrants, I identified census tracts that contained more than 150<sup>59</sup> Bangladeshi immigrants. I found eleven census tracts with more than 150 Bangladeshi immigrants in Toronto (Table 4-9). I identify the census tracts as Bangladeshi pockets (labeled as pockets 1-11) indicating the number of Bangladeshi immigrants living in these census tracts in descending order.

The number of Bangladeshi immigrants in the eleven census tracts varies significantly. Only Bangladeshi pockets 1 and 2 contained more than 1000 Bangladeshi immigrants. Six Bangladeshi pockets (3-8) contained 250 to less than 500 Bangladeshis immigrants and three Bangladeshi pockets (9-11) contained 180 to less than 250 Bangladeshi immigrants (Table 4-9). I

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<sup>58</sup> Census tracts are small, relatively stable geographic areas that usually have a population of 2,500 to 8,000. A census tract usually covers a contiguous area; however, the spatial size of census tracts varies widely depending on the density of settlement. Census tract boundaries are delineated with the intention of being maintained over a long time so that statistical comparisons can be made from census to census.

<sup>59</sup> Because census tracts are comparatively larger geographic units than DAs, I identified census tracts with more than 150 Bangladeshi immigrants to measure Bangladeshi residential concentrations.

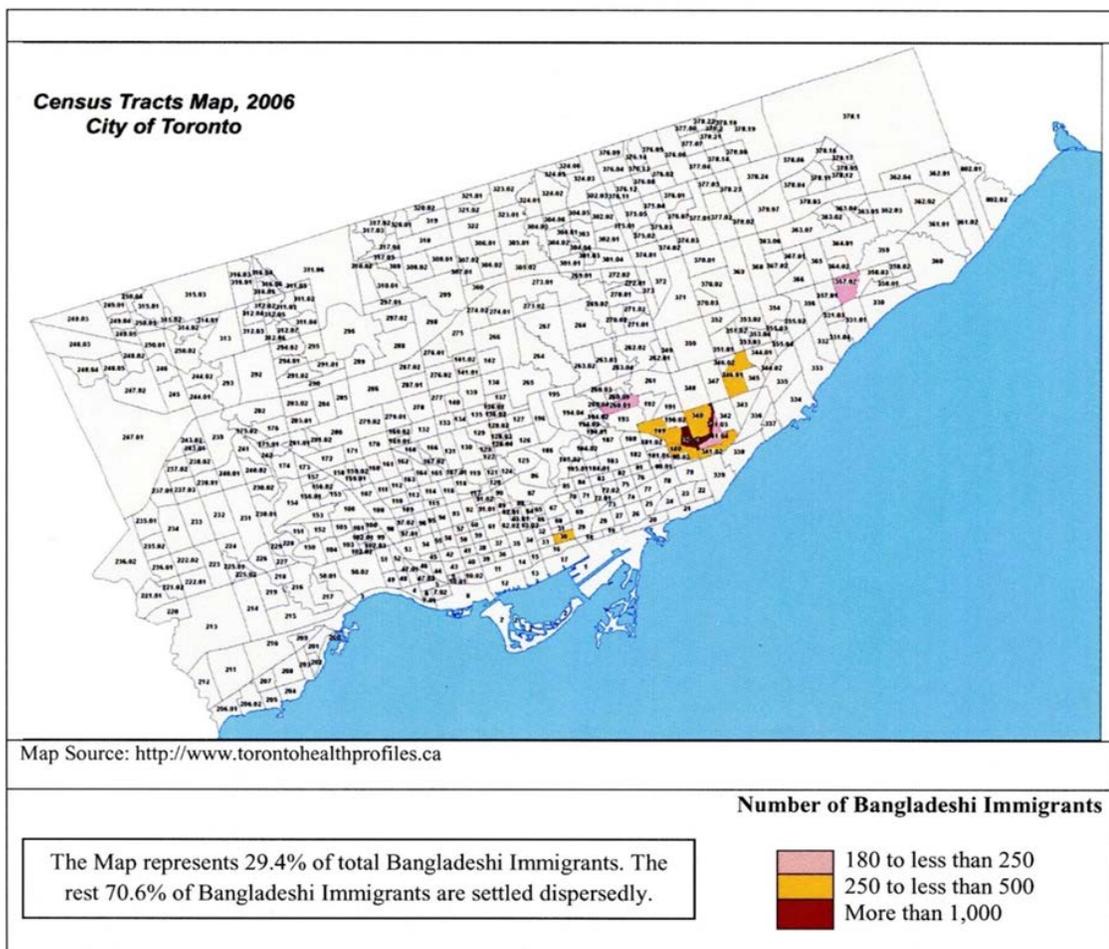
have generated a map highlighting the different levels of concentration of Bangladeshi immigrants in the eleven census tracts in Toronto (Map 4-1).

**Table 4-9: Distribution of Bangladeshi Immigrants by Census Tract in Toronto (CMA), 2006**

Bangl a- deshi Pocket	Census Tract ID*	Number of Banglades- hi Immigrants **	Percent of Total Bangladeshi Immigrants In Toronto	Bangladeshi immigrants among total Population of the Census tract (%)	Median Family Income***	Non-Visible and Visible Minority Population in the Census Tracts (%)		Immigrant and Canadian Born Population in the Census Tracts (%)	
						Visible Minority	White	Canada n Born	Immigran ts
1	535019001	1390	8.3	17	39,900	83.4	16.6	26.3	73.7
2	535034103	1075	6.4	21.2	29,076	84.9	15.1	28.2	71.8
3	535034000	430	2.6	6.7	50,767	53.7	46.3	45.3	54.7
4	535034102	350	2.1	8.9	46,485	58.8	41.2	44.4	55.6
5	535003000	275	1.6	6	31,765	66.9	33.1	54.8	45.2
6	535018900	270	1.6	5.2	54,644	33.6	66.4	56.1	43.9
7	535018000	260	1.5	3.7	43,842	39.9	60.1	47.3	52.7
8	535034601	250	1.5	5.3	47,252	72.2	27.8	40.0	60
9	535026001	240	1.4	3.5	47,592	80.7	19.3	27.2	72.8
10	535035702	220	1.3	4.4	32,144	75.5	24.5	42.6	57.4
11	535034104	180	1.0	4.1	38,826	72.8	27.2	45.5	54.5
	Total	4940	29.4	-	-	-	-	-	-
	All other census tracts	11890	70.6	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Total	16830	100	-	-	-	-	-	-
<p>*Census tracts in which more than 150 Bangladeshi immigrants reside  ** Numbers are weighted and rounded  *** Median income for all census families in 2005</p>									

The map shows that Bangladeshi immigrants are concentrated in Scarborough. Seven of eleven census tracts with Bangladeshi pockets are in Scarborough. The highest proportion (8.3%) of Bangladeshi immigrants in Toronto resides in pocket 1 and the second highest proportion (6.4%) of Bangladeshi immigrants resided in pocket 2 which are located in Victoria Park and Danforth area; the same area where Ghosh (2005) found the highest concentration of Bangladeshi immigrants using 2001 census data. Except for the two large Bangladeshi pockets in Victoria Park and Danforth area, the proportions of Bangladeshi immigrants are relatively small,

ranging from 1% to 2.6%, in the other nine pockets. Bangladeshi immigrants are concentrated in census tracts where visible minority and immigrant populations predominate (Walks and Bourne 2006). Visible minorities comprise more than 80% of the population in pockets 1 and 2 where the most Bangladeshi immigrants are concentrated. Over 70% of the population in these two pockets was immigrants. Except for pockets 6 and 7, the other pockets are also home to large visible minority populations. Only pockets 5 and 6 had more Canadian born residents than immigrants.



**Map 4-1: Concentration of Bangladeshi Immigrants in the Census Tracts in Toronto (CMA), 2006**

Bangladeshi immigrants are the largest group only in pockets 1 and 2. They represent one fifth of total population in pocket 2 and Bangladeshi immigrants in pocket 1 are 17% of the population. Only 4% to 9% of the population in the other nine pockets are Bangladeshi immigrants and they are not the largest group in these pockets. Together Bangladeshi pockets 1 and 2 contain the largest residential concentration of Bangladeshi immigrants (14.7%) in Toronto and together these two pockets can be regarded as a Bangladeshi enclave (Table 4-9 and Map 4-1).

Although Bangladeshi pockets 1 and 2 are adjacent census tracts and can be defined as a single enclave, I identified them as separate pockets because the rates of employment and self-employment of Bangladeshi immigrants in these two census tracts vary. The census data indicate that enclave residence does not have consistent impacts on Bangladeshi immigrants' labour market outcomes. Comparative analysis<sup>60</sup> shows that the rates of wage employment and self-employment are higher for Bangladeshi immigrants who reside in pocket 1 than those who reside in pocket 2. The unemployment rate of Bangladeshi immigrants in pocket 2 surpasses that in pocket 1. The proportion of Bangladeshi immigrants with waged employment is higher in pocket 1 and lower in pocket 2 when compared with the average for all Bangladeshi immigrants in Toronto. A similar trend is evident for self-employment. It is clear that Bangladeshi immigrants who reside in pocket 1 are more active in the labour market than those who reside in pocket 2.

Of the total Bangladeshi immigrant population, less than one third (29.4%) settled in the eleven census tracts identified as Bangladeshi pockets and the rest (70.6%) were dispersed. Their settlement patterns indicate that Bangladeshi immigrants are both concentrated and dispersed. A

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<sup>60</sup> Due to confidentiality of data, reporting the distribution of employment status in census tracts across the line of gender was not possible.

relatively small portion of Bangladeshi immigrants are spatially concentrated in the eleven census tracts, whereas, the majority are dispersed across Toronto. As Ghosh (2005) suggested, there is a link between living in Bangladeshi pockets and low income. The median family incomes in Bangladeshi pockets 1 and 2, where they comprise the largest population group, were substantially lower than the Toronto CMA median income (Table 4.9). Pocket 2 had the lowest median income of the eleven census tracts and its median income was less than half of Toronto's average. The median family income data confirm that when Bangladeshi immigrants concentrate, they live in low-income enclaves in Victoria Park and Danforth area (Walk and Bourne 2006). Housing in this area is primarily low-cost high-rise apartment complexes over 20 storeys in height. The majority of Bangladeshi immigrants who are concentrated in Victoria Park and Danforth area reside in these low-cost apartment complexes (Ghosh 2005).

Does living in an ethnic enclave contribute to Bangladeshi immigrants' low family income? The answer to this question is ambiguous. In 2005, the rate of waged employment for Bangladeshi immigrants aged 15 and over was higher (64.9%) than for the equivalent Toronto population (52.2%). However, the median family income for Bangladeshi immigrants (\$38,257) was substantially lower than the Toronto average (\$69,321) even though two thirds of Bangladeshi immigrants were not enclave residents. It appears that, Bangladeshi immigrants tend to earn much less than average in Toronto regardless of whether they live inside or outside the residential concentration. There may be a relationship between low income and enclave residence but it only partially explains Bangladeshi immigrants' low earnings in Toronto.

**Table 4-10: Employment Status of Bangladeshi Immigrants in Pockets 1 and 2, 2006**

<b>Class of Employment</b>	<b>Bangladeshi Immigrants in Census Tract 535019001 (Bangladeshi Pocket 1)</b>	<b>Bangladeshi Immigrants in Census Tract 535034103 (Bangladeshi Pocket 2)</b>	<b>Total Bangladeshi Immigrants in Toronto</b>	<b>Total Population In Toronto</b>
Wage Employment	68%	59%	64.9%	52.2%
Self-employment	8.3%	7%	7.6%	6.9%
Not in labour force	23.7%	34%	27.5%	41%
Source: Canadian Census 2006				

As Balakrishnan and Hou (1999) suggested, enclave residence has not reduced Bangladeshi immigrants' labor market participation rates. In fact, Bangladeshi enclave residents are more likely to be employed than the Toronto population (Tu 2010). When compared with the Toronto average, it appears that Bangladeshi immigrants who resided in pockets 1 and 2 had higher employment rates than the Toronto average in 2005 (Table 4-10). A similar trend is observed for self-employment. Compared with the Toronto average, Bangladeshi immigrants who reside in pockets 1 and 2 are more likely to engage in self-employment. The rate of self-employment among pocket 1 residents substantially exceeds the rate for the entire Toronto population. The low median family incomes in these pockets indicate that Bangladeshi immigrants are more likely to work in low paid jobs. Overall, the findings suggest that factors other than enclave residence shape the labour market outcomes of Bangladeshi immigrants in Toronto. To better understand the factors that influence Bangladeshi immigrants' integration in the labour market, I conducted a multinomial regression analysis. The following section discusses the findings of the analysis.

#### 4.4. The Impacts of Socio-economic Characteristics: Multinomial Logistic Regression

A multinomial logistic regression analysis assesses the factors that affect Bangladeshi immigrants' employment status. The variable 'employment class' with three categories: wage employment, self-employment and unemployment<sup>61</sup>, is used as the dependent variable. The impacts of ten variables: sex, age, marital status, education, number of kids, presence of pre-school going children, year of migration, housing type, tenure and low income status are evaluated. The selection of the independent variables was shaped by the descriptive analysis and existing literature. Descriptive analysis indicated how the socio-economic characteristics of Bangladeshi immigrants are similar and different from those of white and other visible minority immigrants, but it did not indicate how those characteristics influence Bangladeshi immigrants' employment status. Multinomial logistic regression analysis explores the relative influence of the independent variables in shaping Bangladeshi immigrants' employment status<sup>62</sup>. For example, multinomial logistic regression allows me to assess the relative importance of gender and education compared with other variables such as marital status, age, year of immigration and housing type that may affect Bangladeshi immigrants' employment status.

A multinomial logistic regression analysis requires reference categories<sup>63</sup> for the dependent and categorical independent variables (Table 4-11). The reference categories are used to interpret the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The aim is to evaluate the likelihood that Bangladeshi immigrants are unemployed and self-employed compared to waged workers.

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<sup>61</sup> In this analysis unemployed persons indicate Bangladeshi immigrants aged 15 and over who were outside the labour market.

<sup>62</sup> Due to data confidentiality it was not possible to disaggregate the analysis among Bangladeshi immigrants by gender. Social factors may have different impacts on Bangladeshi men and women in shaping their engagement in businesses.

<sup>63</sup> Wage employment is the reference category for the dependent variable.

**Table 4-11: Multinomial Logistic Regression Analysis**

<b>Wage Employment <sup>a</sup></b>		
<b>Independent/factor Variables</b>	<b>Unemployment</b>	<b>Self-employment</b>
	Odds Ratio	Odds Ratio
<b>Sex</b>		
Female	4.352**	.516**
<b>Male <sup>b</sup></b>		
<b>Age</b>		
15-34	.400**	.589**
35-44	.309**	.840
<b>45+ <sup>b</sup></b>		
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Never married, Divorced, Widowed	2.394**	.846
<b>Married <sup>b</sup></b>		
<b>No. of Kid</b>		
No kid	1.670*	.686
1-2	1.042	.840
3-4	1.155	1.257
<b>5 and up <sup>b</sup></b>		
<b>Pre-school going kid</b>		
Do not have 0-5 years old kid	.540**	.960
<b>Have 0-5 years old kid <sup>b</sup></b>		
<b>Education</b>		
High School or below	3.742**	1.007
College/University Diploma	1.512**	1.049
<b>University Degree <sup>b</sup></b>		
<b>Year of Migration</b>		
Before 1990	.498**	2.292**
1990- 1999	.700*	1.411**
<b>2000 - 2006 <sup>b</sup></b>		
<b>Housing Type</b>		
Single detached house	.653**	1.073
apartment building	1.087	1.015
<b>Other <sup>b</sup></b>		
<b>Tenure</b>		
Rented or Band housing	.987	.445**
<b>Owned House <sup>b</sup></b>		
<b>Low Income Family (after Tax)</b>		
Not a low income family	.413**	.271**
<b>Low income family <sup>b</sup></b>		
Number	3745	1005
<p>a. The reference category is: Paid worker work for wage and salary.  <b>b. The reference category for variable</b>                      *p&lt;0.05; **p&lt;0.0001</p>		

Logistic regression computes odds ratios that explain the independent effect of each determinant of employment status while controlling for the effects of all other determinants (Ray and Preston 2009). Odds ratios that differ significantly from 1 indicate strong effects<sup>64</sup>. For example, the logistic regression analyses allowed me to explore the relative importance of being male or female on employment status (Table 4-11). The analysis reveals how different socio-economic factors impacted the employment status of Bangladeshi immigrants in 2005. It confirms that multiple factors need to be considered to understand their labour market outcomes.

#### **4.4.1. Factors Affecting Unemployment**

The results show that the likelihood of unemployment among Bangladeshi immigrants is significantly associated with seven variables: gender, age, marital status, pre-school aged children, education, length of residence, and low income family status. Variables such as number of children, housing type and tenure also modestly affect their propensity for self-employment. Of all the variables examined, gender has the strongest influence on the probability of unemployment among Bangladeshi immigrants (Table 4-11). Women are four times more likely than men to be unemployed than salaried workers.

The likelihood of unemployment for Bangladeshi immigrants increases with age. The likelihood of being unemployed is much less for those who are 15-34 and 35-44, than for those who are 45 and over. Those who are 35-44 years of age are the most successful in obtaining waged employment as they are least likely to be unemployed and most likely to be employed. Bangladeshi immigrants who are single because of having never married, divorce, separation and

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<sup>64</sup> Odd ratios are based on a comparison of two probabilities by forming a ratio of the probabilities. If the probabilities are equal, the odds are 1.0. When the probabilities diverge, the odds diverge from 1.0. (Ray and Preston 2009:224). For example, an odds ratio of 1.0 indicates that two groups such as, females and males have the same odds of engaging in self-employment. An odds ratio of 0.51 means that the probability of group A (e.g., females) to be engaged in self-employment is one half of the probability of the reference group (e.g., males).

widowhood are more likely than those who are married to be unemployed. The number of children also affects the likelihood of unemployment, but modestly. The presence of pre-school aged children <sup>65</sup> in the family is a key factor for Bangladeshi immigrants' participation in wage employment. The odds ratio suggests that compared to those who have pre-school aged children, those who do not have are less likely to be unemployed.

The analysis confirms that education has substantial impacts on Bangladeshi immigrants' chances of being unemployed. The likelihood of unemployment increases for Bangladeshi immigrants with less education. Compared to those who are university graduates, those with less education, with a college or university diploma or a high school diploma are more likely to be unemployed. The odds ratio for unemployment is three times higher for those who have only a high school diploma or less education than for those who are university educated.

Spending more time in Canada lowers the probability of unemployment. Compared to recent Bangladeshi immigrants who arrived after 2000, the previous cohorts that arrived between 1990-1999 and before 1990 are less likely to be unemployed. The odds ratios suggest that those who arrived before 1990 are the most successful obtaining wage employment. Housing type has modest effects on the likelihood of unemployment. Residents of apartments are just about as likely as residents of other types<sup>66</sup> of houses to be unemployed. However, residents of single detached houses are much less likely to be unemployed than residents of other types of houses. Tenure has a very modest impact on likelihood of unemployment. The level of unemployment among those who live in rented houses departs only modestly from that for home owners indicating that home ownership does not impact the probability of being unemployed.

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<sup>65</sup> In Ontario a child must be 6 years old to attend school, they can begin full day kindergarten program at 4. ([www.settlement.org](http://www.settlement.org)).

<sup>66</sup> Other types of housing include semi-detached or double house, row house, other single-attached house, mobile house and other mobile dwelling (Census 2006).

#### **4.4.2. Factors Affecting Self-employment**

Of all the variables examined, six variables (i.e.; gender, age, marital status, length of residence, tenure, and low income family status) have a significant influence on the likelihood of self-employment (Table 4-11). Variables, such as education and pre-school aged children that had a significant influence on Bangladeshi immigrants' probability of unemployment, have only a modest influence on their probability of self-employment. The number of children and housing type also modestly impact their likelihood of self-employment.

Gender has a substantial impact on the odds of self-employment. Male Bangladeshi immigrants have a greater tendency to engage in self-employment than female Bangladeshi immigrants. Older Bangladeshi immigrants are more inclined to engage in self-employment than the younger ones. Younger Bangladeshi immigrants who are less than 45 years old tend to have a much lower propensity for self-employment than those who are 45 and over. Older immigrants most often possess the capital and skills required to start their own businesses (Li 2001).

The number of children has a modest effect on the likelihood of self-employment, but the effect is not significant. The presence of pre-school age children also does not affect the likelihood of being self-employed, contrary to what the literature suggests (Boden 1999; Lim 2015; Maitra 2013). Educational attainment also does not affect the propensity for self-employment. Those with only a high school diploma or less education are 1.007 times more likely than those with a university degree to engage in self-employment. It appears that education is not a major factor in shaping Bangladeshi immigrants' propensity for self-employment, unlike earlier findings (Li 2001).

The likelihood of self-employment is higher for earlier cohorts who arrived in the 1990s and before than for those who are recent immigrants arriving after 2000. Those who arrived

before 1990 stand out in terms of adopting self-employment. The odds ratio for self-employment is two times higher for those who arrived before 1990 than for those who are recent immigrants. Spending more years in Canada increases the probability that Bangladeshi immigrants are self-employed. As Li (2001) and Green et al. (2016) suggested, the longer period of stay may have helped Bangladeshi immigrants acquire the financial capital needed to invest in businesses.

Type of housing does not significantly influence the likelihood of self-employment; however, tenure which has a very modest impact on likelihood of unemployment has a substantial impact on the likelihood of self-employment. Rental residents are much less likely to be self-employed than home owners. Home ownership increases the probability of formal self-employment. The impacts of home ownership and length of residence may be connected. Longer residence in Canada allows immigrants to accumulate the financial capital to invest in a house and a business (Li 2001; Green et al. 2016). On the other hand, the likelihood of self-employment is associated with low income. Bangladeshi immigrants who are not members of a low income family are less likely to be self-employed. Home ownership is the evidence of financial success that enables entrepreneurial activities. At the same time, Bangladeshi immigrants from low-income households are also more likely to be self-employed. These two relationships point to the complexity of self-employment and its causes.

The multinomial logistic regression analysis reveals complex patterns regarding the impacts of various socio-economic characteristics on Bangladeshi immigrants' labour market activities. The findings indicate that gender, age, marital status, length of residence, and low income family status have significant effects on Bangladeshi immigrants' likelihood of unemployment and self-employment. The number of children and housing type have no impact on their likelihood of unemployment and self-employment and education; the presence of pre-

school aged children and housing tenure have various effects on Bangladeshi immigrants' probability of unemployment and self-employment vary. While education and the presence of pre-school aged children substantially influence the likelihood of unemployment, they only modestly impact the likelihood of self-employment. Tenure does not influence likelihood of unemployment but substantially affects the likelihood of self-employment.

Overall, the results suggest that women are more likely to be unemployed than men and less likely to be self-employed. Having a university education helps Bangladeshi immigrants avoid unemployment, though the level of education only slightly affects their inclination towards self-employment. Older people aged 45 and above, are less successful in finding wage employment as they are more likely to be unemployed but they are more inclined towards self-employment than younger Bangladeshi immigrants. Length of residence in Canada reduces the chances of unemployment for Bangladeshi immigrants and increases the likelihood of being self-employed. Different cohorts of Bangladeshi immigrants who settled in Toronto at different times have different labour market experiences. The analysis informs that recent immigrants face more challenges to secure employment than earlier cohorts.

#### **4.5. Conclusions**

The 2006 census data analysis provides valuable information regarding the socio-economic attributes, settlement patterns and labour market outcomes for Bangladeshi immigrants in Toronto. The comparative analysis reveals that Bangladeshi immigrants stand out in many ways from white and other visible minority immigrants. Bangladeshi immigrants tend to be married, working-aged and recent immigrants with a higher level of education than the other two groups. Their participation in wage employment exceeds that of white and other visible minority immigrants, but their median family income is low and not commensurate with their educational

attainment and employment rates. Bangladeshi immigrants' higher participation in wage employment and much lower median family income than other immigrants indicates that Bangladeshis are concentrated in low-paid and precarious jobs. With a large number of low-income Bangladeshi families, they continue to be an impoverished immigrant group (Ghosh 2005; Murdie and Ghosh 2010). As a result, compared with white and other visible minority immigrants, home-ownership is rare among Bangladeshi immigrants and most live in rental apartments.

Overall, one third of Bangladeshi immigrants are concentrated in eleven census tracts with median family incomes lower than the Toronto average. The largest Bangladeshi concentration is located in Victoria Park and Danforth area. Although, as Ghosh (2005) suggested, there is a link between low income and the concentration of Bangladeshi immigrants, enclave residence does not explain why the median family income of all Bangladeshi immigrants, the majority of whom are dispersed across Toronto, is much lower than the Toronto average. As Tu (2010) observed, enclave residence did not negatively affect Bangladeshi immigrants' labor market participation rate but they did not fare well in terms of earnings. Ethnic businesses in the residential enclave may be a source of employment opportunities but the jobs are often low-paid and precarious (Teixeira 2001; Teixeira et al. 2007). The results of multinomial logistic regression analysis reveals that socio-economic factors such as: sex, age, marital status, education, year of migration, and housing tenure have substantial to modest impacts on Bangladeshi immigrants' likelihood of being unemployed and self-employed.

The analysis reveals gender differences in Bangladeshi immigrants' labour market outcomes. Bangladeshi men's participation in wage employment exceeds women's by 20%. The proportion of women with full-time employment was two times lower than for their male

counterparts and their unemployment rate was two and a half times higher. The self-employment rate for Bangladeshi women was also more than two times lower than that for men. The results of multinomial logistic regression analysis also identify gender as the most influential influence on Bangladeshi immigrants' employment status in that women are four times more likely to be unemployed than their male counterparts. The probability of Bangladeshi women engaging in self-employment is one half of the probability for Bangladeshi men.

Women's participation in informal economic activities cannot be explored through the census data. Previous studies found that women are more likely than men to be engaged in informal income-generating activities and in most cases, they provide child care and catering services from their home (Akter et al. 2013; Maitra 2013). Bangladeshi immigrant women's high unemployment rate suggests that they may be more likely to engage in informal entrepreneurial activities than their male counterparts.

The 'traditional' gender roles of Bangladeshi immigrant women may also encourage informal self-employment. The proportions of Bangladeshi women who spent more than 15 hours per week on household work and child care were two times higher than those of men. Although gender differences in terms of labour market participation and unpaid work were observed for white and other minority immigrants, they are much greater among Bangladeshi immigrants. Bangladeshi women's responsibility for household work and childcare may impact their labour market participation (Dumon 1981; Hoffman-Nowotny 1978; Ng 1990). The census analysis illustrates how gender intersects with other axes of social identities to affect participation in paid and unpaid work for immigrant women. However, quantitative analysis could not capture the subjective dimensions of labour market integration, including the coping strategies and negotiations of gender roles from the perspectives of Bangladeshi women.

## **Chapter 5: Characteristics of Bangladeshi Women Operated Ethnic Businesses**

### **5.1. Introduction**

In this chapter, I draw on Bangladeshi women's narratives to investigate why and in what circumstances they adopted two different pathways to entrepreneurship - one group at home and another group outside the home, and how they organize business activities and household work when their home and business overlaps and when their home and business locations are separated. Using an intersectional perspective, I focus on how gender shapes the ways that women enter into entrepreneurship and negotiate their responsibilities for paid-work and household work. The chapter also illustrates the extent to which religious and cultural practices in the Bangladeshi neighbourhood influence women's engagement in paid-work and how women evaluate religious practices including the Islamic dress code. Through a comparative analysis between Bangladeshi immigrant women who work at home and those who work in non-H-B businesses, the objective of this chapter is to explore how 'business site' is a critical factor in understanding immigrant women's engagement in ethnic businesses.

This chapter draws on the theoretical debates that I described in Chapter Two regarding the factors that encourage racialized immigrant women to enter into ethnic businesses. The absence of a gender perspective in the literature about ethnic entrepreneurship and its male-centric theoretical underpinnings mean the roles of women entrepreneurs have often been overlooked (Min and Bozorgmehr 2000; Mirandani 1999; Basu and Altinay 2002). Many gender

sensitive studies, drawing on segmented labour market<sup>67</sup> theory, suggest that failure in accessing employment in the primary labour market due to sexism and racism encourages involvement in ethnic businesses (Murdie and Teixeira 2000; Dhaliwal 2000; Dallafar 1994; Maitra 2013). Another thread of studies – stressing the gendered connotations of women’s domestic work - counter that women enter into ethnic business to have flexible work hours that allow them to combine paid work and household responsibilities (Hanson and Pratt 1995; Waldinger 1996; Gunnerud 1997; Mirchandani 1999; Mason et al. 2011; Edwards and Field-Hendrey 2002). Conservative religious practices have also been identified as a barrier for Muslim immigrant women’s engagement in paid work including ethnic businesses (Ram et al. 2000; Sanghera 2002).

It is argued that immigrant men and women experience places of production and reproduction in different ways depending on their various social positions (Mahler and Pessar 2006; Menjivar 2003; Mahalingam et al. 2008). The expected gender roles of immigrant women often affect their paid work inside and outside the home (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1997; Leonard 2001; Salaff and Greve 2004). Scholars also highlight how the intersection of place and work shape racialized immigrant women’s identity negotiations (D’Addario 2012; McDowell 1999, 2008, 2015; Raghuram 2008; Pratt 2008). Yet, there is limited information about the diverse social and economic circumstances in which women enter into and operate ethnic businesses in different socio-spatial contexts such as at home and outside the home. With few exceptions,

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<sup>67</sup> To understand the segmented labour market the inferences of the dual labour market theory coined by Doeringer and Piore in 1971 are crucial. The terms ‘dual labour market’ indicates the existence of two parallel employment segments in the developed countries (Berntson et al. 2006). The primary segment consists of ‘high wages, good working conditions, employment stability, chances of advancement, equity and due process in the administration of work rules’. In contrast, the secondary sector contains jobs with low wages, low income security, and poor working conditions (Fuller and Vosko 2008; Piore and Doeringer 1971).

whether and how racialized immigrant women's entry into businesses in the home and outside the home impacts their domestic roles have not been addressed in the literature (Mirandani 1999; Basu and Altinay 2002). This chapter enhances understanding of how place and context affect immigrant women's involvement in ethnic businesses by investigating how they negotiate the private/public division of labour.

Comprising five sections, this chapter investigates the experiences of Bangladeshi women who operate home and non-H-B businesses. It illuminates the complex ways that Muslim immigrant women enter into ethnic businesses. The first section analyzes the strategies that home and non-H-B business operators use to combat social and economic marginalization. The analysis describes how husbands' and male family members' economic integration shape Bangladeshi women's search for paid work. The second section investigates Bangladeshi women's employment search and entry into home-based businesses outlining the nature and characteristics of their home-based businesses. The third section describes the contexts in which Bangladeshi women become involved in businesses outside the home and the characteristic of non-H-B businesses. The fourth section examines how women experience and evaluate the religious and cultural practices in the neighborhood and how they interpret the connections between Islamic dress and their engagement in paid work at the two locations: inside and outside the home. Then the fifth section scrutinizes the division of household labour and discusses how paid work in the home and outside the home shapes the ways in which women negotiate family responsibilities.

## **5.2. Experience of Blocked Mobility and Diverse Family Strategies**

Patriarchal norms in Bangladesh that normalize men's breadwinner role influenced most Bangladeshi women to migrate with the hope that their husbands and male family members

would assure financial responsibility for the family in Canada. Women's experience of blocked mobility started with the un- and underemployment of husbands and other male family members who - by virtue of 'conventional' patriarchal family relations - were the principal applicants/sponsors in the migration process, had been the primary breadwinners before migration and on whom these women expected to depend financially after migration (Naved et al. 2006; Zaman 1999; Man 2004). The lack of recognition of international educational and work experience posed a huge barrier for their husbands to get a job in their previous field of specialization. Some men were forced into low paid jobs in the secondary labour market.

A home-based business operator - Sufiya, whose husband was an engineer in Dhaka for 12 years, explains how her husband's predictions about job opportunities in Canada proved wrong when he was repeatedly refused positions in his professional field because he lacked Canadian work experience. Finally, he had to accept a job as a security guard to maintain the family. After 3 months he quit the job because he only got night shifts and could not take the physical pressure of waking up all night. Then he was unemployed for almost a year until he got a temporary part-time job in a super market. For Sufiya, the failure of her husband to get a decent and permanent job and the resulting financial difficulties after migration were unexpected and unthinkable.

Sufiya: Before coming here, my husband used to search in the websites to find out whether there are job opportunities for him in Canada. He was a civil engineer so he found out that there are jobs in his profession here. So I thought he will work and I will stay at home at least initially then will look for work gradually. But after coming here we realized things are different. My husband did not get any job in his profession. Everywhere they ask for experience. His work experiences don't have any value and his education is value less. So it was a huge shock for him! He got a job where he had to work at night. But it was hard for him to work at night. Here working is different, we are used to do only paper works back home but here you have to do work physically. That is difficult for anyone after coming here.

The secondary labour market devalues the immigrant labour force (Bauder 2003). Taking on Bourdieu's notion of institutionalised cultural capital, Bauder (2003) argues that institutional processes of devaluing the cultural capital of immigrants such as their foreign credentials and work experience exclude many foreign-educated and skilled immigrants from high-paid jobs in Canada. A number of studies critically illustrate the ways in which systemic racism, such as requirements for Canadian skills and work experience, employers' lack of knowledge about foreign credentials, and employers' negative attitudes towards minority immigrants, adversely affect their participation in the labour market (Liu 2007; Saloojee 2003; Bauder 2003). Confirming these findings, the majority of women in this study described how the employment barriers faced by male members in the family shattered their dreams of a better life after migration.

Nupur - a non-H-B business operator describes how it was unimaginable that her husband would not get a job after coming to Toronto since his educational qualifications and employment experiences were the main driving force for their migration. Despite having a master's degree in economics from a European university, her husband could not secure a job in his professional field. Taking up a low-paid job was the only option for him to survive after migration.

Nupur: When I came to Canada just think; 24 years ago, we came in 1988. So when we came my husband was not getting a job related to his education and work experience. He got a master's degree in Norway. Still he was not getting a good position. My relative here told us the situation; no one gets a good job in the beginning. So he started applying for low position jobs. He got a few job offers, not good ones, like a junior management position in a super store but why would he do those jobs? he came to work as an economist. We were running out of money and we could not sleep at night; we used to think what will we do and how will we take care of the sons.

Nupur's and Sufiya's testimony indicate how the requirements for Canadian experience and English proficiency create a dead end for new immigrants since these qualities are impossible for them to obtain unless they get their first job (Man 2004; Creese and Wiebe 2009).

Most Bangladeshi women describe the harsh reality they faced when they realized that there is no hope that their husbands will ever get a job in their professional fields. The non-recognition of foreign degrees and work experience on the one hand, and employers' demands for Canadian experience, Canadian credentials and Canadian accent on the other hand, made it almost impossible for Bangladeshi men to obtain jobs in their fields (Reitz 2003; Aydemir and Skuterud 2004). The foreign education and work experiences of immigrants in Canada are racialized on the basis of their national and ethnic origins (Guo 2011; Man 2004). Many immigrants experience devaluation of their foreign education, however, visible minority immigrants experience a lack of recognition of their foreign credentials (Buzdugan and Halli 2009). Foreign credentials are an important disadvantage for racialized immigrants in the Canadian labour market. Bangladeshi women whose husbands had well-paid jobs in Bangladesh describe the mental and psychological pressure of employment barriers, financial struggles and loss of social status after migration. Priya, a home-based business operator, describes the mental and emotional struggles she and her husband experienced because of his unemployment. Disappointed and frustrated they started questioning if migration to Canada was the right decision and even considered returning to Bangladesh where they had had a much better life. However, the investment of family savings in migration and the desire to get Canadian citizenship motivated them to stay in Toronto.

Priya: Well we come here for better life but things are reversed now. Life was much better there. Here we always have tension about finding a job, having a job. Starting a new life here is tough. My husband remains sad all the time. He says, I had a good job there, why did I come here? ... my husband is always saying, lets go to Bangladesh. I told him ok first take the Canadian passport then go. We spent so much money to come here, now at least we have to be citizen so that we can visit time to time. I went to Dhaka twice, went back once for 5 months and came again, so much money we spent already. My mother in law is all alone there. Now it is difficult to bring her here. We have to show income and we don't have that much income.

Bangladeshi women that migrated to Canada with hopes and dreams of a better life were disappointed after migration, realizing the gaps between their dreams and reality. The problematic Canadian immigration system in which immigrants get points for educational qualifications and work experiences that are not recognized by employers in the primary labour market systematically maintains the deskilling of racialized immigrants (Creese and Wiebe 2009; Maitra 2013; Akbar 2009). Most Bangladeshi women did not have any idea about the employment barriers that their husbands would confront. Immigration guidelines do not indicate that the credentials and work experiences of their husbands and male family members will be devalued after migration.

Yasmin: No, we didn't know anything about employment issues. Nobody informed us about the reality... So we were not mentally prepared to face employment barriers. We discovered employment problems after coming here. If my husband knew about difficulty in getting a job here, he would have different plans. That's why it was shocking for us ... it was hard to accept and decide something quickly.

Facing employment barriers and financial setbacks after migration, families of Bangladeshi women implemented various strategies to create alternative economic opportunities. Migrants often take diverse paths to combat blocked mobility and achieve their short and long-term migration goals (Blau et al. 2003; Dion and Dion 2001). An individual's family roles influence the search for income opportunities and the desire to enhance the well-being of the

family often impacts women's entry into paid-work (Menjivar 1999, Vorley and Rosgers 2012; Tienda and Booth 1991; Creese et al. 2008). The ways in which men and women in immigrant families assign meaning to their income generating activities vary and are shaped by the affirmation and re-negotiation of gender roles and gender relations (Menjivar 1999; Raghuram; Wong 2013; Mahalingam et al. 2008). The narratives of Bangladeshi women demonstrate how they followed diverse routes to socio-economically integrate in Toronto and how their intersecting identities influenced their decisions about paid work. Women's stories indicate that the families' economic strategies in Toronto required re-evaluation of the family's social-economic status and re-negotiation of gender roles. Though male members of the family faced similar employment barriers after migration, the families adopted diverse strategies to overcome blocked mobility. The roles of Bangladeshi women in adopting diverse family strategies reflect gender roles and gender relations in the household that shape family members' abilities to negotiate labour market barriers. Their experiences also shed light on the social and economic factors that shaped family decisions.

### **5.2.1. Family Strategies of Home-based Business Operators**

#### **5.2.1.1. *Husbands' Human Capital Development***

Most of the home-based business operators' husbands decided to upgrade their skills to obtain a decent job and overcome financial difficulties and the loss of social status. In some cases after disappointing job interviews and after working in low-paid jobs for a while, their husbands decided to upgrade their skills by enrolling in courses that qualify them for their previous fields of work. Alternatively, some attended technical courses (computer programming, tax filing, and accounting) to get a job quickly. Rather than moving in and out of numerous temporary low paid jobs, these men wanted a stable job and income. They thought acquiring

Canadian credentials and skills would help them achieve this goal. In this context, their wives looked for any employment to support the family and started working in home-based businesses when no other employment options were available.

Priya and her husband came to Toronto in 2009. Upgrading her husband's career was the main purpose of their migration. Priya supported her husband's dream with the hope of having a better quality of life in Toronto. She describes how after working temporarily in a community based organization and a factory her husband decided to study and upgrade his skills to get a permanent job. Similarly, another home-based business operator, Najneen, who came to Toronto in 2004 along with her husband and two children, states that to have permanent employment and a stable income her husband planned to get a degree in finance or accounting so that he could get a job in the banking sector where he worked in Bangladesh. Both of them stress the importance of the economic advancement of their husbands (Blau et al. 2003; Mahalingam and Leu 2005).

Priya: He is not working now, only I am working. He used to work before, now he is studying. He worked in BCS and then he worked at a medicine factory. He does not want to do those jobs. It is hard to get a job, that's why he is studying. He is planning to work in technical fields. He is taking a diploma in computer programming in Sentinel College and wants to have a permanent job ... I am working because he needs a good job otherwise he will feel frustrated.

Najneen: I decided to work because it is not possible to survive here on one income. My husband is not working now. He started working in Walmart; he didn't get a good job here. He tried a lot but nothing happened. He needs to get a degree from here ... he was a banker; he was a senior manager in *Sonali Bank*. Here he applied for banking job but he could not get one. His job is the main concern now. He will do a diploma in finance or accounting.

Priya and Nasjneen searched for work to support the family while their husbands are upgrading their qualifications. Many male family members' ability to undergo re-skilling process in Toronto relies on Bangladeshi women's success finding paid work. Immigrant women's entry into paid-work to finance their husbands' skills development has been documented by various researchers (Blau et al. 2003). Duleep and Sanders (1993) found that immigrant wives took up

paid work in the USA to support their husband's human capital development. Studying immigrant couples in Canada, Blau et al. (2003: 429) found that "upon arrival, husbands invest in their human capital, while wives work to provide the family with liquidity during this investment period". They argue that wives' decision to enter into low-paid employment and self-employment to invest in husbands human capital development is a common practice since men are viewed as the head of the family and, thus, have priority in obtaining education and skills.

Similar to these findings, some of the Bangladeshi women demonstrate their inclination to do any type of paid work to support their husbands' educations. The professional employment status of the husband is often viewed as a collective success of the family. It was taken for granted that men in the family should restore the family's social status and, thus, investing time and money for their skill development was a priority for these women. Mira states how it is important for her husband to regain social status by getting a good job in his professional field and how she is willing to do any type of paid work to endorse her husband's skill development.

Mira: He did his Masters in English from Chittagong University and worked in a bank for 15 years. After coming here he talked to a couple of settlement agencies and they told him to get a degree in Math and commerce to get a banking job here. So he is now studying accounting in George Brown College. So it is a 3 year course but he did well in the courses, so now he will finish in 1 and half years. Then he will try to get a job in the banking sector. He has planned to do masters later on. He wants to get a good job; he doesn't want to do odd jobs. It is [working in low end jobs] ok for me. I don't feel bad here but he is having tough time.

Like Mira, many women portray husbands as needing a good job, but they don't comment on their own anguish. It appears that women do the emotional work in the household by showing empathy and compassion towards their husband and family members to ease their disappointments and frustrations in Toronto. Among professional immigrant couples, women's sacrifices concerning employment are a common trend (Raghuram 2004; Cooke 2007). Yasmin,

who was a manager in CARE in Bangladesh states that she does not mind sacrificing her career and working in low paid jobs to help her husband because her husband's employment is the first priority for the family. Although she and her husband are equally qualified and worked in the same position in CARE, she made the labour market compromises.

Yasmin: He did one course in Centennial College and now he is planning to do CSC<sup>68</sup> or something on banking and then will look for a job. We are planning a couple of options ... I am looking for a job ... I will work whatever job I get, in the factory or coffee shop I don't care but he needs to get a better position.

The ethnic entrepreneurship literature highlights how employment barriers and the responsibility for reproductive work rather than family context and gender expectations influence racialized immigrant women's involvement in home-based businesses (Maitra 2013). Bangladeshi home based business operators stress the importance of the family's common goals in making decisions about their paid work. They are willing to take any type of job so they can help their husbands to advance their education and achieve a stable financial situation for the family. Women often compromise educational and professional advancement by engaging in home-based businesses to ensure their husbands' professional and economic success (Sakamoto and Zhou 2005). Their husbands' withdrawal from the labour force to study required that the women who were interviewed take financial responsibility for the family. For these women, starting a home-based business was the only means to sustain the family, particularly after they and their husbands had been rejected by numerous employers.

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<sup>68</sup> CSC refers to The Canadian Securities Course. The CSC is a baseline regulatory requirement to perform securities and mutual fund transactions in many financial services positions ([https://www.csi.ca/student/en\\_ca/courses/csi/csc.xhtml](https://www.csi.ca/student/en_ca/courses/csi/csc.xhtml)).

### **5.2.1.2. *Husband's Entry into Survival Jobs***

Another group of home-based business operators mention that to combat economic struggles after migration, they and the male members in the family decided to take whatever jobs and income opportunities came along. Being excluded from the primary labour market, these men had only one option, to take up low-paid jobs which do not require Canadian experience and are labeled as 'survival jobs' (Creese and Wiebe 2012; Mojab 1999).

Husbands of home-based business operators took jobs in fast food stores, superstores, security companies and factories which are not only low-paid but also temporary. Some of the women state that as parents they were inspired to sacrifice their own career goals and work hard for their children's future by doing any type of job. Nee and Sanders (2001) suggest that immigrant parents' willingness to rationalize the employment barriers and economic hardships at their destinations so they can provide better educational and employment opportunities for their children is a common family strategy. It often encourages immigrants to accept survival jobs, the strategy adopted by many Bangladeshi men and women to secure the financial future of their children in Toronto.

The importance of their children's future is emphasized by Kamrun, whose husband, despite having a PhD degree from Europe and 10 years work experience as an administrative officer in a public university in Bangladesh, failed to get a stable job in Toronto. Although they considered returning to Bangladesh, they stayed in Toronto for the children. Since the children's better future was the main motive behind their migration, her husband did low-paid jobs to make sure that the children do not experience financial difficulties in Toronto.

Kamrun: Within 3 months I wanted to go back. I started crying. My husband became sick mentally. He said – I feel to kill myself; we had this situation. Then gradually we accepted our life here. My husband’s friends told him- why do you want to go? Just spend some time here, see what you can do, then we stayed. He still had the previous job [in Dhaka]. He took leave for two years before coming here. We will apply for citizenship in May 2013. He says I don’t mind now to do odd jobs. Everybody does odd jobs here to survive here.

Sufiya who besides operating a home-based business, works part-time in a fast food shop while her husband works in a super market stresses how she and her husband work in low-paid jobs to provide a better future for their children. She also justifies the employment barriers that minority immigrants encounter. Her statement echoes the arguments of some scholars that employment barriers in Canada often demoralize immigrants to the extent that they believe that they lack skills and give up pursuing better employment opportunities (Man 2004; Liu 2007).

Sufiya: I think it is good to accept the situation. We cannot get a high paid job immediately so it is better to get along with the situation. After coming here no one cares what degrees you had in the past or what profession you had....so you have to start doing whatever you get. Ego is not good, you have to gain work experience from here. Also we will not get a good job here in the beginning. The work and education system is different here from back home. We have to accept it for our children’s’ future. We have to provide them good life; that’s why we came here!

In some cases, male family members took up low-paid and precarious jobs for immediate survival and to gain Canadian experience with the hope that they will get a job in their own professional field. However, these job experiences do not qualify them for employment in their professional fields. As a result, some of the women’s husbands are trapped in low-paid and unstable employment (Creese and Wiebe 2012; Berntson, 2006). With agony, Selina describes how her husband moved in and out of several temporary jobs and never gained work experience in his field of study. Instability in employment also restricted his efforts to obtain Canadian credentials. Due to her husband’s irregular income, she had to look for paid work to supplement the family income.

Selina: He started working in a factory. That is the only job he got and it was temporary. Then he tried to get a job in banking sector in his field, but he could not show any experience. Then he got another job again in a factory. They saw that he worked in this sector before so they hired him. These jobs are temporary ... No guarantee that tomorrow you will have the job. He went to some organizations and they told him to get a degree in finance. But he never had a chance to do that. When will he do that? He had to work and look after the family.

Male family members' entry into low-paid jobs and skill development programs require home-based business operators to take full or partial responsibility for the family's financial needs. Even those women who did not have any plans to work after migration, had to look for work to support the family. The situation of home-based business operators aligns with previous studies that find that the husband's lack of income or his inadequate income often encourages women's entry into paid-work (Menjivar 1999). Based on a study of women's labour market participation in the USA, Stier and Tienda (1992: 1294) state that "the lower the husband's wage rate, the higher the likelihood that wives' labor income will be essential to meet consumption needs". Likewise, most home-based operators looked for paid-work due to the husband's un- and under employment and the resulting financial difficulties. Desperate to find an income source Bangladeshi immigrant women enter into home-based businesses.

The complex findings from the logistic analysis revealed that Bangladeshi immigrant women with low family incomes are more likely to be self-employed. The narratives of Bangladeshi women help us understand how low family income compels their involvement in home-based businesses. Their narratives emphasize the strong link between low family income and Bangladeshi women's engagement in informal economic activities that take place in their homes. Informal home-based businesses are a crucial source of family income for many Bangladeshi women who are members of low income families.

## **5.2.2. Family Strategies of Non-H-B Business Operators**

### ***5.2.2.1. Husband's/Male Member's Entry into Ethnic Businesses***

Families of non-H-B business operators described different routes to becoming entrepreneurs. The majority of male family members of non-H-B business operators had decided to start a business. Supporting blocked mobility theory, the stories of non-H-B business operators suggest that their husbands and other male family members decided to start a business due to their failure to obtain desired employment in the primary labour market (Zhou 1992; Ram and Jones 1998; Portes and Bach 1980, 1985, Portes and Jensen 1989, Clark and Drinkwater 2002).

While the majority of male family members started a business immediately after realizing the extent of employment barriers, some of them worked before starting businesses. In some cases, male family members took low-paid and temporary employment initially but later on left their jobs and started a business to have stable and higher incomes. Laili first migrated to Montreal and then came to Toronto four years later. She has been living in Toronto for twelve years and describes how her husband worked in low-paid jobs for five years before deciding to start a business. Her husband preferred to start a business which he thought would offer more opportunities and better economic returns.

Laili: After coming here in Montreal my husband worked and we had to save money for the business. Then we started the business. I never wanted to marry a business person. But now he is a business man. He started business cause one has to invest 5 to 10 years to study and get Canadian degree to become qualified for a good job. So that's why we preferred business line. My husband had 10 types of businesses so far. If he doesn't like a business he closes it and starts another one.

Similarly, Rebeka whose brother sponsored her to come to Toronto describes, how her brother after moving in and out of several unstable and temporary jobs, decided to start a restaurant as an alternative way to ensure a stable income source.

Rebeka: I came here in 2003, like 8/9 years ago. My brother came here before, 3 years before ... When I came here my brother was working in a company but he was not earning enough, it was a temporary job. So there was chance of losing the job any time. It was his 4<sup>th</sup> job. So he wanted to have something stable. He was thinking of a restaurant business. He started collecting information from friends and realized it is possible. If he has a business there will be security in life.

Most non-H-B business operators share similar stories of how their husbands' entry into ethnic businesses was the only way that they could create a reliable source of income and restore their social status. These women stress the importance of restoring their husbands' social and economic status which provided the women with a privileged life style in Bangladesh. Realizing the devaluation of their husbands' foreign credentials that had been the basis of their high-paid jobs and high social status in Bangladesh, women supported their husbands' decisions to start businesses that allowed them to avoid low-paid and low-status jobs.

Dipika: Well those who came to Canada from Bangladesh are very educated; mostly doctors or bankers or engineers but they don't get a job here. We don't want to work with people with lower social status and education. So we think if we do something by ourselves, we can create our own employment. We can avoid mixing with working class people.

The notion of transnational habitus<sup>69</sup> is useful to understand the ways in which non-H-B business operators construct their husbands' employment status and social status in Toronto. Immigrants' construction of social status, particularly the ways they assign values to the economic, social and symbolic dimensions of social status, are shaped by transnational habitus - the interlocking habitus of the place of origin and places of destination (Kelly and Lusia 2006; Vertovec 2004; Guarnizo 1997). Immigrants often bring employment preferences and expectations from their own habitus and they replicate those expectations as they navigate a new

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<sup>69</sup> Central to the concept of habitus is the internalization of social expectations and value systems and their incorporation into bodily dispositions. The other side of the habitus, however is the collective, learned, system of usually unconscious or implicit rules which shape the value that individuals place on practices, and, therefore, on various forms of capital (Kelly and Lewis 2006: 835).

habitus (Bauder 2004; Kelly and Lewis 2006). As stated earlier, in chapter three, after the British colonial period, the middle class in Bangladesh has been distinguished by their educational attainment, administrative and office jobs and distance from working class people who do physical labour (Siddiqui 1990; Alavi 1989). The tendency to translate social status in Toronto through the lens of Bangladeshi middle class consciousness is apparent among some Bangladeshi women who want their husbands to work in a business independently instead of mixing with less educated and working class people in low-paid jobs. Anita indicates how she strives to maintain separation from people who do not have a university degree, a crucial marker of her social status. The desire to maintain distance from 'working class' people adds to women's motivations to support their husbands' entry into ethnic businesses to gain upward social mobility.

Anita: Our husbands were doctors and engineers. We never thought of working. We thought we will relax because they earn so much but here we cannot have that status. They are not getting a good job. He did not think that the situation is so bad. We didn't know that an engineer will have to work in a grocery store! or as a waiter in a hotel! Clean dishes in the kitchen! So why should not he try to do something rather than working with less educated people?

In families of non-H-B business operators, ethnic entrepreneurship was seen as a route to gain financial security and restore social status (Light 1984; Zhou 1992; Portes and Zhou 1996). Male family members' involvement in businesses has substantial impacts on Bangladeshi women's entry into non-H-B-businesses which I discuss later.

#### ***5.2.2.2. Immigration Period and Financial Resources***

Data from the 2006 census suggest that the propensity to operate formal businesses among Bangladeshi immigrants increases with their length of stay in Toronto. This trend is common among immigrants in general (Li 2001; Green et al. 2016). Corroborating this finding, narratives of most non-H-B business operators indicate that their long period of settlement in

Toronto since the 1980s and early 1990s worked in their favor in terms of business opportunities in the Bangladeshi neighbourhood. During this period, there were not many Bangladeshi businesses in the Bangladeshi neighbourhood in Toronto, so there was little competition. Nupur, who came to Toronto in 1985, provides a glimpse of the Bangladeshi neighbourhood in the late 1980s. She describes how there were only a few Bangladeshi businesses in the neighbourhood, insufficient to serve the needs of Bangladeshis. As more and more Bangladeshis started to settle in the neighbourhood, demand for Bangladeshi food, grocery items, money transaction facilities, social and cultural services increased. Having failed to get a job in his professional field, her husband opened a store to lend and sell videos of Bengali and Indian movies.

Nupur: When I came to Canada just think, 26 years ago!, we came in 1985. So when we came my husband was not getting a job related to his education and work experience. So we thought to start a business. There was no restaurant for authentic Bangladeshi food. There were some they used to serve Indian food like Biryani. There was a Pakistani video store at this place. The Pakistani gentleman was not happy with the business. The idea of starting a business came to my husband's mind. He thought how it would be if we start a business. There was no source for entertainment here; there was no facility to watch Bangla drama serials and movies. Then he contacted [Bangladeshi] people in New York. There were many Bangladeshi video stores there [in New York]. My husband asked them if they he could buy Bangla videos from them. They said it is possible for them to send video cassettes of Bangla drama serials and movies to Toronto ... Then we bought the video store from that Pakistani guy. My husband start bringing those videos and he also bought Indian movie cassettes from Indian stores and made a huge collection of those videos.

Nupur then describes how later on, she joined the businesses and together with her husband they turned the video store into a restaurant in response to the demand for traditional cuisine and a place for socialization among Bangladeshis in Toronto. She stresses that the inclination of Bangladeshis to maintain social interactions with each other in a new social setting was the secret of the success of her restaurant business.

Nupur: So when we started the video store, people used to come and sit here and spend time by talking and discussing many things. The store was too big for only a video store. There was lot of space. So we put chair and table for Bangladeshis to come and sit and have discussions. They used to spend time here. Then many of them requested my husband to serve tea; without tea the discussion session felt incomplete. There was no place like this where they could sit and talk. People used to play Karam board here where the kitchen is now. So my husband started selling tea. You can say we started by selling tea. So people used to buy snacks from outside to have with tea. They used to say why don't you keep some snacks too? Then we won't have to buy things from other places. I said ok I will prepare *samosa*, *singara*, *dal puri* in a small quantity and my husband used to sell them with tea and on weekends I used to make big dishes like biryani and khichuri, meat curry in a small quantity. That was how it started.

Residential concentration and the proximity and cohesion of co-ethnics, emphasized in the cultural theory of ethnic entrepreneurship, significantly facilitated the emergence of Nupur's restaurant business in the Bangladeshi neighbourhood (Aldrich and Waldinger 1990; Light and Bonacich 1988; Light and Gold 2000). The increasing number of Bangladeshis near the intersection of Victoria Park and Danforth Avenues facilitated the emergence of niche markets for goods and services and the growth of Bangladeshi businesses in the early 1980s.

Access to financial resources is another crucial factor that enabled non-H-B business operators as well as male family members to start a business in Toronto. Founding a business in Toronto requires substantial amounts of capital and getting loans from Canadian banks to start a business is extremely challenging for newcomers (Lo and Li 2011; Texiera et al. 2007). Banks rarely grant loans for small scale retail businesses unless the applicant has substantial savings (Fadahunsi et al. 2000). Due to the difficulties of obtaining bank loans, the majority of immigrant entrepreneurs fund their businesses from their own personal savings and money borrowed from family members (Min 1988; Light and Gold 2000; Ram and Hillin 1994; Barrett et al. 2002; Fadahunsi et al. 2000).

Most women state that neither they nor their husbands or other male family members received any loans from the banks. Rather, they sold their properties in Bangladesh and invested

their own savings in the businesses. Both Rupali and Nupur mention obtaining money for business by selling their property in Bangladesh.

Rupali: We did not take any loan. We invested our own money. We sold all of our property. That's ok because we will not go back so keeping those properties was not profitable. We would sell those anyway. Then my husband started a clothing business. Not this store, another store on Gerrard Street. Then he sold that business and started this one here.

Nupur: We brought a big amount of money from Norway and we sold our properties that we had in Bangladesh but money goes away so quickly here if you do not have an income source. So my husband thought to invest it sooner. He did not wait for getting a job. We decided to buy the video store that was a good decision, it helped us to survive.

Mariyam and her husband had a multiplex apartment building in Dhaka. They sold the building to a real estate company to invest the money in her husband's business in Toronto. Once the business was profitable, she started saving money to start her own business.

Mariyam: Having a business here is not that easy. You need thousands of dollars and there is no guarantee that you will be able to make profits. It was possible because we had a very precious property in Dhaka. We owned an apartment building, a big one, eleven story tall. In our country it says that if you have that kind of apartment, you don't need to worry for three generations. You can live like rich people with the rent. But we could not keep it. We had to sell it. It was so risky. There is a chance to fail in business and lose money. Establishing a successful business needs money and luck. I would say luck favored us that is why we succeeded in business.

Non-H-B business operators had family savings and financial resources to invest in male family members' businesses as well as their own. Their access to financial capital also allowed this group of women to reside in owner occupied houses. According to 2006 census data, home-ownership increases the probability of self-employment among Bangladeshi immigrants. Bangladeshi women who operate non-H-B businesses are more financially secure than the majority of Bangladeshi immigrants in Toronto who lack the financial resources required for home-ownership (see Table 4-5). Though this group of women faced economic setbacks in

Toronto, they did not suffer the severe financial difficulties experienced by home-based business operators. Due to their financial resources, these Bangladeshi women evaded low-paid survival jobs in Toronto by working in non-H-B businesses. Some of them worked in non-H-B family businesses, while others started a business on their own. Min and Bozorgmehr (2000) recognize financial resource as a crucial component of class resources. Studying Iranian immigrants in the US, they found that the possession of class resources in the form of financial capital and knowledge of business allowed Iranians to become entrepreneurs. Having class resources such as financial capital and male family members' business background also enabled these Bangladeshi women to operate non-H-B businesses in Toronto.

### **5.3. Employment Search and Entry into Home-based Businesses**

Searching for paid-work is more frequent among home-based business operators compared to non-H-B operators. Most home-based business operators failed to get a job even a low-paid job, so they started their home-based businesses for family survival. Though a majority of the women who looked for a job were not skilled migrants and came to Canada either as spouses or as family class migrants, some of them possess university degrees and work experience. Women who had worked in Bangladesh failed to secure a job, apparently because they lacked Canadian credentials and work experience. In most cases, they even failed to get a low-paid job in the secondary labour market (Man 2004; Vosko 2003). Most of those who do not have previous work experience also faced difficulties obtaining a job despite attending training programs at SAWRO to get a job in fast food shops and grocery stores.

Race-based and gender-based exclusionary practices channel minority immigrant women into temporary and precarious<sup>70</sup> employment (Arat-Koc 1997; McDowell 2008; Fuller and Vosko 2008; Creese and Wiebe 2012; Galabuzi 2005). Bangladeshi women who looked for employment opportunities before starting home-based businesses faced numerous barriers. Most women including those who possessed a university degree and work experience could not find jobs in their fields of study in Toronto. Despite having a master's degree in computer science from a European country, Farah, did not get a job in Toronto. She was not even short-listed for interviews after sending several job applications. To gain an income, she started working as a computer instructor at SAWRO and teaching Bangladeshi women to use computer programs from her home.

Farah: I already applied for 10/15 jobs but no luck yet. They did not even call me for interviews! I started working as a computer teacher since last year. I saw an advertisement on website that SAWRO needed a computer trainer. One of my neighbours told me that the organization is within this neighbourhood. So I started teaching here in the morning and I teach other women in the evening at my home ... I take classes of 3 batches of women each week. But this experience will not help me to get a job, employers don't recognize any experience from SAWRO.

Having a university degree did not provide much advantage for Farah in the primary labour market in Toronto (Akbar 2009; Ng and Estable 1987; Walsh and Brigham 2007; Liu 2007). Home-based business operators who are comparatively well-educated describe how deskilling forced them to settle for low-paid jobs (Mirchandani et al. 2008). Unable to get a job in her professional field, Najneen, who has a Master's degree in Biology, took a job in a fast food store. She accepted the job because of the economic needs of the family. Her husband, who

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<sup>70</sup> Precariousness denotes the temporality and the casualization of employment and labour market insecurities in Canada. "Forms of employment involving atypical employment contracts, limited social benefits and statutory entitlements, job insecurity, low job tenure, low earnings, poor working conditions and high risks of ill health" Precarious employment comprises a range of employment other than a full-time, full-year, permanent paid job and includes full-time temporary, part-time permanent and part-time temporary jobs (Cranford et al. 2003: 455).

had been a banker in Bangladesh, was unemployed when Najneen started searching for a job. Without her husband's income and with family savings running out, she took a job in a fast food store. After five months, she was laid off from the job and started working in a factory where she packages cosmetics. Job insecurity and the low income from her current job led her to look for additional income by starting a home-based garment business.

Najneen: That's happened to us here. Sometimes it is hard to accept that I work in a factory. I thought my subject is good and I have a chance to get a job ... Unfortunately we are doing the same job that Canadians with high school education do. What to do? That's why I have two jobs, my business and my other work in the factory, to survive.

The lack of recognition of foreign credentials means that Bangladeshi women have to upgrade their educational qualifications in Canada to gain access to employment. Prioritizing their husbands' education and skill development encourages many women to look for short-term training options so that they can start earning quickly. As a result, unlike some Caribbean and Chinese women in Canada who obtain university or college diplomas to tap into better employment opportunities (see Creese and Wiebe 2012; Sakamoto and Zhou 2005), many Bangladeshi women rely on SAWRO for quick job training and skill development. Living in the residential concentration, these women seek help from the organization that is located within five to ten minutes walking distance from the high-rise apartment buildings.

### **5.3.1. The Impact of SAWRO on Employment Search**

Community-based organizations often influence the settlement and integration of immigrants in Canada. Community-based organizations provide immigrants with social and economic supports and networking opportunities that shape their paths toward labour market integration and channel them towards certain job sectors (Ooka and Wellman 2003). For example, the training and skill development programs offered by SAWRO are designed to help Bangladeshi women accept that

they will never get a well-paid job in Toronto. SAWRO recommends that Bangladeshi immigrant women should train for low-paid jobs and start from there. Influenced by the programs and policies of SAWRO, home-based business operators search for employment by targeting low-paid jobs. By emphasizing survival jobs, SAWRO reinforces the deskilling that many racialized immigrants in Canada experience (Bauder 2003, 2005). The key informant, Munira, from SAWRO explains the rationale behind their employment programs:

Munira: One way these women's education is high; another way these women don't have any work experiences. They cannot get a job in their education related field because they don't have experience according to their education. They have language barrier, cultural barrier and education barrier. They cannot go to the high end jobs. We are supporting a group of women who are isolated and live in pocket of poverty. They need to hold something first then they can upgrade themselves gradually when they will get some working experience, working hours and credits. So we are helping highly educated women to take up odd jobs. So that's a big contradiction ... Our women are not ready to enter high end jobs. Our women need one or two years of experience before getting in to standard jobs. So then they will get some money. They have decision making power in the family.

SAWRO's policy resembles the policies of other settlement agencies. A growing number of researchers report that the employment programs and services offered by most settlement agencies channel new immigrants into low-wage jobs (Creese et al. 2006; Dosa 2004; Geddie 2002; Giles and Preston 1996; Preston and Giles 1997). Researchers argue that some settlement organizations reproduce the sexist and racist discourses that construct minority immigrant women as cheap and complementary labour and divert them to low-paid and temporary jobs (Pinder 2002; Day and Brodsky 1998; Ng 1990; 1998). Fuller and Vosko (2008) describe how policy discourses promote temporary employment as a path to inclusion for immigrants. Instead of exploring effective ways to overcome employment barriers faced by Bangladeshi women, SAWRO encourages them to search for low-paid and temporary jobs as a means to a better job in the future.

Ascending the employment ladder - from low-paid to high-paid jobs rarely occurs. Low-paid and temporary jobs funnel women into other low-paid jobs and trap them in cycles of un- and under employment (Akter et al. 2013). No woman that I interviewed got a higher paid job after experience in poorly-paid jobs. Studies of Chinese and African immigrant women in Canada found similar trends (Man 2004; Creese and Wiebe 2012). The discourse of ‘survival jobs’ is prominent among home-based business operators. Through SAWRO and co-ethnic networks, a handful of home-based business operators such as Sufiya obtained temporary and part-time work. Due to the precarious nature of her job she started a home-based business to meet the family’s economic needs and ensure its financial security.

Sufiya: I live in 10<sup>th</sup> floor and there was another Bangladeshi lady lived in 6<sup>th</sup> floor who I met at SAWRO. So she told me about a hospital that there are job vacancies there and I should apply. I have no experience in job interviews. Then I went to SAWRO for help, they told me, just say yes to whatever work they ask you to do. Cleaning, sweeping anything...you just say yes. Then I went for interview and what I understood that they wanted someone to swipe the dining room and work as a waitress. So I thought I don’t have any job and we need money so why don’t I start working and see what happens? So I said yes and told them that I will work from 9 am to 3 pm. So they told me to go from next week and I started working there that was my first experience. I worked there for 4/5 months ... After that one lady at SAWRO told me about this McDonald’s where I work, that they were looking for new employees. She told me to put her name as reference so I did that. I have been working there for 3 years ... The income is not enough so I started the catering business from home. I need to earn money as much as possible now and save money for future because I am still not old and can work hard. I cannot move from job to job in old age. I have to think about how we will survive in future.

Women’s reliance on SAWRO for skill upgrading and job search advice often narrows their job prospects. Their difficulties in getting a job compound the financial insecurities in the family and their disappointment often forces them to start home-based businesses to generate an income.

### **5.3.2. Multiple Home-based Businesses and Additional Paid Work**

Bangladeshi women enter into home-based businesses because of severe financial need and marginalization due to the un- and under employment of their husbands and other male family members and the employment barriers the women encounter in Toronto. Their experiences in home-based businesses are unlike those of Iranian women in Los Angeles who are married to rich, economically privileged men and start home-based businesses as a hobby or for complementary income (Dallafer 1994). Operating home-based businesses in Toronto is not a hobby or a source of ‘pin money’ for Bangladeshi women (Wokowitz and Phizacklea 1995: 28). Rather it is a means - often the only means - to be economically active and generate an income for the family.

With few economic resources these women establish small businesses that have low start-up costs. Most of them utilize the cooking, sewing and child minding skills which they learned after marriage (Dallafer1994; Edwards and Field-Hendrey 2002; Maitra 2013; Mirchandani 1999) and for which they do not require further training and education (Hanson and Pratt 1995; Thompson 1983; Waldinger 1996). Some women provide home-based services based on other skills such as playing musical instruments, singing, computer programming and beatification.

By utilizing their existing skills, Bangladeshi women set up businesses with small financial investments, however, the informal and labour intensive nature of these businesses provides few economic benefits, as Mirchandani (1999) suggested. Most home-based operators work long hours almost every day to carry out business activities yet they do not gain enough income to meet their family’s needs. Morjina, who caters from her home, provides detailed accounts of her laborious work and her frustrations regarding her low and unpredictable income.

The low economic returns from home-based businesses encourage most operators including Morjina to prefer jobs in the secondary labour that have a fixed income on an hourly basis.

Morjina: I have a busy life but I must say I don't get paid according to the labour I put for making these snacks. It is tough to make snacks for [a] whole day. I make 120 *ruti* each day. I have to stand for whole time. If I worked outside I could get 10/12 dollars per hour but at home I start working in the morning and work till 2 pm. Then I pray and have lunch. Then I start working again till 9 pm. I work 8-10 hours per day but still don't earn money based on hours. I think those who work at home don't have appropriate earning ... Daily? Often I get 20 dollars, often 25 dollars. I got around 60 dollars in last 3 days.

To increase their incomes many women operate multiple businesses at home. Operating multiple businesses requires them to distribute their work hours among diverse business activities. Some women conduct one type of business on weekends and the other type of business on weekdays depending on the demand for their products and services. Several studies suggest that women prefer operating a home-based business because it provides flexible work hours, more leisure time than formal employment and enhanced quality of life (Mason et al. 2011; Walker et al. 2008). However, working at home does not provide Muslim Bangladeshi immigrant women with flexibility or leisure time. They often work 12 to 15 hours a day to juggle different types of businesses activities to earn a minimal income. Sumaiya for example, teaches children on weekends when they are not at school and provides child care on weekdays. She describes the lengthy and tiring tasks she has to do regularly to manage both businesses. Because her husband is unemployed, her home-based work is the only source of income for the family in Toronto. Operating multiple businesses is a strategy for her to increase the family income.

Sumaiya: I teach music only 2 days a week, Saturdays and Sundays. There are 2 batches of students on Sunday and 1 batch on Saturday. Not many students yet! Only 9 students, with time the number will be increased I hope. I take 30 dollars a month from those who learn in batches. I teach one batch for about an hour or sometimes one and half hour. I teach 1 student alone, she did not want to join with others. So I take 50 dollars a month from her ... I look after 5 kids, 2 Indian kids, they stay from morning 8 am to evening 5 pm, only on weekdays when their parents are at work. Their parents bring food for them

and they gave me a routine- when and what to feed them, so I follow the routine and feed them accordingly. These 2 stay for 5 days, but other 3 kids stay 2/3 days a week for 3/4 hours. From these two sources I make like 800/1000 dollars. Somehow I am managing here.

Tuli describes how she provides child care and catering services on a daily basis that keep her busy from morning till night. Like Sumaiya, Tuli also stresses the benefits of having stable employment with a fixed hourly wage.

Tuli: I do child minding at my home. I look after 2 children, 2 boys; one is 2 years and another 1 and half. I had to do everything for them. Their parents brought them around 7 am and they took them around 6/7 pm. Income is ok. I have to do everything, diaper change, feeding, and so on. I get 30 dollar per day for one child so 60 dollars per day. Parents bring food but they sometimes share food with my kids too. But income is good when one has a permanent job outside, they pay hour basis. When I work at home, I invest lot of time but I don't get money according to the hours I invest. I work whole day. I cook food and all day watch the kids. I try to prepare most of the food at night when the children go home.

In addition to working in a home-based business, a few women have a part-time job outside the home. Job insecurity and the inadequate incomes from part-time work encourage them to continue their home-based businesses. Engagement in paid work at home and outside the home requires moving from one type of work to another which is physically exhausting and emotionally stressful. As Sufiya who works in a fast food store in the morning and provides catering services from home in the evening states: "in the evening I don't feel I came home [to rest], I feel I came to start another work". She describes how she divides work hours throughout weekdays and weekends to maintain her paid employment outside the home and business activities at home.

Sufiya: I work for McDonald from 8 am to 4 pm and then, I prepare food to cater from 6 pm to 10 pm. Often I work till 1 am at night. That's on weekdays and weekend say I work [for catering] in the morning from 10 am to 12:30 and then in the evening I work [at McDonald] from 3 pm to 8 pm. It is hard but that's how I make money. I don't sleep at night often cause I go to bed so late that if I fall asleep then I will not be able to wake up early in the morning, cause I leave home at 7 to work in Macdonald.

With their home-based businesses as the only or main sources of family income in Toronto many Bangladeshi women operate several businesses to generate income. The entry of Bangladeshi women into multiple home-based businesses, their labour intensive tasks and their engagement in part-time work outside the home reveals how racialized immigrant women from 'middle class' backgrounds adopt the life style of 'working class' women after migration due to employment barriers and the economic struggles of the family in Toronto (Bannerji 2000: 76; Man 2004; Bonacich and Modell 1980; Min 1988).

#### **5.4. Entry into Non-H-B Businesses**

Bangladeshi women who work in non-H-B businesses on Danforth Avenue are concentrated in the retail, restaurant and beauty parlor sectors - the business sectors common to ethnic enclaves (Light and Bonacich, 1988; Light and Gold 2000; Min 1988, 1996; Portes and Bach 1985; Waldinger et al. 1992). All the businesses are 'formal' in character – licensed and registered properly and subject to income tax. Husbands' and male family members' involvement in businesses encouraged Bangladeshi women to establish formal businesses outside the home. The experiences of these Bangladeshi women are similar to those of other immigrant women who operate businesses outside the home. In New Zealand, experience in a business family enabled Indian women to open big stores (Pio 2007). Anthias and Mehta (2003) report that the majority of immigrant women that operate ethnic stores in the UK have businessmen husbands. Husbands of most Turkish women who operate businesses in Germany's

ethnic markets are also engaged in ethnic businesses (Hillman 1999). A similar trend is evident among Bangladeshi women who work in non-H-B businesses in Toronto.

I have categorized non-H-B businesses into two groups: family businesses and independent businesses. Some scholars emphasize ‘legal ownership’ as a characteristic of a business (Anthias and Mehta 2003; Dhaliwal 2000, 1998; Dallafar 1994) but due to the sensitivity of the question of legal ownership, I did not ask the women whether they owned their businesses. Some women, however, willingly shared information about the ownership of their businesses. Based on the roles of women at the business sites, I identify two types of non-H-B businesses: family businesses and independent businesses.

I identify family businesses as those where women jointly operate the business with their husband or other family members and share the responsibilities of running the business on a daily basis. Independent businesses are those that women operate alone without the presence of husbands and other family members at the business site. In some cases, husbands and family members invest money but they remain in the background and do not participate in daily chores at the business site. I explore the ways in which the participation and nonparticipation of family members at the locations of businesses shapes Bangladeshi women’s entrepreneurial experiences.

#### **5.4.1. Working in Non-H-B Businesses**

Immigrant women are overwhelmingly constructed as ‘hidden partners’ and ‘unpaid workers’ in ethnic family businesses (Dhaliwal 1998, Ram et al. 2000; Hollander and Bukowitz 1990; Marshack 1994). South Asian Muslim women are often portrayed as among the most subjugated in family businesses. Some studies suggest that male family members force South Asian Muslim women to work in family businesses (Dhaliwal 1998). Other studies claim that in

South Asian Muslim families, for example Bangladeshi and Pakistani families, women are not allowed to work in family businesses or any businesses that require their presence outside the home (Ram et al. 2000). I argue that these studies construct a stereotypical image of South Asian women in general and Bangladeshi Muslim women in particular as subservient subjects controlled by men. The studies silence women's voices and do not acknowledge their active roles in family businesses (Maitra 2013; Dallalfar 1994, Walton-Roberts and Hiebert 1997; Pio 2007). The experiences of Bangladeshi women who work in non-H-B family businesses provide a different perspective on how these women are involved in family businesses. Five out of twelve non-H-B business operators work in family businesses. All of these women operate the business jointly with their husbands except Rebeka who works with her brother to run a restaurant.

Explaining their decisions to work in family businesses, most of these women indicate that their involvement was necessary for survival of the business after male family members experienced financial losses. Contrary to previous studies where Bangladeshi women are represented as 'invisible' participants in family businesses who remain in the background (Ram et al. 2000; Sanghera 2002), Bangladeshi women in this study construct themselves as an integral part of the family business and as the 'rescuer' of the business which would not survive without their contributions. Rupali for example, describes how after the closure of one clothing store operated by her husband on Gerrard Street, she took charge of the new store on Danforth street and her contributions brought success to the business.

Rupali: He [husband] used to have another small shop in Scarborough but it was not going well, he had to go to Pakistan and India to buy dresses, sari and during that time there was no one to open the store. We didn't have enough income to keep an employee. So we had to close the shop when he was not in Toronto. Then the business started failing. Then I thought to help him with the business ... We then bought this store here ... Now I look after the shop and do most work here, he does not interfere. He also works at

the store but he has to go to Pakistan to buy stuff and he stays there one month each time when he goes. He has his family, his mother there. Then when he will come back he will work in the store with me. Without me, the business will not run because he has to attend meetings with suppliers here.

Though a gender-based division of labour is evident where Rupali takes care of sales and customers and her husband manages the supply of products and business deals, working in the business was her decision and she manages the store on her own without any interference from her husband. Bangladeshi women became involved in non-H-B family businesses due to the family's need for help to sustain the businesses. The allocation of tasks between family members helps Bangladeshi immigrant families create an alternative source of income in Toronto. These women consider themselves to be economically valuable, indispensable for the survival of their family businesses. These beliefs challenge stereotypical representation of Bangladeshi women as invisible and subjugated in the family business.

Immigrant women often devote time and labour to family businesses (Morokvasic 1991). The unpaid labour of women in ethnic family businesses has been criticized by many researchers (Hollander and Bukowitz 1990; Salganicoff 1990; Morokvasic 1991). Recent studies however, argue that immigrant women often provide unpaid labour voluntarily to combat racial discrimination that they and their family members experience in the labour market. By working extra hours in the family business, they try to ensure the family's economic security and provide a better future for their children (Rowe and Hong 2000; Anthias and Mehta 2003). This notion is reflected in the story of Nupur who contributed to the family business in multiple ways by providing unpaid labour and holding an outside job.

When Nupur and her husband decided to start a restaurant, their financial situation was strained. It was crucial for them to be successful in the business. To supplement the family income Nupur started searching for paid work while her husband started the restaurant. Though

Nupur completed a 3-year diploma course in human resource management in Norway, she could not get any job in her field in Toronto. Advised by a settlement agency, she completed a child-care worker program and managed to get a job in a day care center. Nupur worked 6 hours in the day care centre and 8 - 10 hours with her husband in the restaurant, without any salary for three years. She used to prepare snacks for the restaurant before going to the day care center and after coming home in the evening. She used to work in the restaurant until midnight to ensure its profitability by lowering labour costs. Her income from work in the day care center provided a regular income source. With delight, she shared her success in establishing the family business:

Nupur: When we started in the first place, then I already had a job in a day care center. I thought it would be risky for me to leave the job. On the other hand my husband was not satisfied with the video business because of the popularity of internet, satellites etc. the sale was dropping. He was thinking of doing something else ... There was no restaurant for authentic Bangladeshi food. My husband asked me if I could give time for a new business. I said if you can manage morning time I can help in the evening. At that time, I worked in the day care center whole day so I did not have much time. Still I used to make snacks time to time. Then after coming from the day care center I worked again in the restaurant often till 11/12. ... I did not think about making money for the first three years. I did not take any salary for those three years. I provided free service without salary to establish this restaurant. But it was worthwhile, now I earn more than I could imagine.

Nupur views her unpaid labour as her contribution to achieving the well-being and financial security of the family. After three years she eventually quit her job at the child care centre and took over responsibility for running the restaurant. Her husband started helping her with the supplies of grocery and food ingredients. She expresses her satisfaction about the success of the business and the financial security it brought to the family.

Women who operate non-H-B businesses independently emphasize their autonomy and freedom in work. They also argue that the opportunity to achieve better economic returns was a good reason for starting their businesses. These women, like those who work in family businesses, stressed the economic advancement of the family and construct themselves as key

contributors to their families' economic and social status in Toronto. As stated earlier, their dissatisfaction with unstable and low-paid jobs encouraged some women to start a business. The flexible work hours and the potential income that would allow them to maintain a middle class status also attracted some women, such as Mariyam. She highlights the positive aspects of working in her own business where she manages her work-time according to her own needs and makes more money than before.

Mariyam: Actually I was dreaming of starting a business for a long time. You have independence in business. I was a supply ESL instructor. The job was temporary and there was no work schedule. I used to receive calls from the center if any regular teacher was absent. I used to wake up at 6 am and I had to go for work at 7 am and often there was so dark outside and I had to drive while snowing. I was tired of it. I had to get ready after morning prayers, I wanted to sleep a bit but couldn't. Now I can manage my time and earn more money. We are not struggling here economically, by grace of god my husband is doing well in his business and I am also happy with this business.

Operating a business implies higher social and economic status for a woman in Toronto's Bangladeshi population. The discourse of 'social status' is prominent among this group of women unlike home-based business operators who construct their businesses as 'survival work'. Dipika highlights how Bangladeshis in Toronto recognize her and her husband as a successful couple since both of them are successful in business. Their ability to donate money for social events and charity programs make them well known in the community.

Dipika: This is my store, I manage it. It feels great when people see me and say oh you have your own business! People respect me, they show me as an example that women can do whatever she likes. Here women want to do business but they don't have money. Money is the main issue ... People have lot of respect for me and women ask me how I succeeded in business when I go to social gathering. My husband has his own business; he also does social work and donates money for charity programs. Last year he was elected as a community representative ... Because we are established here and we both have our businesses people respect us.

Like Dipika, most women who operate non-H-B businesses possess a strong sense of accomplishment and satisfaction regarding their entrepreneurship.

Anita: People [Bangladeshis] invite me in social and cultural events. They respect me because of my accomplishments. Women come to take advice from me if they want to start a business. I tell them there are many opportunities for women in this country. There are programs for small scale business for women. It is important for Bangladeshi women to get information about these services ... I am engaged in social services and it feels good to help people. I get these opportunities because people know me, they now that I run this business.

Women who independently operate non-H-B businesses mention the appeal of autonomy, setting their own work hours, and securing a regular and stable income. For many, their husband's involvement in businesses opened up opportunities for them to start a business independently. They construct their businesses as economically valuable as they contribute to the family's income in Toronto.

It is important to note that none of the Bangladeshi women who participated in this study identify their religious beliefs and practices as a reason to operate businesses inside and outside the home. Their experiences corroborate with the findings of Basu and Altinay (2002) that Muslim women's participation in ethnic businesses is not associated with their religion. However, religious beliefs and practices play crucial roles in shaping the ways in which Bangladeshi women construct their identities including embodied identities in relation to their business activities inside and outside the home - which I outline in the following section.

### **5.5. Influence of Religious and Cultural Practices**

'Traditional' cultural and religious practices are often consolidated in immigrant Muslim communities as a response to social and economic marginalization in places of settlement. Scholars suggest that greater emphasis on religious identity often has negative consequences for

Muslim women in terms of their physical mobility in ‘public’ places and labour market participation (Moghissi 2006; Mohammad 2010). Studies reveal that Pakistani women in the UK encounter multiple barriers to their physical mobility and often they wear the ‘veil/hijab’ to navigate spaces outside the home (Afshar 1989; Mohammad 1999). Bangladeshi Muslim women’s absence in ethnic businesses in the UK is explained by religious barriers that restrict their involvement in paid work (Ram et al. 2000; Sanghera 2002). Counter narratives emphasize that Muslim women have agency in the ways they negotiate community expectations, make decisions about wearing the ‘veil’ and enter into paid work including ethnic businesses (Abu-Lughod 2006; Moghissi 2006; Ruby 2006; Essers and Benschop 2009; Predelli 2004). This section evaluates these debates by exploring the experiences and views of Bangladeshi Muslim women who work in home and non-H-B businesses.

### **5.5.1. Not just Muslim but Bangladeshi Muslim**

Most studies conducted in North America and Europe note that immigrant Muslims often adopt conservative religious practices. The tendency to adopt conservative Islam among Bangladeshi immigrants in Canada and the US has been discussed in several studies (Kibria 2008, 2011; Halder 2012; Dale et al. 2000). To emphasize their religious identity, Muslim immigrants often undermine their distinct ethnic and cultural identities (Moghissi 2006; Mohammad 2013). Halder (2012: 165) notes how Bangladeshi women in Canada prefer Arab religious and cultural practices over their traditional cultural practices so they can relate to a global Muslim community:

*In multi-ethnic Canada, many Bangladeshi Muslim women have been influenced by orthodox Arab religious and cultural customs, traditions and norms as authentic markers of Muslim women. Bengali local, national and cultural norms and practices which Bangladeshi Muslim women used to practice to define their identities are questioned, disjoined, altered, and negotiated in relation to powerful Arab Islamic cultures and traditions in Canada. Global migration is a significant force that has altered religious, social, and cultural syncretism, and is reinforcing Arabic religious and cultural norms among the Bangladeshi immigrant communities.*

Bangladeshi women who participated in the study provide a different view of their religious identity. Instead of relating themselves to Arab cultural practices, they constructed an ethnically Muslim identity. Differentiating themselves from ‘Other’ Muslims is a crucial component of their identity construction. ‘We are not like other Muslims’ (Nupur), ‘Bangladeshi Muslims are different from Middle Eastern Muslims’ (Rebeka), ‘Bangladeshi Muslims are not like Pakistani Muslims’ (Nishat) - are frequent comments from women who claimed a distinct Bangladeshi Muslim identity. Ethnic identity<sup>71</sup> significantly influences the ways that women construct their Muslim identities and interpret religious norms.

Priya stresses that Bangladeshi Muslim women are more progressive than Pakistani and Arab Muslim women because ‘Bengali’ culture is less restrictive about women’s clothing and their involvement in ‘public’ affairs. She cannot relate to Muslim women from other countries in Toronto due to a lack of shared cultural values. Differentiation from other Muslim women and an emphasis on ethno-religious identity is also articulated in Yasmin’s narratives:

Yasmin: We Bangladeshis are different, we are not extremist, we don’t follow conservative religion, like Afghans and Pakistanis. Bangladeshi culture is a liberal culture; Bangladeshi women are educated and smart. Women in Bangladesh don’t stay in a ‘Khacha’/cage anymore [women are not confined in home] like Arab women. They [Arabs] follow conservative Islam, they made it up to silence women ... we follow progressive Islam.

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<sup>71</sup> Women used the term ‘Bangladeshi’ to identify their national and ethnic identity.

Othering of other Muslims is central to Yasmin's religious identity in Toronto. She emphasizes her ethnic identity, by constructing Bangladeshi immigrants as progressive and liberal Muslims as opposed to conservative Muslims from other countries. Drawing a binary division between conservative and liberal Muslims, she also confirms her disassociation with extreme Islamic norms. The depiction of Muslims as violent, radical and extremist in 'western' media influenced women to be conscious about their religious identity. "We are not extremists" is another common statement evident in Bangladeshi women's narratives. According to Nupur who is a restaurateur, interaction with people from other communities is essential to change their views about Bangladeshi Muslims.

Nupur: People think Muslims are extremists from a distance, when they know you they won't think everybody is same ... at the day care center where I used to work, there was no Bangladeshi woman other than me but there were some Muslim women. Sometimes we used to organize lunch or dinner party in different restaurants. Once, other Muslim women refused to join because they did not want to go to a restaurant that doesn't serve *halal* food. I didn't support this. If you have problem with meat, you can eat fish or vegetarian dishes, there are many options in restaurants ... So some are like this, very rigid. I used to join the parties. So my co-workers understood that I am not like them. That is why interacting with others is important.

Bangladeshi women who follow religious rituals on a daily basis and identify themselves as devout Muslims also differentiate themselves from Muslims who endorse radical Islam. Rebeka, a hijab wearer, expresses her worries about how Bangladeshi Muslims are perceived in Toronto due to the extremist activities of Muslims from other countries.

Rebeka: the problem is people don't know very well that Muslims are different, they [non-Muslims] think all Muslims are alike, and there is no difference. If a Middle Eastern man commits a violent act like suicide bombing, the next day people will hate us, but Bangladeshi Muslims never committed any violent crime. A few [radical] people are ruining Bangladeshi Muslims' reputation.

Similarly, Nishat, who manages a clothing business jointly with her husband, criticizes the tendency of non-Muslims to generalize Muslims and represent “all Muslims in the same way” without considering their ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Nishat identifies herself as a devout religious woman. She wears a ‘bourqa’- a loose dress that covers the body including the head - regularly when she goes outside the home and she is actively involved in Mosque-centered religious activities in the Bangladeshi neighbourhood. Despite her strong association with Islam, she does not relate to Arab culture and Arab Muslim women. She stresses that Arab women’s attire that covers their entire body including hands and face does not represent Islam. “Islam does not prescribe women to cover their face and hands”- states Nishat. She emphasizes that covering the face is not a part of Bangladeshi culture. Nishat also disagrees with Islamic doctrines that prohibit women’s paid work outside the home. Her distinct notions about Islamic dress codes and gender roles encourage her to keep her distance from Arab Muslim women in the Mosque.

Nishat: There are Muslim women from other countries, they go to the same mosque, but they are too conservative. They cover head to toe, they wear gloves, and black eye glass, and their eyes are even covered. Bangladeshi women are not like that, we do not cover face ... They discourage women to work and criticize women who work outside. They practice [Islam] different ways. I don’t talk to them. I don’t agree with their opinions.

The majority of Bangladeshi women refuse the notion of a single global Muslim identity. Instead, they stress the characteristics that make them different from other Muslims. Focusing on their ethnic identity and distinct cultural practices, Bangladeshi women challenge the generalization of Muslim immigrant women (Moghissi 2006).

Doing ‘boundary work’, Bangladeshi women, like Moroccan and Turkish women in the Netherlands (Essers and Benschop 2009), negotiate gender and religious norms to justify their

involvement in entrepreneurship inside and outside the home. The testimony of Morjina indicates how her religious practices are shaped by her multiple social positions in Toronto. Morjina came to Toronto as a family class immigrant sponsored by her daughter and lives with her son in the Bangladeshi neighbourhood in Victoria Park and Danforth area. Morjina does not accept the notion that Muslim women should withdraw from paid work and 'public' places. She stresses that "it is not Quran but men who don't want women to work and gain financial freedom to control women". Although she did not have paid work in Bangladesh, she started home-based catering and garment businesses in Toronto to gain financial independence. She states:

I do not want to depend on my son and daughter and ask money from them because I feel shy to ask money from my own children and ... I know that they do not have a good job and they are struggling here.

Due to the unstable and low income from her businesses, she is searching for a job in the formal labour market which will provide a stable income. She does not consider Islamic religious norms a barrier to her involvement in paid work in the home or outside the home. Her conviction that Islam does not prohibit women's paid work allows her to engage in business activities and combat the financial difficulties resulting from downward social mobility in Toronto. Morjina's emphasis on her Bangladeshi identity, her resistance to patriarchal gender norms, her class position in Toronto and her personal interpretation of Islam conjointly shape her involvement in ethnic businesses.

Many Bangladeshi women highlight their ethnic identities, distinct cultural practices and their participation in paid work inside and outside the home to differentiate themselves from conservative Muslim women from different ethno-cultural backgrounds. Along with rejecting the notion of a single unified global Muslim identity, women also emphasize the diverse and

contrasting religious views and practices among Bangladeshi immigrants in Toronto. Women's experiences confirm that Bangladeshi Muslim immigrants in Toronto are not members of a homogenous and unified community. Rather, the Bangladeshi immigrant population in Toronto is more fragmented than united in terms of religious practices.

### **5.5.2. Contested Religious Practices among Bangladeshis in Toronto**

Studies of Bangladeshi immigrants in the UK and Canada suggest that efforts by Bangladeshis to preserve religious and cultural practices in residential concentrations significantly affect women's gender roles (Halder 2012; Dale et al. 2000). However, these studies pay little attention to the contradictory and conflicting religious practices of Bangladeshi immigrants. The narratives of women in this study suggest that Bangladeshi immigrants' religious sentiments regarding women's productive and reproductive roles are diverse, contradictory and disputed. The diverse sentiments affect the ways home-based and non-H-B business operators negotiate their gender roles in Toronto.

When asked whether they experience any cultural and religious barriers to finding employment and operating businesses in the Bangladeshi neighbourhood, women provide mixed answers. The majority of women agree that residents of the Bangladeshi neighbourhood support women's engagement in paid work. Rather than imposing barriers, many Bangladeshis encourage women to obtain paid work. Home-based business operators mentioned how Bangladeshis appreciate dual-income families, as those families are more successful in overcoming economic marginalization. Women's participation in the labour market is seen as a strategy to gain economic security. As a result, Bangladeshi men usually support their wives' efforts to find jobs. Tuli, a home-based business operator, highlights this point by describing how women's paid work is preferred over religious conservatism by most Bangladeshis.

Tuli: No, I think Bangladeshis here [in the neighbourhood] is not like that. Many people are very broad minded. Especially men, many of my husband's friends are really broad minded, completely different than what other people think. The main thing is here if you want to have a good life, both husband and wife have to work. So there is no benefit by being conservative.

Similar to Tuli, Sumaiya, another home-based business operator, highlights how employment barriers and financial struggles compel Bangladeshi men and women to recognize that one income is not enough to survive in Toronto. As a result, women's employment is encouraged in the neighborhood. In Toronto socio-economic marginalization does not consolidate the conservative religious practices that often restrict women's labour force participation. The narratives of Tuli and Sumaiya reveal that social-economic marginalization has increased men's and women's support for Bangladeshi women's paid work.

Sumaiya: I think environment is very good here. Most women want to work. Everyone is looking for work. Those who were housewives back home are also madly looking for a job. They go to English classes, go for training programs. Before it was a tradition that women should get married and then husband will take care of them, marriage meant the end of a woman's career, but now things have changed, especially here. Working is compulsory for women here, because people know family will not survive otherwise.

A few Bangladeshi women, however, in a subtle manner indicated that there is a conservative group that opposes women's presence outside the home. Women's physical movements are often monitored and controlled by their husbands. Nupur, who runs a restaurant and Farah, who works in a home-based business, insist that some women's economic activities are restricted by family members, particularly, by their husbands. Both women draw a boundary between themselves and conservative Bangladeshi Muslims with whom they do not socialize or mingle.

Nupur: Women want to work here otherwise they cannot manage family. You see lot of women are working in the restaurants and grocery shops ... Some women have constraints you know, their husbands may be too conservative, so there are some cases like that. But otherwise there is not any objection about women's work ... I am Muslim too but not like them, they are too conservative.

Farah: well there are some limitations often some people are judgmental and conservative....but I don't see any problems. Here women are more motivated than men to find a job. They want to work and they are serious. Men also don't create any problem. A few conservative men may be here but I don't know them. We don't mingle with conservatives. Employment is the main topic of conversation among women. So I don't think there is any social and cultural constraint.

The testimonies of Nupur and Farah reflect the opinions of most Bangladeshi women in the study who identify themselves as Muslims and at the same time differentiate themselves from Bangladeshis with conservative practices. Some of the women complained that conservative men in the neighbourhood criticize their involvement with SAWRO and their social activities outside the home. It appears from their narratives that, like Pakistani women in the UK, Bangladeshi women's physical mobility is to some extent monitored by men who endorse conservative Islam (Mohammad 1999, 2005b). Mira, who works in the home, describes how her presence outside the home, especially in the evening, is often monitored and questioned by men:

Mira: Some Bangladeshi men don't like that women stay outside till night. Often they ask me "where did you go? Where are you coming from"? Once in the elevator one man asked me "where are you coming from?". I said, I went to attend a class at SAWRO. And he said "oh what they teach you till night", and it was only 8 pm!. I was surprised, 8 pm is not really late night!. Then he asked me, "oh! so you have class till that late night?". But, he himself works till 10 pm and he is asking me why I am at SAWRO till 8? Because I am a woman that's why he could ask this question. So strange!

Mira captures how women's physical mobility outside the home is scrutinized by men in the Bangladeshi neighbourhood. Her narratives also illustrate how she challenges men's authority to control women's physical movement. Despite facing criticisms, she continued to actively participate in SAWRO's events and social services. Mira did not decide to quit her evening

English language classes to be a 'good housewife'; rather, she challenged conservative religious practices that denied her rights to participate in skill development training and social events.

Most women who work in home-based businesses confirm that women's involvement in SAWRO's activities is often criticized by conservative Bangladeshi men. The key informant, Munira, who works in SAWRO, describes how one conservative group including the Mosque committee, protested against the establishment of the organization on the grounds that it might encourage women to prioritize paid work and career over family responsibilities and transgress conventional gender roles. Munira organized a meeting in the community to gather support to establish the organization. Since most people supported her, she overcame the barriers posed by the conservative group.

Munira (key informant): There was a big fight, between me and the Mosque committee. They were opposing the idea that there will be an organization for women in the neighborhood. They said women will learn problematic things, they will not care for family and husband any more. They will prioritize work and career. So they said, they won't allow any organization. So I went door to door to inform everybody, all the families in these four apartments. Think about it, a few women and I, we went to every house to gather support. Here most Bangladeshis are progressive, they welcomed our idea, they said we need an organization for women, then they will obtain a job, they need help to get jobs. So finally, the conservative group became silent.

Munira stresses that most Bangladeshis in the neighborhood are 'progressive' and support women's participation in paid work. She also, like most women, draws a boundary between 'progressive' and 'conservative' Bangladeshi Muslims. She highlights conflicting religious ideologies regarding women's gender roles among Bangladeshi immigrants in Toronto. Her comments illustrate how contradictory religious and cultural practices characterize the diverse ways that Bangladeshi immigrants translate women's gender roles regarding paid work and unpaid domestic responsibilities. Her initiatives to collect support from Bangladeshi immigrants and establish the organization for Bangladeshi women revealed that Bangladeshi

women are not passive victims of conservative religious practices. Rather, Bangladeshi women possess agency to challenge and overcome barriers imposed by conventional religious and patriarchal norms.

Location of residence influences the extent to which Bangladeshi women's physical mobility is monitored and questioned by conservative Bangladeshi men. Women who work in non-H-B businesses are less likely to experience direct confrontation with conservative Bangladeshis. They do not mention facing any religious barriers in carrying out their business activities outside the home. Residing in owner occupied house outside the high-rise apartment complexes might have enabled most of them to avoid the constraints felt by home-based business operators, who live and work in the high-rise apartment complexes. The comments of Laili, Soniya and Anita hint at this possibility. Laili who lives in a town house on Dawes Road stresses her limited knowledge of conservative Bangladeshis in the neighbourhood.

Laili: I have heard that there are people who are really conservative in the neighborhood. I do not know them. I do not know what is going on inside the neighbourhood. People who come to my store often tell these stories.

Sonya and Anita, who reside near the intersection of Pharmacy Avenue and Denton Avenue, also claim that they did not experience any unpleasant encounters with conservative Bangladeshis in their workplaces. Their comments confirm that Bangladeshi women who reside in high-rise apartments are more exposed to religious barriers and criticisms compared to those who live in other areas.

Soniya: Nobody comes to my store to criticize me, they [conservative Bangladeshis] may criticize from a distance, but I don't know that ... Women who live in those [high-rise] buildings will know better. I don't mingle with them.

Anita: I think people are more conservative in Teesdale Place area. I have heard that there are lots of activities in the Mosque and, they impose conservative ideas on others. They [conservative Bangladeshis] never approached me in my store.

Bangladeshi women who work in home-based and non-H-B businesses identified two parallel religious ideologies relating to women's paid work and their mobility outside the home in the Bangladeshi neighborhood. The majority of Bangladeshis support and encourage women's employment on the grounds that women's paid work increases family income and is crucial for the family to overcome economic difficulties in Toronto. Women also suggest that a small fragment of Bangladeshis endorsing conservative Islamic principles, oppose women's employment and their presence outside the home. Bangladeshi women in the study identify themselves as progressive Muslims and draw a boundary between themselves and those who practice conservative Islam.

### **5.5.3. Evaluating Islamic Dress Code**

The majority of women in this study do not wear the 'hijab/veil'<sup>72</sup>. Only four women - two non-H-B business operators and two home-based business operators - wear the 'hijab'. They state that adopting the 'hijab' was their own decision and their family members did not impose any restrictions about wearing or not wearing the 'hijab'. These women observe the Islamic dress codes in different ways. While Morjina and Nishat wear a 'Burqa' that covers their entire body including the head, Nipun and Rebeka wear a headscarf that only covers their hair. Wearers and non-wearers of the 'hijab' have various opinions indicating different discourses of judging and justifying the 'hijab' and its connection to women's paid work. The links between veiling practices and the production of the religious bodies of Bangladeshi Muslim women mirror

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<sup>72</sup> The terms veil and hijab are often used interchangeably, but the hijab has an Islamic significance that distinguishes it from the veil. The veil, which is often perceived in the west as a headcovering, does not reveal the intricacies of the practice. The term hijab, however, encompasses women's behaviour/attitude, and studies have found that a vital feature of the hijab is modest behaviour (Ruby 2006: 58). However, these two terms are used interchangeably in the literature.

Butler's (1990, 1993) notion of performative identity. For Bangladeshi women there is no fixed meaning and purpose of veiling. Interpretations of their embodied identities vary (El Guindi 1999; Gokarıksel 2009).

### **5.5.3.1. *Opinions of Hijab Wearers***

For hijab-wearing Bangladeshi women, veiling is an embodied religious symbol through which they make their religious identity visible (Gokarıksel 2009). Hijab-wearing women challenge the notion that veiling is inherently associated with women's seclusion from 'public' places. They perceive it as a religious and cultural symbol not as an instrument of women's seclusion. Nipun, who works in a home-based business, states that people who do not know her personally, often think she is conservative because she wears a headscarf. She mentions how hijab-wearing women are assumed to be different from other women. She emphasizes her education and previous work experience in Bangladesh and her involvement in home-based businesses and SAWRO's activities in Toronto as examples of her progressive beliefs and actions.

Nipun: yes people think I am conservative, because they see me from a distance, and they think I am hijabi [who wears a hijab], so I am conservative. I studied in university and worked, there is nothing that I do differently than others. Now am working here too. I work with SAWRO. I am more progressive than many women. So people know me better when they talk to me. Then they say oh you not that conservative! ...

Nipun stresses that she is not confined in the home. Rather, she is much more involved in social services in the neighbourhood. She does not believe that Muslim women should limit their presence in 'public' places. Religious practices did not influence her decision to work from home. She decided to start a home-based business due to limited employment opportunities. Her narratives draw a sharp line between veiling and women's seclusion by highlighting that these two aspects of Muslim identity are not synonymous (Hoodfar 1997).

For women who operate businesses outside the home, wearing the 'hijab' is not only an embodied religious practice but also a means to assert their distinct identities in the multicultural setting that is contemporary Toronto. Wearing the 'hijab' strengthens women's confidence as they perform their business activities in formal workplaces. They consider the 'hijab' a religious obligation and want to be known and accepted by others as practicing Muslim women. Hijab wearers reject the idea of giving up religious beliefs, symbols and practices to assimilate in Canadian society. Their opinions reflect one of the underlying notions of Canadian multiculturalism policy promoting inclusivity of ethnic, religious and cultural diversity (Halder 2012). Rebeka, who runs a restaurant, views her 'hijab' as a symbol of the religious and cultural practices that she has every right to follow exactly the way other religious groups follow their customs and beliefs.

Rebeka: Like I am working all day, running a business but I wear hijab. I feel proud and confident of who I am. It is about mind set ... yes many people are too conservative, I know but not all of them. Here when one see a woman with hijab they think that woman is very backward, but maybe that's not the case ... All communities have their own beliefs and practices; they don't give up their culture. Jews people follow their own religion, Hindus follow their own religion, but what is wrong if a Muslim follows her religion?.

For Rebeka, wearing the 'hijab' is a way of asserting her identity without restricting her business activities. Her opinion concurs with the argument that the 'hijab' is not necessarily a constraint for Muslim women in engaging in paid work outside the home. Instead, women often construct the 'hijab' as a means to assert their religious and cultural identities in their workplaces (Ruby 2006; Prendelli 2004; Tiilikainen 2003).

Bangladeshi 'hijab' wearers highlight how they gain respect from others while working outside the home. Nishat and Rebeka agree that they receive respect from Bangladeshis in the

neighbourhood due to their Islamic dress. Their customers also see them as pious Muslim women and treat them with respect and honor. Nishat mentions that customers who come to her clothing store “feel compelled to respect” her because of her ‘hijab’. Hijab wearers claim that their embodied religious identity influences the ways in which others perceive them in their workplace. The production of their religious and pious bodies is linked to their experiences in workplaces (Siraj 2011). Emphasizing how wearing the ‘hijab’ in ‘public’ workplaces is crucial to ensure they receive respect and honor from other people, some of the Bangladeshi women in this study reveal how religious identities are spatialized (see Siraj 2011).

### ***5.5.3.2. Opinions of Non-hijab Wearers***

Only a few studies outline the experiences and perceptions of non-veiled Muslim women. Non-veiled Muslim women are often considered integrated in the dominant society in North America and Europe unlike their veiled counterparts (Kepel 1994; Fadil 2011). Fadil (2011) argues that analysis of all practices – veiling and non-veiling – requires a ‘situatedness approach’ that scrutinizes the contexts and power structures in which women interpret their religious views and practices. She suggests that Muslim women’s decisions to not veil “stem from their [own] cultivation of a specific religious agency, one that is primarily structured along liberal ethical lines”. Affirming this notion, a few Bangladeshi women who do not wear the ‘hijab’ stress their liberal views about Islamic dress codes. Home-based business operator, Sumaiya, criticizes the ‘hijab’ culture in the Bangladeshi neighbourhood by emphasizing how women’s clothing is judged in the neighborhood. ‘Hijab’ wearing women often criticize other women who are non-wearers. She believes that Muslim women should not associate modesty with clothing since modesty implies the ways in which a woman thinks and behaves. By relating women’s modesty with their modest behavior rather than with the ‘hijab’, Sumaiya provides an

alternative explanation of Islamic religious beliefs supported by Mernissi (1987) who argues that the Qur'an does not make the 'hijab' an absolute symbol of women's modesty. Sumaiya criticizes the 'hijab' and its association with women's religiosity and modesty. For her, women's modesty is inherently embedded in their moral thoughts and actions.

Sumaiya: Here people are too conscious about religion. I never saw women wearing hijab in home [in Bangladesh]. Here women wear burqa and scarf and talk about these, criticizes each other. I don't think your clothing can protect you. I don't know why women here are so much into dress code. Even in Islam it says only to be decent in dressing up. Modesty is not about clothing, it is about how you think and behave. I felt really worried and upset about conservative behaviors.

Although, scholars agree that Muslims are one of the most ethno-culturally diverse religious groups, how cultural diversity affects Muslim women's embodied identity is not discussed much in the literature. The narratives of one group of Bangladeshi women in this study, mostly those who operate home-run businesses, reveal that they refuse the 'hijab' to maintain their ethno-cultural identity. They insist that Bangladeshi women should wear their own traditional dresses (i.e.; *sari*, *salwar-kamij*) instead of wearing Islamic dresses. They differentiate between Islamic and Bangladeshi traditional attire arguing that the Islamic dress code does not reflect Bangladeshi culture. They agree that the 'hijab' is associated with religious conservatism. Yasmin, who works at home, claims that the 'hijab' is a part of Pakistani and Middle Eastern women's clothing and by wearing the 'hijab' Bangladeshi women imitate their ways of life and promote religious conservatism.

Yasmin: People from Pakistan and the Middle East, they are very conservative. Bangladeshis should not act like them, cause our culture is different. Why should we wear their dress? Some women, you cannot tell if they are Bangladeshis, they dress-up like them. Culturally we [Bangladeshis] are not so conservative about covering.

Bangladeshi women who wear the ‘hijab’ do not differentiate between religious and cultural attire and refuse to translate the ‘hijab’ as a marker of women’s seclusion. Few non-wearers, like Yasmin, see the ‘hijab’ as a sign of conservative religious practice and draw a boundary between religious and cultural customs. The study reveals that while the hijab wearers consider it as an embodiment of modesty, piety and respect, the non-wearers regard it as a piece of clothing which is not associated with Bangladeshi culture. Bangladeshi women’s embodied identities, thus, reflect their contrasting views about religious and cultural practices, despite their agreement that women should emphasize the importance of modesty in ‘public’ place (Siraj 2011).

Most non-hijab wearers who operate businesses outside the home agree that wearing the ‘hijab’ is not necessary for Muslim women, even though, being modest in dressing and behavior is important. Most women state that they are not conservative but they make sure that they are seen as modest women especially since they work in ‘public’ places where they interact with different people. Highlighting her multiple positions as a wife, mother, Muslim and Bangladeshi woman, Dipika, who runs a clothing store, points out how these intersecting identities require her to be a decent woman in the neighborhood.

Dipika: I am not conservative but like I was not indecent back home. So I don’t think we should be that indecent, cause we are Bangladeshi and Muslim and I am married as well, have kids so I don’t think I should be indecent. I work and meet people every day, so I do everything within the limit of decency. I try to create a good impression among the customers ... I wear everything, salwar kamij, shirt-pant, suit, those do not expose the body.

For Dipika, decency means not exposing the body at workplace. She wears traditional as well as western attire that does not expose her body. Although she does not wear the ‘hijab’, she is conscious about how her embodied identity is perceived by others at the workplace. She strives

to maintain modesty as a Muslim woman by wearing non-exposing dress while she interacts with customers outside the home.

Few non-H-B operators take a defensive stand about the 'hijab'. Although Jinat, who operates a beauty parlor, does not wear the 'hijab', she describes how many Bangladeshi women embrace Islamic practices including Islamic dress code in Toronto to prevent their adolescent kids from becoming 'westernized' which means going to nightclubs and pubs, and quitting their studies. According to her, parents' religiosity plays a positive role in disciplining kids. Religious practices including wearing the 'hijab' are recognized by many Bangladeshi families as a strategy to control their kids and maintain their cultural identities in Toronto. Jinat does not recognize the 'hijab' as a barrier to paid work and business activities.

Jinat: But there is a reason for that, it is necessary for parents to be conservative for their kids. You have no idea how the kids are here. They start drinking, going to clubs, they don't study and became out of control. They don't listen to their parents. That is why many parents become religious so that their kids learn discipline. If the kids see that parents are practicing religion they become religious too, they don't go to bad places. So it is mostly for kids, I know many parents who were very modern and stylish life but they now started wearing hijab and going to Mosque because of fear that their kids may will become too westernized.

Halder (2012) also found that Bangladeshi women in Toronto often wear Islamic dress to teach cultural and traditional values to their children and keep them away from Canadian lifestyles and interracial marriage. Adopting the 'hijab' is a strategy by women through which they preserve family heritage and 'traditional' marriage practices. A similar trend is also evident among Somali Muslim women in UK and Canada (McGrawn 1999, 2003).

Another group of non-H-B business operators take a flexible approach to their own clothing. According to Nupur, Bangladeshi women should be flexible in selecting clothes to

adapt to the place and context in which they live and work. She describes how she changed her style when she quit her job at a day care center and started a restaurant. She used to wear 'western' clothes (i.e.; shirt and pants) at the day care center to reduce the distance between her and non-Bangladeshi co-workers. After starting the restaurant, she started wearing Bangladeshi traditional dresses (*Salwar kamij*) to represent her as an insider to Bangladeshi customers and employees.

Nupur: I tell this to everyone that you should present yourself based on the norms of the place you are. For example, I used to wear shirt-pant when I worked at the day care center. I presented myself the way they are. I wore *Salwar kamij* often as cultural dress and that is different. But I tried to be like them. Here I work in Bengali area, Bengali customers come here mainly so I wear our traditional dress. I wear decent dress ... Look at other Bengali girls they are also following the same idea, when they work at Tim Horton they wear shirt pant. You need to adjust with the environment where you work. Otherwise, people will not accept you and there will be a distance between you and your co-workers.

Since Nupur works in the Bangladeshi neighbourhood and sells meals to Bangladeshi customers, wearing traditional attire at her workplace seems reasonable and 'decent' to her. Her dress selection is performatively constructed depending on the characteristics of her workplaces, such as the type of work, location of workplace and characteristics of co-workers. Her explanation sheds light on how Bangladeshi women practice diverse dressing styles to fit in with various workplace environments. Nupur's narratives also indicate that, like Dipika, she is conscious of customers' and employees' perceptions of her attire and physical appearance when deciding how to dress.

The narratives of Bangladeshi women mirror the diverse ways they perform boundary work (Butler 1990; 1988; Essers and Benschop 2009) to justify their contrasting positions in relation to Islamic dress code. The 'hijab' is simultaneously interpreted as a sign of cultural

and/or religious identity as well as progressive and/or conservative depending on women's varied perceptions and religious practices. For Bangladeshi women, dress is a 'situated bodily practice' through which they represent their intersecting gender, ethnic/cultural and religious identities while carrying out business activities (Siraj 2011). 'Hijab' wearers insist that the adoption of Islamic dress does not restrict their engagement in business both inside and outside the home. For them, the 'hijab' is an embodied spatial practice through which they assert their distinct religious and cultural identity and integrate in Toronto's multicultural society (Gokariksel 2009). The meaning and implication of the 'hijab', thus, depends on the broader social context in which Bangladeshi women make sense of their identity.

Due to the wide range of opinions it is difficult to distinguish home and non-H-B business operators' attitudes towards the 'hijab'. Among non-hijab wearers, women who operate home-based businesses are more critical about the Islamic dress code than those who work in formal workplaces. Although, non-H-B operators convey different opinions, most of them stress that women's modest and decent outfits and behavior - which are not necessarily associated with the 'hijab' - are important especially at their workplaces where they interact with other people. The location of the workplace adds meanings to Bangladeshi women's dress whether they wear the 'hijab' or not (Secor 2002; Gokariksel 2009). Even when some non-H-B business operators refuse to wear the hijab, they acknowledge the symbolic association of veiling with female modesty by wearing modest dress when they perform business activities. However, some women are more flexible about clothing than others.

## **5.6. Distribution of Household Labour**

The gendered division of household labour is a crucial indicator of gender equality/inequality in the families of working women. Liberal feminists argued that women's

engagement in paid work provides a fair amount of autonomy to negotiate the division of labour within the household (Sassen 1996). Notably, studies of immigrant women reveal complex negotiations about household work (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). Some authors document greater participation of men in household chores to help working wives after migration (Foner 1978; Guendelman and Perez-Itriago 1987). In contrast, a study of Asian American immigrants (Espiritu 1997), found that even when working women were not dependent on their husbands for economic survival, the gender division of domestic labor remained unaltered. Sometimes, women's entry into paid work violates established gender roles in the home. As a result, women reaffirm gender relations by investing more time in household work (Goldring 1996; Cooke 2007). Kitson (2003: i) points out that the gendered division of labour and patriarchal ideologies remain intact in the households of Ghanaian immigrants, whether women participate in the paid labour force or not. These diverse findings suggest that settlement in a new society can be accompanied by increased or decreased gender inequality or leave gender roles essentially unaltered even when women take greater financial responsibility for the family (Crummett 1987; Tienda and Booth 1991). In my case study, home-based and non-H-B business operators take different measures to reconcile their gender roles in the home. They interpret their domestic roles from various perspectives depending on their expectations as wives and mothers, the employment status of their husbands and their family circumstances in Toronto. The locations of their workplaces also shape the ways in which they affirm or challenge the traditional gendered division of labour. The locational characteristics of their entrepreneurial activities significantly influence the ways they negotiate paid work and household labour.

In Bangladesh, where a patriarchal division of domestic labour prevails, women were responsible for household work before migration (Zaman 1999; Naved et al. 2006; Kabeer and

Mahmud 2004). Belonging to the middle class enabled most Bangladeshi women to employ maids for domestic help, reducing their household labour (Tienda and Booth 1991). A drastic drop in social status after migration and high labour costs in Canada made it impossible for home-based business operators to recruit a maid for household help. Though most non-H-B business operators secured middle class status, recruiting a maid in Toronto is also beyond their financial means. For Bangladeshi women, migration and settlement in Toronto was accompanied by greater responsibility for household work.

For most women, taking responsibility for domestic chores after migration required significant emotional and psychological adjustments. Dipika, who runs a clothing store, describes how her domestic work in Toronto has changed. Before coming to Toronto she only had to supervise her maid with whom she had a close bond. Her mother recruited the maid for her when she got married which is a common custom of a bride's parents in middle class families in Bangladesh. Having the same maid for seventeen years allowed Dipika to completely rely on her for household work. Discussing how she has to take care of her child and do household work single-handedly in Toronto, Dipika broke down.

Dipika: My mom gave one girl [maid] to each of us, we are three sisters. So that girl was with me for many years. She used to help me with household work and took care of my children. She was with me for 17 years, she protected me as a mother, I didn't have to do anything. She used to bring milk for me at night. She used to manage guests and everything. Then before coming here, we helped her to get a new job. After coming here, I realized oh God! I have to do everything, cleaning, cooking, mopping floor. I started crying, how come I do so much work? And I have a small child, 5 years old.

Other women used to get help with child care and household work from family members and relatives in Bangladesh. Close bonds with extended family members and in-laws enable Bangladeshi women to ask for help with household and care work. As Selina's narratives indicate, cohabitation with in-laws allows women to delegate household work to in-laws

especially when the women have paid employment. Selina describes how her mother-in-law and another relative who used to live with her were responsible for every detail of household tasks which helped her to teach without any worries. She highlights how her life changed in Toronto with the added pressure of household tasks.

Selina: My mother-in-law and the daughter of my husband's brother, they used to live with us. My life was different then, not like now. I only used to work outside that's all, I didn't have to do anything at home. Everything was ready for me at home. I didn't have to prepare meal and tea. The young girl [daughter of husband's brother] used to do everything according to how I want and like. My mother-in-law was so good with me. She never let me do any household work. She even used to wash the 'sari' I would wear to go to school. I had a maid too so I didn't have to do anything. My mother-in-law used to keep the house clean. She knew everything about the house, everything, even what is in the locker.

Selina, who migrated to Canada with the hope of a better quality of life, became disappointed immediately after settling in Toronto when she realized that she would not be able to employ a maid. She had a panic attack within three weeks of her arrival in Toronto and had to take medication. Later on, she learned from other Bangladeshi women how to manage domestic chores. Gradually, she adapted to her new domestic roles. Similar change in performing household work is observed among immigrant women who migrated from Hong Kong to Canada (Preston and Man 1999).

Without maids and family help in Toronto, as Halder (2012) also observed, most Bangladeshi women became solely responsible for household work. They did not demand any help from their husbands. Except for a few non-H-B business operators, most women, even those who are the sole income earners in the family, perform most of the domestic chores. Consequently, the gendered division of household labour becomes consolidated in Bangladeshi households in Toronto (ibid). However, Bangladeshi women do not interpret their intensified domestic roles from a position of powerlessness. Instead, they highlight how by performing

household responsibilities they fulfill their roles as wives and mothers along with providing for the family through entrepreneurial activities.

Fulfilling household duties and care work is internalized by many Bangladeshi women as a part of their identity (McDowell et al 2005). Dion and Dion (2001: 515) observe that working wives often endorse the “super woman ideal” by taking financial responsibility and fulfilling high family expectations as a parent and homemaker. Similarly, many Bangladeshi women feel a sense of accomplishment as they manage both home and work in Toronto. Illustrating the ‘traditional’ notion that men are not good at household work, some of the women describe their husbands’ naivety about domestic tasks. They feel glad that their husbands and family members depend on them for care and emotional support. Priya who works in a restaurant and operates a catering service from home describes how her husband has no idea about household work and is completely dependent on her on a daily basis.

Priya: No (laugh), he doesn’t know how to cook. He doesn’t even know how to have lunch by himself. I write down everything for him, where the food is, how to warm food in the micro-wave. He is too lazy to even warm his food in the microwave. I put tea bag in the cup then he only pours water. That’s all he does. He is completely dependent on me ...

Priya’s statement represents a common experience of most women who assert authority in the home by performing household responsibilities. Habiba, for example, does not allow her husband to do grocery shopping and laundry since she does not want him to manage the family budget. She prefers to manage domestic responsibilities with the power to allocate money for family expenses. Some of the Bangladeshi women however, take primary responsibility for household tasks as a strategy to maintain a stable family life and at the same time continue business activities. Women often idealize their roles as wives and mothers to balance family and work lives especially when their husbands experience downward mobility after moving to Toronto.

### **5.6.1. Gender Role Negotiations**

Previous research about South Asian immigrant women suggests that women often accept patriarchal values at home to allow men to exercise their masculinity in authoritative roles. Authority in the home helps men recover from the social-economic marginalization they encounter after migration (Mahalingam et al. 2008). Min (1996) studying Korean women who run businesses in the US, also finds that men's downward mobility after immigration encourages them to resist an equitable division of household work. Women often accept traditional roles to avoid marital conflicts. A similar trend has been documented by Sakamoto and Zhou (2005) regarding Chinese women in Canada. The testimonies of some Bangladeshi women indicate that their endorsement of traditional gender roles in the home is often influenced by the downward mobility of their husbands whose occupational and employment status and social class positions has declined.

Women whose husbands had a high professional status as doctors, engineers and bankers in Bangladesh emphasize the psychological turmoil that their husbands suffer with the loss of their occupations. Despite securing a middle class position and financial security by starting a business, husbands of some of the non-H-B business operators are dissatisfied because they cannot work in their occupations. Women do not put extra pressure on their husbands who are already frustrated due to losing their professional careers by demanding their participation in household work.

A few women who operate non-H-B businesses indicate that their husbands get annoyed if they are asked to help with household chores. Men perceive their involvement in household work as damaging their reputations in the Bangladeshi community. Jinat, who runs a beauty parlor, explains that though her husband has a business in Toronto, he longs for his professional

identity as an engineer and wants to replicate his previous life-style. Her husband thinks that doing household tasks which he never did in Bangladesh would signify the loss of his professional position and privileged lifestyle.

Jinat: I do most of the work. My husband had a different life. He was an executive engineer, had 2/3 office staff to help him all the time, to open his car door, to help with grocery shopping. We had a cook, so he says how can I suddenly cook in the kitchen, clean the house? I told him many men here help their wives. It is essential here because we don't have maids. He doesn't want to accept that things have changed.

Jinat takes sole responsibility for household work. By performing domestic tasks, she provides emotional support to her husband. In response to her husband's resistance against sharing household work, she performs domestic responsibilities to avoid conflicts with him. Thus, doing housework allows her to maintain a stable marital relation. At the same time, she also tries to convince her husband to take part in household work by stressing prevailing expectations about men's and women's responsibilities for domestic work and their changed family circumstances in Toronto.

Even when women work from home, maintaining cordial marital relations is challenging. The shift in roles when men are unemployed and women operate home-based businesses after migration destabilizes gender relations. Ritu who operates multiple home-based businesses, states how difficult it is for her husband who had a senior administrative position in a university in Dhaka, to accept that he is unemployed and financially dependent on her in Toronto. The unexpected loss of his wage earner role has left him depressed and as a result, Ritu does not involve her husband with domestic responsibilities such as grocery shopping.

Ritu: Of course it is hard to adjust when things just change suddenly. Before, I was a housewife; my husband had a good job, he was a respectable person. People used to come to him for help. He feels ashamed that I am running the family now and he is not doing anything. He doesn't talk much, become irritated for small things ... I think he would feel happy to go back! This is change we never though would happen. He often

wants to help but I don't ask him to do anything in the home. I do everything, cooking, grocery shopping.

Men's unemployment after migration and declining social status often increases the pressure on Bangladeshi women to undertake domestic responsibilities as well as take up wage work. The experiences of Bangladeshi women match with the findings of Menjivar (1999), who studied Central American couples in the US. In these households, men's frustrations with unemployment discouraged women who were the sole income earners from demanding an equitable division of household work. The women wanted to avoid marital conflicts and domestic violence because their husbands were depressed.

Husband's unemployed status and working wife's breadwinner role transgress 'traditional' gender norms and Islamic principles that prescribe a public/private binary that assigns responsibility for private domestic work to women and responsibility for earning the family's income and paid work in 'public' to men (Prendelli 2004; Torab 1996; Mohammad 2005a). For some home-based business operators and their husbands the transformation in the woman's role creates discomfort in the neighbourhood. Some Bangladeshis critically judge the changes in men's and women's family roles. Sufiya, whose husband works part-time in a store, describes how the unemployed husbands of working women are called 'house husbands' in the neighbourhood. Even though this label is used by community members as a humorous gesture, men take it seriously because it compounds their frustration from losing their professional and social status. Due to direct and indirect social pressure, husbands become frustrated and avoid participating in household work to preserve their patriarchal authority in the home.

Sufiya: It is not that women are working and men are having a good life. Men are also under lot of pressure here. Do you know people call them house husbands here? My husband often says 'I am now a house husband', he jokes, but men take this seriously. They are frustrated because they don't have a job and money and social prestige, they start arguing because they stay at home most of the time, they are not the income earner

... we have to understand that men are going through a tough time. People would say women got a chance and now they are dominating their husbands, they forgot cultural and religious values, cause doing domestic chores hurts their [men's] ego.

Sufiya sheds light on how 'traditional' gender and religious norms in the Bangladeshi neighbourhood idealize women as homemakers and caregivers and men as breadwinners (Walker et al. 2008; Cooke 2007). Although women's employment is encouraged by most Bangladeshis, women are still seen primarily as homemakers. The term 'house husband'- used to describe unemployed men in the neighbourhood implies that husband and wife are diverted from their appropriate roles. Community expectations intensify the family tension for women who take a wage earner role.

Women's gender role negotiations are more prominent among home-based business operators whose husbands are unemployed and underemployed than among non-H-B business operators whose husbands are established businessmen. The family's economic circumstances affect how Bangladeshi women negotiate their gender roles. To ensure family stability and conform with community expectations, home-based business operators often downplay their roles as wage earners. They refuse to identify themselves as breadwinners and co-breadwinners, instead, they describe their entrepreneurial activities as a way to contribute to the financial needs of the family. They perceive their employment as a path to overcome financial difficulties and gain middle class status in Toronto rather than as a vehicle to bring fundamental change in gender divisions of household labour.

Even when home-based business operators demand an equitable share of household work from their husbands, they rarely achieve these goals due to the characteristics and locations of their businesses. Operating businesses in the home creates additional psychological pressure on Bangladeshi women to manage family responsibilities and paid-work simultaneously. In

contrast, separation of the home and business allowed some of the non-H-B business operators to challenge 'traditional' gender roles and establish equity in the division of household work by stressing their roles as income earners. The next section sheds light on how the locations of businesses affect Bangladeshi women's gender role negotiation.

### **5.6.2. Influence of Workplace on Gender Roles**

Self-employment in general is conceived as an efficient and flexible option for women to accommodate paid work and home responsibilities (Loscocco and Smith-Hunter 2004). Numerous studies recognize home-based work as a route for women to balance paid-work and family responsibilities (Walker et al. 2008; Pratt, 2006; Mirchandani 1999; Anthias 2001). Loscocco and Smith-Hunter (2004) claim that women running home-based businesses experience less work-family conflicts than those who run businesses outside the home. In contrast, some scholars found that women who work from home take up more domestic work than those who work outside the home (Silver 1993; Silver and Goldscheider 1994). I agree with recent studies that show home-based business operators invest relatively more hours in performing domestic chores than non-H-B business operators (Silver 1993; Walker et al. 2008; Field-Hendrey 2002). None of the home-based business operators mention flexibility in combining business and household work when explaining why they started their businesses. Fulfilling family responsibilities while operating businesses for income adds additional pressure to the women's lives on a daily basis (Lavoie 1992; Martins and Reid 2007). In contrast, the spatial separation between work and domestic activities allows some of the non-H-B business operators to negotiate a new division of household labour with their husbands (Mirchandani 2000).

A few home-based business operators who demanded a contribution from their husbands describe how their business activities in the home re-enforced the conventional divisions of household work. Kamrun states that after starting a home-based catering business she asked her husband to participate in household work such as cleaning, doing laundry and helping the children with their studies so that she could invest time to prepare and deliver food. Although her husband agreed with this arrangement, he never really performed those chores due to the busy schedule at his workplace. Eventually, she and her husband agreed that it would be convenient for her to take care of domestic tasks and family responsibilities since she works in the home. A similar notion is reflected in Sufiyya's statement. She works at McDonald's and operates a catering business from her home:

Sufiyya: He wants to help me but he gets tired after night shifts and he does not have fixed shifts. The job he does is tough. He needs to carry heavy boxes and containers. I initially told him do stuff like cleaning the home and washing dishes, but I don't ask anything these days. He works hard and can't sleep at night ... I work [at McDonald's] in the morning and after that I stay in the home anyway. Now I don't involve him with domestic tasks.

Although both Sufiyya and her husband work long hours to provide for the family, Sufiyya's home-based business and her presence at home comes with greater responsibility for domestic work. Some home-based business operators describe difficulties in putting a boundary between business activities and household work. At home, for women, the need to generate family income often conflicts with family responsibilities. To handle this conflict, most women perform business tasks and household work alternately throughout the day. Women spontaneously alter their entrepreneurial and family roles to balance both spheres in their lives. Sabina, who operates home-based child care and garment businesses, describes how she manages her work load by alternating between business activities and household work.

Sabina: I have to find time for *ghorer kaj* [household tasks] in between [business] work. I cook when I look after the kids during the day. It is risky because kids can come to kitchen, so I give them toys in the dining space and I watch them from the kitchen. Then I have to feed them. So I do small tasks in between. Often children watch TV so I can clean the house. But the problem is finishing the dresses because I become tired. Then my daughter comes from school and my husband comes from work. They want me to spend time with them. So I switch the dresses and watch TV with them. Often I pretend that I am watching TV but I sew the dresses! (laugh) ...

The description of Sabina's work captures how she has to switch from business tasks to household tasks repeatedly to maintain commitments to customers and fulfill her husband's and daughter's expectations for her attention as a good wife and mother.

The shortage of space at home adds to the difficulty of accommodating the competing demands of work and family life (Baines 2002). Yasmin cannot concentrate on her child care and catering businesses because there is always some kind of interruption from family members and relatives. In addition to taking care of household tasks, she has to respond to phone calls from family members and relatives. Most importantly in between her business work she has to entertain relatives who come to visit. Taking care of *mehmans* [visitors] is crucial in Bengali culture so she cannot prioritize business tasks over family expectations. She longs for a separate place of business which will allow her to devote time to business tasks without any interruption.

Yasmin: When you work at home it is not possible to concentrate because you have to look after the family needs. When they see you are in the home they also want to involve you with everything. My husband and children will never take the phone calls. If *mehman* [visitors] comes I have to spend time with them. I tell my husband don't invite your friends and relatives because I have lot of work to do, I don't have time. If they come I have to offer food, I can't ignore them. If I ignore that will be a big issue ... I think working outside is good. You do your work and then come home. If I am outside relatives will also not come ...

Extended family relations in Toronto create additional pressure for Sabina to combine work and family responsibilities. While home-based business operators blend their business and household work, a few women who operate non-H-B businesses mentioned that their husbands

often helped them with household chores since they worked outside the home for a lengthy period every day. Rupali mentions that though performing household work after business hours is exhausting, she gets help from her husband and daughters to prepare dinner and clean dishes. After starting to work in the family clothing business with her husband, she established a routine to distribute domestic responsibilities among family members so that they do not depend on her in her absence. This strategy saved her from worrying about family responsibilities while working in the store.

Rupali: In the beginning it was hectic. I work in the store from morning till evening. Making time for cooking, cleaning after working in the store was tiring. So I realized that I need to train my daughters so that they can take care of themselves. It is important that they become independent. So I told my elder daughter to do laundry and younger daughter to clean and wipe furniture. They are very smart, they know I work hard ... yes my husband also helps them. I don't have to serve food to my daughters; my husband does. So I am not worried about my daughters ... my husband and daughters, they cook dinner and put everything in the fridge and clean the table. They don't leave those tasks for me.

The narratives indicate that Rupali has succeeded in engaging her husband and daughters in domestic tasks. Her roles in the non-H-B business at a separate location allowed her to re-negotiate gender role in the home. Nupur also stresses that her husband's participation in domestic work has been a key factor behind her engagement in the family restaurant business in

Toronto:

Nupur: Here one income is not enough. Husband and wife both need to work. In that case husband should sacrifice more. In my life in Canada, my husband helped me a lot. He doesn't know how to cook so he could not help me with cooking. But he used to do all types of cleaning at home, bathroom, kitchen he cleans everything. And after starting this restaurant I did not have to cook at home anymore. We have food here so no need to cook separately. When guests come to my place I cook and my husband cleans everything.

Unlike home-based business operators, most non-H-B business operators allocate specific hours to household work. Women who operate businesses jointly with husbands and other family

members can spend time on household work without hampering their business. Nishat usually hands over responsibility for running the clothing store to her husband and goes home in the afternoon. Her husband usually prepares and serves lunch to their sons. Sharing the business and household work with her husband enables her to spend time with her sons and maintain a social life along with managing the family business.

Nishat: Once I go home at 3, I am free. I go out with my son. Often I tell my son to take me to my cousin's place. They come to my place ... I prepare food in the evening. My husband takes care of lunch. I don't get time in the morning because I leave home at 7 am. I take the subway. It takes 45 to 50 minutes to come here [to store]. By 8 am I should be here. So I do household work in the evening. So we manage this way.

Other non-H-B business operators remain solely responsible for domestic tasks in the home. Hochschild and Machung (2012) define working women's household chores in the home as the 'second shift' acknowledging that family responsibilities require women to add an extra shift in their daily routine. Some of the non-H-B business operators perform a second shift of work in the home in addition to working for 8 to 12 hours at their businesses. Shahin describes how she combines her work schedules in the beauty parlor and home:

Shahin: I found that it is easy if I do half of the cooking in the morning, before leaving home, it won't take lot of time to manage. So what I do I cut the vegetables and put it in refrigerator. I wake up at 6 am and start cooking. I prepare ginger, garlic paste and other spices. I also put meat and fish in the fridge; I fry them so they stay fresh. So if I start cooking at 9 pm, by 10 pm, 4/5 dishes are ready. We have enough food for lunch. So Saturday and Sunday from 6 am to 10 am I do laundry. I clean the house also. So rest of the week I have to cook.

Shahin states that she manages household work without much difficulty because she maintains a regular routine to perform her business and family responsibilities. Conflicts between family and business responsibilities are less pronounced among women who work in non-H-B businesses than for those who operate businesses in the home. While home-based business operators blend their business activities and household work, non-H-B business operators compartmentalize their

business and family responsibilities in different work shifts. None of the women who work outside the home had any pre-school aged children at the time of interview. Older non-H-B operators have less responsibility for care work. Among home-based business operators, three of sixteen had infants at home. These women have difficulties juggling motherhood, household work and their businesses. For example, responsibility for her three-year-old child influenced Selina, a home-based beautician, to limit business expansion and provide aesthetic services to a limited number of customers.

Selina: I put a poster in front of SAWRO office so women who come here know about me. But I did not distribute flyers in other neighbourhoods because women in other neighbourhoods would want me to go to their place to do beauty treatments. It is not possible for me to go to their homes; I have a little child ... Everyday 4/5 customers come to my place to do something. Most come for eyebrow threading and upper lip threading. Some come for hair cut too. I work a bit then in between work I look after my child. I can't take much work pressure now. I will be able to expand my business in future when my child will grow up.

Home based and non-H-B business operators follow different strategies and schedules to combine family and business roles. As feminist geographers point out, along with conventional gender norms surrounding social reproductive work, the locations of their businesses influence each group's negotiations of domestic responsibilities (see McDowell 1993; 1999; Valentine 2007; Raghuram 2008; Pratt 2004; Giles and Preston 1996). Factors such as, the idealization of gender roles, their husbands' employment status, the socio-economic position of the family and religious and patriarchal norms regarding breadwinner and care-giver roles shape the diverse ways home-based and non-H-B business operators negotiate responsibilities for domestic work. The locations of their businesses, inside and outside the home, also play a crucial role in the ways Bangladeshi women entrepreneurs perform and negotiate social reproductive work in Toronto. Whereas, most home-based business operators remain primarily responsible for household work despite their contributions to the family income, a few non-H-B business

operators managed to share household responsibilities with their husband and family members and re-negotiate gender roles in the home due to their business commitments outside the home.

## **5.7. Conclusions**

Information about the various contexts in which minority immigrant women work in different types of ethnic business is still limited. This chapter describes the circumstances in which Bangladeshi women adopt two different paths to entrepreneurship: home-based and non-H-B businesses. These different paths are shaped by the family's diverse strategies to combat employment barriers and socio-economic marginalization in Toronto. The women's experiences confirm that family strategies shape their diverse pathways to socio-economic integration in Toronto (Blau et al. 2003; Dion and Dion 2001).

Class positions and gender roles can be re-negotiated when women start their businesses. Women's entry into businesses is shaped by male family member's labour market integration after migration and the family's financial situation. Male family member's business experience and access to financial capital help non-H-B business operators establish family and independent businesses, increase family wealth and secure a middle class position. Similar trends have been reported in previous studies that document how male family members' business background has a positive effect on women's entry into businesses (Pio 2007; Anthias and Mehta 2003; Hillman 1999).

In contrast, home-based business operators who experienced downward social mobility due to limited financial resources and their husband's un- and underemployed status had to look for an income source to survive. Unable to obtain employment in the formal labour market, most home-based business operators establish multiple businesses to combat severe financial

difficulties. The circumstances of home-based business operators in Toronto differ from the situation of Iranian women in Los Angeles who are married to rich husbands and work in home-based businesses as a hobby (Dallalfer 1994). For Bangladeshi women, operating home-based businesses is essential for the survival of their families and mirrors their working class status in Toronto.

Women generally do not face religious restrictions and barriers when they work in businesses in the Bangladeshi neighborhood. However, women are aware of a small segment of conservative Bangladeshis in the neighborhood that opposes women's involvement in business activities outside the home. Constructing a progressive/conservative binary, women, including those who wear the hijab, associate themselves with progressive beliefs and practices. 'Hijab' wearers problematize the notion that the 'hijab' signifies women's seclusion. Among non-hijab wearers, home-based business operators are more critical about associating the 'hijab' with the modesty of Muslim women than non-H-B business operators, some of whom take a defensive stand about the 'hijab'. Most non-H-B business operators agree that being 'decent' - with or without the 'hijab' - at the worksite is important. Women's opinions vary revealing the diversity in Muslim immigrant women's religious sentiments and spatial practices (Moghissi 2006; Prendelli 2004; Ruby 2006; Hoodfar 1997).

Taking financial responsibility for the family changed the roles of both groups of Bangladeshi women. They moved from being housewives and/or complementary earners to become breadwinners and co-breadwinners. Without maids and help from family members, the majority of women take sole responsibility for managing domestic chores. A few women juggle business and domestic chores and embrace a double and triple burden, to be ideal wives and mothers. Like Central American (Menjivar 1999) and Korean (Min 1998) immigrant women,

some of the Bangladeshi women allow their husbands who have lost occupational status and/or stable employment after migration to exercise patriarchal authority in the home. The absence of a physical and social boundary between business and family activities makes it difficult for home-based business operators to juggle business and family responsibilities. Separation of the business site from the home allows some non-H-B business operators to re-negotiate the gender division of domestic responsibilities in the home. Highlighting their long hours of work outside the home, this group of women successfully engages their husband and family members in domestic tasks. The experience of ‘workplace’ thus, differs between the two groups of Bangladeshi women.

Business sites - inside and outside the home – are not just backgrounds, they embody the diverse social, economic and family circumstances and identity negotiations of Bangladeshi women that influenced them to pursue different business paths. Despite differences in their identity constructions in relation to business activities and unpaid work Bangladeshi women stress that their business activities are crucial to the family’s collective interests and help the family overcome financial insecurity in Toronto. In this spirit, they mobilize the required resources, adopt various business strategies and target diverse consumer markets to operate businesses at home and outside the home - which I discuss in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 6: Embeddedness, Market Opportunities and Business Strategies**

### **6.1. Introduction**

In this chapter, I explore the embeddedness of Bangladeshi women by focusing on how they mobilize resources and adopt diverse strategies to generate business opportunities. Specifically, I consider their use of ethnic social capital (i.e.; ethnic ties and networks) which is sometimes viewed as a central requirement for the emergence and growth of minority ethnic enterprises in enclaves (Waldinger 1986; Greve and Salaff 2005; Light et al. 2004; Fairchild 2010; Zhou 2004). As I discussed in chapter two, Aldrich and Waldinger (1990) propose an interactional theory to describe the emergence and characteristics of ethnic entrepreneurship. They recognize ethnic entrepreneurship as a function of three interrelated dimensions: opportunity structures, group characteristics and emergent strategies. Along with recognizing the importance of social capital, the theory stresses the diverse ways that different ethnic groups implement business strategies to access existing market opportunities. The inclusive character of this three-dimensional framework enables scholars to capture the resource mobilization of diverse ethnic minority immigrants and their embeddedness by situating ethnic businesses within the wider social, locational, economic and market contexts (Waldinger 1999).

Feminist scholars have problematized the male centric representation of ethnic enterprises in these theories (Mirchandani 1999; Anthias 2007). Although Aldrich and Waldinger (1990) provide a comprehensive framework considering diverse group characteristics, they remain uncritical about how the similarities and differences in identities of co-ethnics shape the mobilization of social capital (Anthias 2007; Light et al. 2004). Women's entrepreneurial experiences are generally incorporated into the collective explanations of ethnic groups' business development without recognizing their distinct social locations, agency and interests. Apart from

a few studies, gender has been overlooked in studies of ethnic entrepreneurship. Few studies investigate women's diverse experiences of entrepreneurship; their business characteristics, resource mobilization and market opportunities from the vantage point of the entrepreneurs. These factors are crucial for documenting and appreciating diversity in women operated ethnic businesses (Apitzsch and Kontos 2003; Menzies et al. 2003).

Recent empirical studies show that the settings of entrepreneurship affect the ways immigrant women carry out entrepreneurial activities (Dhaliwal 1998; Dallafar 1994; Maitra 2013). South Asian women who work in family businesses are often treated as secondary actors while those who operate businesses independently enjoy more freedom in making business decisions (Dhaliwal 1998). A business location in the home where women usually socialize with female friends and relatives in Iranian culture allows Iranian women in the US to utilize ethnic and gender resources to create business opportunities. In contrast, Iranian women who operate family businesses in formal work places have few opportunities to build business networks (Dallafar 1994). These studies provide a critical look at the ways in which women's identities and the locations of their businesses shape their business roles.

This chapter provides a gender perspective on Aldrich and Waldinger's (1990) interactional theory by exploring the embeddedness of Bangladeshi women who operate home and non-H-B businesses in the Bangladeshi neighbourhood in Toronto. I have taken account of the main factors that influence embeddedness: group characteristics, opportunity structures and ethnic strategies - to capture the similarities and differences in the ways two groups of Bangladeshi women operate their businesses. In interactional theory, group characteristics refer to the social and locational factors that influence the mobilization of ethnic and class resources of particular ethnic groups. Aldrich and Waldinger (1990) emphasize group characteristics to

identify differences among different ethnic groups that shape their entrepreneurship. By comparing the resource mobilization of Bangladeshi women who operate businesses inside and outside the home, I explore intra-group differences. Focusing on intra-group differences allows me to recognize the diversity in Bangladeshi women's entrepreneurial experiences.

The resource mobilization of home and non-H-B business operators is traced at two levels: family and non-family ethnic ties and institutions. Although Aldrich and Waldinger (1990) did not differentiate between family and non-family ethnic networks and institutions, a growing number of studies insist that the role of family ties in the emergence of ethnic businesses needs to be analyzed separately (Sanders and Nee 1996, 2001; Valdez 2016). Family is a more tightly integrated social organization compared to other ethnic social institutions (Lo 2009; Sanders and Nee 1996, 2001; Coleman 1990; Portes 1995; Bankston and Zhou 2002).

The distinction between family and non-family ethnic ties and institutions allows me to identify the implication of two distinct forms of capital/resources - 'class resources' and 'ethnic resources' (Light 1984; Min and Bozorghmehr 2000; Yoon 1991). Family and other ethnic institutions provide distinct forms of resources. Class resources represent one's financial capital and cultural capital,<sup>73</sup> such as skills and education). The business backgrounds of family members are also recognized as class resources (Min and Bozorghmehr 2000; Valdez 2016). Financial capital, a crucial class resource, allows immigrants to establish a formal business (Min and Bozorghmehr 2000). Scholars suggest that 'class resources' (i.e.; financial and cultural capital) are not available equally to all members of an ethnic group as they are embodied in the

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<sup>73</sup> Cultural capital refers to the symbolic assets that a person possesses. This might be in the form of institutional cultural capital (for example, university degrees), embodied cultural capital, referring to "long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body" (Bourdieu 1986: 243) (for example, accents, comportment, and 'race'), or objectified cultural capital (for example, dress, physical equipment, or an art collection). In each case, these are assets by which an individual is judged in the labour market (and in a variety of other settings) (Kelly and Lusia 2006: 834)

individual and family (Anthias 2007; Sanders and Nee 1996). Family is often the primary source from which ethnic minorities mobilize social capital (i.e.; help and support from family members) as well as class resources such as financial capital (Valdez 2016). Non-family ethnic ties and institutions are sources of ethnic resources. Ethno-cultural endowments (i.e.; trust, favor, information, and informal transaction) and solidarity among ethnic group members are recognized as economically productive social capital crucial for establishing ethnic enterprises (Light 1984; Aldrich and Waldinger's 1990; Sanders and Nee 1996, 2001).

Access to family-based social and financial capital often reduces dependence on other ethnic networks and institutions as a source of capital (Sanders and Nee 1996, 2001; Portes and Zhou 1992; Zhou 1992; Yoon 1991; Min and Bozorgmehr 2000). The previous chapter illustrates how access to financial capital and a husband's business background facilitated non-H-B business operators' entrepreneurship. Home-based business operators who experienced downward social mobility due to limited financial resources had to start labor intensive low cost businesses. This chapter explores how non-H-B and home-based business operators' identities and the locational attributes of their businesses shape their dependence on ethnic networks and institutions in the Bangladeshi neighbourhood.

Market opportunities which Aldrich and Waldinger (1990) regard as opportunity structures are explored by investigating whether home-based and non-H-B business operators target co-ethnic and non-co-ethnic markets. The business strategies that home-based and non-H-B business operators employ to access local market opportunities are analyzed in two parts. The first part scrutinizes the customers that women target and how they form and utilize business related networks to access various consumer markets. The second part explores how proximity to

a residential concentration of co-ethnics influences how Bangladeshi women operate their businesses at home and even, outside the home (Aldrich and Waldinger 1990).

The analysis seeks to identify the overlapping and contrasting ways in which the two groups of Bangladeshi women conduct business activities to shed light on ‘women’s diverse ways’ of doing business. A comparison between home and non-H-B business operators provides a window into the effects of business locations on female Bangladeshi business operators’ embeddedness in ethnic ties and co-ethnic markets. Incorporating Bangladeshi women’s experiences of entrepreneurship in Toronto into the analysis allows me to evaluate the relevance of the interactional theory of entrepreneurship for this group of entrepreneurs.

Organized in four sections, the main goal of this chapter is to illustrate the family and non-family resources that Bangladeshi women mobilize to operate their businesses in different locations and the business strategies they use to access market opportunities in the Bangladeshi neighbourhood. The first section analyzes the ways in which home and non-H-B business operators mobilize family supports and resources to conduct business. The second section illustrates how home-and non-H-B business operators utilize help and support from ethnic institutions to create business opportunities. The third section provides a detailed description of the ways in which home-based business operators establish networks, access consumer markets and take advantage of their proximity to co-ethnics in the neighbourhood. The fourth section, explores how non-H-B business operators target consumer markets, adopt diverse business strategies, and recruit employees. The information helped me evaluate the need for a protected co-ethnic market for sustaining non-H-B businesses.

## **6.2. Reliance Family Resources and Support: Background Literature**

The significance of family for ethnic enterprises has been discussed at length (Waldinger et al. 1990; Light and Gold 2000; Sanders and Nee 1996; Valdez 2016). In most studies, ethnic enterprises are constructed as family enterprises in which family members work as a unit and adopt strategies to maximize collective wealth (Sanders and Nee 1996). Many ethnic minorities construct their families as a unit of survival and a basis for resistance against cultural racism and discrimination in the host society and “such transformations in the institution of the family have implications for the emergence of new business opportunities, opportunity recognition, business start-up decisions, and the resource mobilization process” (Aldrich and Cliff 2003: 574). Family thus, significantly influences one’s access to the financial and social capital needed to establish and sustain ethnic businesses (Pécoud 2004; Sander and Nee 1996).

Much of the literature considers the family as a patriarchal institution in which men draw on different types of resources including the unpaid labour of women and children to establish and operate ethnic enterprises (Anthias and Mehta 2003, 2008). Researchers focus on how minority women contribute to the establishment of male-owned and male-operated businesses by providing unpaid labour in the business, performing household tasks and holding outside paid work (Phizacklea 1988, Zhou and Logan 1989; Pécoud 2004; Dhaliwal 1998). Women’s roles as ‘silent contributors’ to male-operated businesses are documented, but the support that women entrepreneurs receive from family members to operate businesses is rarely discussed (Anthias and Mehta 2003). There is a tendency to overlook minority women as entrepreneurs in their own right.

The few studies that touch upon female entrepreneurs’ access to family support provide contrasting views. Studying fifty middle-class Mexican immigrant entrepreneurs in the USA,

Valdez (2016) suggests that household dynamics influence access to family-based resources, such as family labour, financial capital, and inheritance. Differential access to family resources by gender and class shapes the entrepreneurial activities of family members in Mexican immigrant households. Patriarchal and gendered expectations associated with family roles and responsibilities tend to favour middle class men's entrepreneurial outcomes over middle class women's. A comparative study of British-born and immigrant women operated businesses in the UK (Anthias and Mehta 2003) illustrates that family support is different for men and women, and both groups of women receive little help from their families in operating businesses. Family is not always a 'happy heaven' - as Anthias and Mehta (2003) suggest - it is also a site of conflicts and negotiations where women's business interests often receive less priority from family members. Morokvasic and Catarino (2006) also suggest that most immigrant women do not get emotional support from the family in dealing with business challenges. Rather, they often face criticism from family members.

On the other hand, Pio (2010) notes that Muslim women in the Dawoodi community in Sweden were able to operate ethnic businesses outside the home with the help of their husbands and their community. However, these women establish businesses targeting mainly female customers to obtain support from their husbands to work outside the home. To operate businesses, women create a 'private' space within the 'public' space by avoiding contact with men. Maintaining gender segregation in business activities, Dawoodi Muslim women access support from family and community members. These studies illuminate the intricate ways that Muslim women are positioned in the family as entrepreneurs and as family members and the negotiation required on their part to receive family support. Religious beliefs and practices and

patriarchal norms may contribute to the varied experiences of immigrant women in different business contexts.

The experiences of Bangladeshi women add further insights into current debates about immigrant women's dependence on and ability to mobilize collective family resources for business purposes. I already showed that unlike home-based business operators who set-up small service-oriented business at home with minimal investments ranging from \$20 to \$200, most non-H-B business operators had to mobilize substantial financial capital to initiate their businesses and they utilized family savings and/or their husband's incomes. However, access to financial resources is not the only form of family help that these women receive. Their business tasks and the social meanings that the business sites embody affect the support from family members. The connotations of home with a feminine domain and formal workplace with a masculine domain shape the degree to which family members of Bangladeshi women contribute to their businesses. The intersections of gender, class and place of business which restrict the involvement of family in home-based businesses, sometimes allow non-H-B business operators to seek help from family members.

### **6.2.1. Family Involvement: Home-based Businesses**

Most home-based business operators state that few family members especially their husbands are involved in their businesses. Husbands and other family members rarely participate in business tasks on a daily basis. Their husbands also do not make any significant contributions to how women build-up business networks and a customer base in the neighbourhood. The husbands' withdrawal from helping with the business is connected to the business tasks - cooking, child care and sewing which are seen as women's unpaid household work, and the locations of the businesses in the home where women are usually responsible for household work

(Mohanty 1991; Kofman and Raghuram 2006; Pessar and Mahler 2003; Minnotte et al. 2010; Pratt 2004, 2008). Within the context of home-based business, unpaid household tasks are not considered a separate sphere of activity from business activities for women (Carter 2011; Jennings et al. 2013).

Operating businesses at home, the location of unpaid social reproductive work, reduces the importance of women's business activities in the eyes of their family members (Kofman and Raghuram 2006). Affirming the long-standing feminist argument that women's association with domesticity influences the social value of home-based work, most home-based business operators describe how their business tasks particularly those that are related to social reproductive work are conceived as less serious and intellectually challenging tasks by their husbands and family members (McDowell et al. 2007; Leonard 2001; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1997). Nipun explains that her husband and in-laws do not offer help with catering and garment selling because they think that her business tasks do not require any special skills or intelligence and that women usually know how to manage these tasks even when they do not have higher education.

Nipun: these things [catering and garment selling] are generally not recognized as serious work because women just learn that in the home they don't need to be highly intelligent to those things. So they [women] don't get any credit for the hard work they do every day. See women who never went to school like our grandmothers, they also learned these. So my husband and my in-laws here think I can manage it.

Previous studies show how the same work occurring in different locations has different gender connotations. For example, cooking in the home is almost always associated with femininity but cooking in the restaurant is viewed as appropriate for men (Leidner 1991). Cooking does not challenge masculinity when it is done by men in the restaurants and fast food shops (ibid: 164).

The notion that catering in the home is women's (not men's) area of work is re-enforced in the narratives of Kamrun and Priya.

Kamrun explains that her husband is not involved with her catering business because he does not know how to work in the kitchen. In addition, he feels embarrassed to do grocery shopping because he does not want to give others the impression that having failed to get a job he is involved with his wife's catering business. Her husband knows very little about her business and she also does not ask him to do any favors or seek his help as she knows this is not his 'area' of work.

Kamrun: My husband is not involved with it. You know men do not do cooking in the home. Even if he wants to he can't help me. This is not his area so engaging him means losing the contract, he won't be able to do it properly ... No I do the grocery shopping. My husband does not want to cause you know people here. They will think he has started catering business at home and they will question him. They will think he did not get a good job so he is doing it. He feels shy and embarrassed. I don't want him to feel that way.

Male family members' unemployed and underemployed status and the resulting loss of their breadwinner status in the home discourage their involvement with home-based businesses run by Bangladeshi women. Men's involvement in business activities viewed as inherently feminine undermines their conventional 'breadwinner' roles. Working in a home-based catering business violates Kamrun's husband's masculine identity as well as symbolizes his failure to secure employment in Toronto. Her business responsibilities are not considered a collective responsibility of the family.

Priya also stresses the gender connotations of her home-based catering business while describing how her husband is not involved with the business tasks she carries out. Her husband feels shy about telling his friends or anyone to order food from her. He thinks it is a 'women

thing' and women should make the decisions from whom and where to order food. However, when asked what her future plans are, Priya describes how she and her husband are planning to establish a restaurant together in the Regent Park area if they obtain enough financial capital.

Priya: He is totally disconnected from my work. He doesn't know what I am doing. He never tells anyone about my business. I told him to tell his friend to order food from me but till today he never requests his friends. He says "you can tell to their wives because women know about food more and decide from where to order food". Their husbands won't decide these things. This is a women thing. "We are not good at cooking and deciding which food is tasty which is not ...". Yes we are planning to establish a restaurant in future if we can save money, my husband and I will manage it ...

Her testimony implies that while her husband refuses to participate in her catering business in the home, he shows interest in operating a restaurant jointly with her – indicating how the gendered connotations of work - such as cooking and serving food – are different inside and outside the home (Dallalfer 1994; Leidner 1991). The different perceptions of home-based catering and non-H-B restaurant business imply that gender roles, which are not emphasized in Aldrich and Waldinger's (1990) interactional theory, are important in shaping immigrant's entry into different type of businesses.

Though most Bangladeshi women started home-based businesses to augment the family income and ensure the family's survival, they do not receive assistance from the family, particularly from their husbands, because their business tasks complement and reinforce women's established gender roles in the home. Women also construct their work as 'feminine' tasks which are not suitable for their husbands. Bangladeshi women's experience mirrors the devaluation of commodified social reproductive tasks when they take place in the home (Pratt 2004; Young 2005). As Anthias and Mehta (2003: 113) note:

*“Both the gendered areas in which women’s enterprises are located and the gender stereotypes and attitudes that seek to undermine the legitimacy of women as owners of means of production continue to construct them as being primarily responsible for the domestic sphere”.*

The productivity of reproductive work complicates the public/private dichotomy even as it fails to challenge gender norms regarding women’s work (Pratt 1998). The narratives of home-based business operators indicate that embodied gender norms are reinforced by their commodified reproductive work in the home. Women are seen as appropriate for doing domestic services - whether paid or unpaid - which have been historically performed by them in the home. Even though the sites of family activities and business activities overlap in their private homes, male family members, particularly husbands, of home-based business operators remain detached from their business activities.

#### **6.2.2. Family Involvement in Operating Non-H-B Businesses**

Unlike home-based business operators, for most Bangladeshi women who operate non-home based businesses, family is the main source of economic resources, help and emotional support. Engagement in businesses away from the home situates these women in a site of entrepreneurship which has been historically constructed as a male-dominated sphere (Ram et al. 2001; Dhaliwal 2000). In this ‘masculine’ sphere, women are almost always constructed as secondary and hidden bodies that provide unpaid labour to support the businesses of the male family members (Morokvasic 1991; Frishkoff and Brown 1993; Ram et al. 2001; Dhaliwal 2000). Thus, identifying the contexts in which Bangladeshi women receive help and support from the family to operate businesses outside the home is crucial.

The narratives of some of the non-home based business operators reveal that male family members’ dependence on them to increase family income paves the way for women to access family support. Those who work in family businesses jointly with their husbands and other

family members highlight how they have decided to divide the tasks between them on a daily basis so that they can avoid paying for an employee to operate the business. Nishat for example, states:

Nishat: He stays in the evening hours but I have to decide the price of these dresses. He does not have much idea of price range. Often he calls me to know the price if customers request him to reduce the price, he calls me and then I tell him how much it is, then he sells the dress ... More people come in the evening so I often stay in the store till evening and he stays at home. We do it because he cannot be here all the time, he needs to do other things, and someone needs to be at home. Or we have to get an employee to be here and pay him. So I think it is better if we can manage, why paying someone else if we both work together and can manage the business? Then we can spend for our son's education.

Nishat stresses that it is important to make sure that the money remains in the family and is used for the children's education. She constructs herself as a co-owner of the business and highlights how she takes the main role in determining the price of clothing and deciding whether a dress will be sold at reduced price.

Similarly, Rebeka indicates that allocating tasks and responsibilities among family members is a strategy to ensure the success of the business and the survival of the family in Toronto. For example, she takes care of finances; all investment and budget related issues, and is a co-owner of the family-owned restaurant. Since she has a master's degree in finance, her brother, who is also her business partner, depends on her for financial decision making. She receives co-operation and support from her brother in making financial decisions.

Rebeka: I had to do all budget and financial planning, investment planning because I have a master's degree in finance. Then I have to manage what to keep in the store, what to cook every day, what to buy so the business cannot be operated without me ... yeah it is our joint business.

The stories of Nishat and Rebeka contradict previous findings that minority immigrant women, such as South Asian women (Dhaliwal 2000) and Iranian women (Dallafer 1994), have no control over financial decisions in family businesses and do not claim business ownership. Despite the fact that Rebeka is more educated than Nishat, both of them succeeded in mobilizing family support and play prominent roles in the businesses with the co-operation of male family members. In fact, male family members need the women's active involvement to sustain the family businesses. The need for and interest in improving the family's financial situation influence these women and the male members of the family to share business tasks - which also provides the opportunity for these women to make decisions about the business (Tienda and Booth 1991).

Non-H-B business operators who started a business independently mention that their husbands invested money and helped them to set up the business. Even though they operate the businesses independently, they consult their husbands about major business decisions. A study of Indian women in New Zealand (Pio 2007) also found that Indian women who belong to business families get easy access to economic and logistic support from family members particularly from their husbands. Mariyam describes how her husband helped her to start the clothing business jointly with one of her female friends. Her husband helped them with the legal documents and introduced them to an expert in business investment. The business experience of her husband also enables her to seek his help with business strategies.

Mariyam: It is good to have a trustworthy business partner. So I started this business with a partner, she was a famous TV news reader in Bangladesh. She wanted to have this business for a long time. She had a clothing business back home too so it was her initiative in the first place. But we did not have courage to start a clothing business formally cause having a business is challenging here. So then my husband introduced us to one of his friends. He was a big business man back home, and here also he helps people to start a business. When we talked to him he told us to start a business and provided advice. He and my husband helped us to clear the documents. So then we

planned for a year and finally opened this store. So this is the first time I am doing real business but I get help from my husband anytime I need.

The dependence of these women on family support, and the direct and indirect involvement of their husbands in the operation of their businesses indicate that male patronage may be very useful for women to start a business outside the home (see Anthias 2007; Pio 2007; Hillman 1999). The contributions of their husbands go beyond investing money. They also help with business plans and strategies. Male family members offer economic, planning and emotional support to achieve the economic goals of the family.

Some of the women started a business separately to expand or complement the businesses operated by their husbands or other male family members. Their contributions are crucial and valued by family members. Often husband and wife operate separate businesses to make sure that when the income from one business declines the family can depend on the income from the other business. Dipika describes how important it is to have a back-up plan for generating income, especially when most businesses in the Bangladeshi concentration operate at a loss.

Dipika: Economy is not good so here it is necessary that both husband and wife work and there is no guarantee in business here. If you have a job then different you will have a fixed income but business is uncertain. Now we are secure ... If he is not doing well I can take care of the family.

Dipika operates a clothing and ornament store and her husband sells electronic goods. The dual-business strategy provides a sense of security for her as she knows that the family has more than one source of income.

Women often start a business that is similar or related to the businesses owned by their husbands and other family members. In this way, family members get help and support from each other. Laili started a clothing business because her husband and brothers have various

clothing businesses in Toronto and in the US. She considers her clothing business to be an extension of the family business. Since her husband has a wholesale clothing store, she thought it would be beneficial for her as well as for her husband if she established a retail clothing store. She buys clothing from her husband's wholesale business to sell from her retail store. This interconnection brings mutual benefits for wholesale and retail clothing businesses.

Laili: My husband has wholesale of clothing and we have a warehouse in Spadina. Because he has a wholesale store, we thought to have a retail store here. I run this business and my husband works in Tycos, they have everything from all big brands and people like me buy clothing from them. My brothers have businesses in Toronto and in the US ... We will never close clothing business cause it like a family business now.

Establishing businesses in the same or related sectors is one strategy to expand the businesses. Family resources such as financial capital and the husband's business expertise also help women to try different businesses before settling on a stable business option. It took almost 15 years for Laili to start her clothing business. She describes how she switched between the clothing business and operating a beauty parlor to increase profits. Contrary to her expectations, the salon did not do well and she experienced financial losses. Then she worked with her husband in his wholesale business and after one year she began to operate a new clothing store.

Laili: I started this store in 2001 and worked here for 5 years. Then I rented it and bought the store beside it in 2006. Then I start a salon and a clothing store side by side in the store. I thought that if someone come for a dress she will cut her hair and would like to have makeup if she has a party. Or if someone comes for hair cut she will see the dresses and feel to buy a dress. So I thought that way and wanted to have both clothing store and salon side by side. The idea was good but it didn't work. The store was big too but I had to employ others to run the salon because I don't know beauty related work. I had so many business ideas. The business didn't do well particularly the salon. I lost money. Then I sold the store and went to China Town to work with my husband. My husband does wholesale of clothing and we have a warehouse in Spadina ... Then I came back again here because my tenants in this store couldn't do business well so they left, they had a luggage store. So I couldn't find any tenant then I decided to come back here and open a clothing store here again. So that's a long story.

Laili's experience underscores the uncertainty of successful businesses in the Bangladeshi neighbourhood. Her story also implies that she has access to financial and family resources to try out different businesses. Unlike home-based business operators, most women who operate businesses outside the home either jointly with husbands and other male family members or independently, receive financial and emotional support from the family and are able to mobilize family resources for business purposes. Their accounts align with other studies that emphasize how the business background of the family especially husbands' involvement in businesses has positive impacts on minority women's efforts to operate businesses (Pio 2007, Hillman 1999, Dallalfar 1994). The desire to enhance the economic success of the family and ensure its upward social mobility enables these women to establish and operate businesses outside the home. Family support is crucial for their business success. Working in a male dominated location of business and generating family income means they are seen as important economic contributors in the family.

### **6.3. Reliance on Ethnic Institutions and Networks**

Ethnic institutions, such as community-based cultural and religious organizations are often considered the locations and institutions where ethnic solidarity and trust are (re)affirmed and maintained by immigrants (Pécoud 2000). Scholars suggest that ethnic social organizations are a powerful means for generating social capital especially for building networks with co-ethnics (Putnam 1995; Bankston and Zhou 1995, 1996). The strengthening of collective ethnic identities through ethnic organizations enables ethnic members to tackle discrimination and mobilize 'ethnicity' for economic benefits (Zhou 1997). Instead of relying on mainstream institutions, ethnic minorities often turn to ethnic institutions to gather information and build up networks for business growth (Fadahunsi et al. 2000).

Nonetheless, research insists that ethnic minorities who access financial capital through family ties are less likely to draw on ethnic institutions and networks for establishing and operating businesses (Sanders and Nee 1996; 2001). Sanders and Nee (2001: 407) state that minority immigrants “with the lowest stock of family capital rely more on social ties embedded in the ethnic community as a substitute for the social support provided by a family” in their economic integration. Such patterns of support are evident in Bangladeshi women’s varied involvement with ethnic institutions. The majority of non-H-B business operators does not seek help from ethnic institutions and depends on the family for financial and social capital. In contrast, home-based business operators turn to ethnic institutions for support and networking opportunities. These comparative insights elucidate women’s varied embeddedness in the spheres of family and ethnic institutions and the distinct ways they access and mobilize ethnic ties to operate businesses in two different socio-spatial contexts of home and outside the home.

The differences between home-based and non-H-B business operators’ dependence on ethnic institutions indicate that women’s access to help and support from the family may shape their reliance on non-family ethnic institutions. Home-based operators might turn to an ethnic institution due to the limited financial capital provided by family members and their unwillingness to be involved in the businesses. Many home-based business operators access help and support from ethnic institutions especially from SAWRO, an organization located in the Bangladeshi residential concentration nearby the high-rise complexes where home-based business operators live. In addition to accessing employment-related support, women also seek help and advice to start their businesses. Many women started their home-based businesses with the help of SAWRO that promotes home-based work among Bangladeshi women. The key

informant who works in SAWRO describes the organization's initiatives to promote women's home-based businesses:

Munira: SAWRO tries to reach the most isolated women in the community. We want to provide an alternative option of earning for those women who face difficulties to integrate into the mainstream labour market. We assist them to upgrade their skills that they already have, such as sewing, catering, child-care. Through utilizing these skills they will be able to work from home and gain economic independence.

Most home-based business operators received suggestions and advice from SAWRO. They built up networks by meeting other women at the organization's social events. They attended training programs to learn how to start a home-based business. Proximity to the organization also makes it easier for women to participate in its events and programs. For many home-based business operators, SAWRO is an important source of skill development, customers, and networks. The experiences of Sabina, Sumaiya and Parveen illustrate how they received inspiration and support from SAWRO. Sabina operates home-based child care and garment businesses, Sumaiya teaches music and provides child care services from her home and Parveen sells garments from her home. Their involvement with SAWRO significantly influenced their decisions to start home-based businesses. While Parveen has been living in Toronto for nine years, Sabina and Sumaiya are recent immigrants who have been living in Toronto for less than five years. Besides the period of arrival, they differ in terms of educational attainment. Both Sabina and Sumaiya are university educated, whereas Parveen has a high school diploma. These differences suggest that Bangladeshi women who reside in high-rise apartments seek employment-related help from SAWRO regardless of their educational attainment and length of stay in Toronto.

Sabina: I got the flyer in 2010 that there is an organization for Bangladeshi women, then me and another woman came together and we found out that here they started English

conversation class so we decide to join the class. I used to come twice a week to learn English, that is how I met other women here, we used to talk about our lives and spend time after class. Then we had a sewing teacher here, very good person. She encouraged me to take the course. It was helpful cause I was thinking what to do here? Then she gave me the idea of sewing dresses for women. Then there was a fair in the neighbourhood and one woman had a stall of clothing that she sews and women were buying her dresses. So then I thought why I don't start sewing dresses too. That's how it happened.

Sumaiya: ... one day two women came from SAWRO to talk to me. They told me about the organization and requested me to go there and told me that I will get help from the organization. Actually I got most of my students from SAWRO. So after that they helped me to disseminate an advertisement within the neighbourhood and posted on the wall .... I got many kids who now come to my place and I teach them music. Even daughters of SAWRO's staff are learning music from me. Kids come from this neighbourhood ...

Parveen: Some women from SAWRO went to my house to invite me for a cultural program. It was 21<sup>st</sup> February, our language day. So then I went to that program and met her [director]. Then I came to SAWRO and started ESL class. I joined in sewing class and then did customer service training. I think SAWRO is helping women a lot. We get lot of information from here. Women who come here know me and give me sewing orders.

The narratives indicate that women formulate business plans and build-up an initial customer base through the networks they develop at SAWRO. Those who cater started making money by supplying food for SAWRO's social events. Catering gave them a quick income and an immediate solution to their financial difficulties. Morjina explains that her involvement with the organization guarantees that she will get orders to cater food for the social and cultural events organized by SAWRO.

Morjina: I have connection with SAWRO for last 2 years. Once, one woman told me to attend a meeting. So I came to their office and met her [director] and she wanted to know what I do. So I told her that I do catering. Since then she orders food from me when there is a meeting or any event at SAWRO. For a long time I was only one to supply food for SAWRO's events. Still I get orders for food from here.

SAWRO also creates opportunities for these women to celebrate social, cultural and religious events and keep Bangladeshi cultural and religious practices alive in the neighborhood.

Women cook and share food together at picnics where they catch up with stories about their families and relatives. Women established a community garden in the neighborhood to grow vegetables. The engagement with other women at SAWRO helps Bangladeshi women to socialize in the most difficult time after migration. The social ties that develop at SAWRO help women deal with the emotional and psychological issues associated with the loss of close relations and downward social mobility. For example, meeting and talking to other women in SAWRO helped Priya to overcome her isolation and loneliness after migration.

Priya: I always come here if they call me for any purpose. I like to come to SAWRO's office cause I feel like connected to the community. I know I will get help from here if I need. I will get ideas and information from here if I face any problem. Even though I am quite busy still I come here, I feel really good to be here.

Similarly, Sumaiya stresses the importance of having a place where she can come and share her problems and experiences of settling in a new place.

Sumaiya: Oh yeah it is necessary to have contact with other people; that's what happens in SAWRO. Here women learn how to speak English. They share their problems which each other and get lots of information. Women have many problems when they are new in a country. So it helps when you know what others are experiencing and how they solved their problems. We are glad that we have this organization where we can come and talk about these things.

The role that the women attribute to SAWRO highlights how institutionalized community and ethnic ties help Bangladeshi women start home-based businesses (Fenwick 2002). On the flip side, home-based business operators' exclusive dependence on SAWRO - which is within walking distance and has an entirely Bangladeshi staff - for information, training, income generating ideas, forming contacts and social networks suggest that these women rarely go outside the residential concentration for support and advice. As a result, they are not aware of

other assistance. Having easy access to support from an ethnic organization discourages the women from accessing help and information from other mainstream organizations that provide support to set up businesses.

Non-H-B business operators are not involved with SAWRO or any other ethnic institutions. Most mention that they do not have time to participate in activities organized by SAWRO or any other organizations. They emphasize the importance of their families' support in establishing their businesses. In contrast, home-based business operators rely on SAWRO as a substitute for family involvement. They depend on the assistance from the organization to start and operate a business. Regardless of the variations in the help they receive from family and ethnic institutions, both groups of women in many ways rely on 'ethnic specific' resources such as family and ethnic institutions to operate the business.

#### **6.4. Markets and Business Strategies: Home-based businesses**

Bangladeshi women who operate home-based businesses are entirely dependent on co-ethnic ties for help and support and their customer base consists mainly of female neighbours with whom they interact regularly. The potential for profits is limited because of the small scale of their businesses (Apitzsch 2003; Pio 2007). To generate income, women build up and maintain relations with co-ethnic women in the neighbourhood and they collect business related information and customers mostly through these networks. Involvement with SAWRO also encourages women to depend exclusively on other Bangladeshi women. The accounts of these women align with the notion that many immigrant women's business relations build upon social relations with other immigrant women particularly when entrepreneurs have limited access to financial resources (Brush 1992, 2006; Maitra 2013; Anthias et al. 2006; DeWine and Casbolt 1983; Smeltzer and Fann 1989).

Home-based business operators' reliance on co-ethnic female ties demonstrates the interplay among business location, type and market opportunities. The physical setting of the close and dense high-rise buildings where home-based business operators reside and the concentration of Bangladeshis within these buildings provide favourable grounds for these women to mobilize gender and ethnic ties to run their businesses (also see Ghosh 2014). The ethnic and gendered networks they use to operate businesses from home are shaped by the social and spatial characteristics of the Bangladeshi residential concentration (Kloosterman et al. 1999). The overlapping of business and social interactions at home and the proximity to Bangladeshis in the high-rise residential concentration help women mobilize ties with female co-ethnics for business purposes. These circumstances also allow Bangladeshi women in his neighbourhood to take advantage of their social relations with co-ethnic women to create business opportunities. Women mobilize interpersonal relations which are regarded as 'feminine' characteristics strategically to expand their business and generate incomes (Dallalfer 1994; Brush 1992; Mirchandani 1999).

#### **6.4.1. Overlap of Business and Socialization**

Socialization with female neighbours and friends in the home is a common practice among Bangladeshi women in the Bangladeshi neighbourhood in Toronto (Akbar 2009). Some of the home-based business operators describe how they get help and support from neighbors and friends who frequently visit them at home- a phenomenon also evident among Iranian women who operate home-based businesses in Los Angeles (Dallalfer 1994). Najneen provides a glimpse of how her social and business relations with co-ethnic women overlap, creating the opportunity for her to generate an income by sewing children's garments.

Najneen: One of my neighbours gave me the idea. We were having tea at home then she told me dresses are so expensive here. Many women need to modify their dresses to fit in their body, and during any festival like on Eid we wear Bangladeshi dress and kids need dresses too. Yeah so she told me that there is a huge demand for kid's garment here. So then I ask her if she will buy kid's garment from me. She told me she will and her sister has kids too, they may buy. I started making kid's dresses first, not too many just one or two to see if she or any one buy's these. Then 2/3 dresses that I made were sold out in one week. I told this to another *vabi* [a word woman use to mention another woman], when she came [to home], she told me to make dresses for their daughters. So I realized that I will be able to sell kid's dress here [in the neighbourhood].

For Najneen the decision to start a garment business, the collection of information about the demand for garments in the neighborhood and the formation of a customer base all took place by interacting with female neighbours in her home. Gradually she transformed her social relations with female neighbours and friends to money-making contacts that are the basis of the home-based garment business.

Likewise, Selina realized there were opportunities for a successful salon when female visitors from the neighbourhood started asking her to provide haircuts and beauty services. One female neighbour informed her that many Bangladeshi women in the neighbourhood cannot afford to go to a formal beauty parlor. Based on this information she came up with the idea that providing beautification services at reduced prices would allow her to attract more women from the neighbourhood.

Selina: Here my neighbors told me to help out women with beauty related things but I had nothing like appropriate chair for eyebrow threading and to cut hair. Many things need for a salon, special chair, medicine, hair color, combs, and makeups. So then, I was thinking if I invest that much money, if no one comes then? I did not start yet, once one woman came to my place, we were talking and I told her that I know haircut and eyebrow threading. She requested me to do eyebrow threading for her ... Then one day she suddenly came and said I have to go to a dinner party and I need a haircut. So she sat on the sofa and I cut her hair. She gave me 5 dollars, and then I got confidence. I realized these things are expensive here and women in this neighborhood don't have money so they need someone to do it for them in cheaper cost ...

While Selina's experience illustrates the drawbacks of home-based businesses in terms of income generation (discussed later), it also indicates how social relations centered on home yield business opportunities for home-based business operators.

Business transactions and socialization with female friends and neighbors in the home provide opportunities for home-based business operators to share their concerns and worries. This exchange of personal and intimate information generates sympathy and compassion between home-based business operators and their co-ethnic female customers. Since the services and goods are available at bargain prices, co-ethnic female customers continue to purchase them and provide business owners with contacts for their relatives and friends. The support of co-ethnic women inspires home-based business operators and ensures a steady customer base. This is the case for Priya who describes the encouragement and support of female neighbors as the main strength of her home-based catering business. Financial difficulties after migration due to the employment barriers faced by her and her husband and sadness at not having a child escalated her worries and anxieties. In this situation, she started a home-based catering business to generate income. Most of her female customers – with whom she shares her feelings – recommend her catering to their friends and relatives.

Priya: I didn't start catering in the beginning, neighbors used come to my place and they used to praise my cooking. Many said why don't you make snacks for us? We will buy those from you cause you cook so well. You know you can sell these [snacks] in the restaurants? ... my customers don't go to other place for catering. They always order food from me.

In a subtle way for Priya working at home is not only about financial gain but also about overcoming personal stigma and sadness (Brettell and Alstatt 2007; Kontos 2003). The assurance

of emotional support from co-ethnic female customers plays a crucial role in this personal journey.

Home as a business site allows Bangladeshi women to create and mobilize a distinct form of ‘gendered ethnic resource’ in myriad ways to overcome the disadvantages they face due to employment barriers and lack of financial resources. Morjina’s - who provides catering from home- experience mirrors how interpersonal relations among Bangladeshi women result in an expanding customer base and more income opportunities.

Morjina: The young girl, my neighbour, we became friends and she used to come in the evening to talk to me. She cared for me, always asked me if am feeling good, if I had lunch. So I told her about this [her economic difficulties]. She told me don’t worry I will try to help you. One day she came to me and said can you prepare 50 *ruti* and 50 sweets for me? I asked why do you need so much food suddenly, is there any occasion? She said just do it- I will tell you later on. I did that and she came in the next evening and took those from me and the day after she came and gave me 100 dollars. I was surprised I asked her what is going on? She told me she ordered for her friend, for her friend’s sons’ birthday. I felt so grateful. She told me don’t worry I will help you whenever I can.

#### **6.4.2. Proximity and Convenience in the Neighbourhood**

Home-based business operators’ activities are not only dependent on female co-ethnics but also confined within the Bangladeshi neighbourhood and often within a single apartment complex. In this respect, female home-based business operators are typical ethnic entrepreneurs whose intense co-ethnic relations in the enclaves and the significance of these sources of advice, information, and business opportunities are emphasized in several studies (Bankston and Zhou 2002, Koolsterman and Rath 2001, Waldinger 1986).

Geographical proximity promotes social interaction among Bangladeshi immigrants living in the high rise apartments in Toronto (also see Ghosh 2014). The narratives illustrate the interdependence among Bangladeshis in terms of giving and receiving social supports that allow

them to transform Bangladeshi vertical residential concentrations into ‘vertical social spaces’. In the high-rise neighbourhoods, the everyday interactions of Bangladeshis provide opportunities for women to create business networks. Living in the residential concentration allows them to form and expand a co-ethnic customer base, deliver goods and services easily, exercise non-contractual and flexible transactions of money and services and, last but not least, sub-contract other women to help with business tasks.

Most home-based business operators stress convenience in delivering goods and services to co-ethnic women in the neighbourhood. Some home-based operators mention how informal and verbal contracts with Bangladeshi women help them to be flexible in supplying products especially when they have more than one job or multiple businesses. Because of her part-time work in a factory, Sabina who runs a home-based sewing and garment business describes how she often delays delivering dresses. However, amicable relations with the Bangladeshi women in the neighborhood help her to negotiate such delays which she believes would not be possible with women from other ethnic backgrounds.

Sabina: Here women order dresses when there is any festival coming or if they have any invitation or party to attend. So they do not put pressure to finish dresses. It is all right if I delay with them but I can't do it with other women ... No I did not provide any advertisement I get enough orders now, I hardly manage. I also work [in a factory]. So I have time to sew dresses only on weekends.

Home-based business operators' emphasis on shared ethnicity and flexibility in business activities reveals a link between ethnic solidarity and the emergence of home-based enclave businesses (Rafiq 1992; Werbner 1990; Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993). A few women highlight the consideration and co-operation that they receive from Bangladeshi neighbours, without which they could not carry out business tasks. For example, Sumaiya who teaches music

on weekends, says that her Bangladeshi neighbours never complain about the noise and that is why she is able to teach music.

Sumaiya: So after coming here, just arrived, didn't know any place, didn't know any people. Then I started teaching music ... my place is in 8<sup>th</sup> floor in the right corner so the noise is not that high. Neighbors never complain about the noise. They are Bangladeshis, that's why they understand why I am teaching music. I am really thankful cause if they complain I have to stop teaching music.

The convenience of home-based business activities and the co-operation of co-ethnic female customers in the neighborhood often engender mutual benefits and financial gains. In addition to deriving financial benefits from existing social relations with co-ethnic women, some home-based business operators strategically utilize their social relations with other women to expand their customer base and create business opportunities (Basu and Altinay 2001; Janjuha-Jivraj 2003; Pio 2007). They sometimes nurture close bonds with co-ethnic women by providing free gifts and services which in turn help them to get more customers. Morjina, who operates a home-based catering business, occasionally sews dresses free of charge for the close female friends who helped her to start the business. In turn, as a token of appreciation, her friends recommend her catering service to their relatives and friends and help her to expand the business.

Morjina: I used to sew dresses for free for the girl who helped me in establishing the [catering] business. I didn't take money from her as she helped me so much. Her friends also ordered for dresses and I made dresses for them.

Providing free services as gifts to friends is a strategy for Morjina to generate business opportunities. In the same way, her female friends help her to get customers since they get free sewing services from her. This exchange of gifts and services create a reciprocal relationship between Morjina and her customers.

Mutually beneficial and trusting relations are evident in the ways that home-based business operators, particularly those who provide catering, subcontract to co-ethnic women

when they get a big order. Usually, they hire a female neighbor with whom they have amicable relations which allows them to share the work load and split the income. Nipun describes how she hires other Bangladeshi women from the neighborhood occasionally to help her with cooking because they do not dispute payments from co-ethnics. It is convenient for her to seek help from a Bangladeshi woman and share the income without any formal contracts (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993).

Nipun: Once I hired one woman. She cooked biryani and chicken for me. I feel good about it that I helped her to earn money. I can't hire her all the time but if I have to cook a lot then I will hire her. There are many women here who need work. So it is good if I can help someone. I paid her from my income. Here women don't have any problem about this. We help each other.

Home-based catering business operators often exploit subcontracted co-ethnic woman by sharing income informally. They may hide information about their incomes from the women they hire. Morjina, before starting her own catering business, worked occasionally for another Bangladeshi woman to help her with cooking and preparing snacks. Although Morjina mentioned that she did not have any disputes over money with her employer, she also mentioned that she did not have any idea how much money her employer received for each catering order and how much she spent on for groceries. She trusts that her employer gave her a fair share of her income. For Morjina, trust and convenience are more important than having accurate information about how much money she deserved to receive in exchange for working for the Bangladeshi woman who recruited her.

Morjina: The girl used to take a portion of money which she spent for buying the ingredients and then the rest of money was mine.

Researcher: Are you sure that she only took the cost of ingredients?

Morjina: I don't know exactly. She told me she is taking money only to buy ingredients for me. People used to come to her place to take the snacks. People used to order her through phone. And then she used to inform me what to make and when, then she used to

pay me. I didn't know how much money she used to keep for herself. I trusted her, she is like my daughter so I trust that she did not deceive me.

Because of the trust based on shared ethnicity, intimacy and convenience with co-ethnic female neighbors, the customer base of home-based business operators is confined within the Bangladeshi neighborhood. By being completely dependent on co-ethnic women and ethnic niche markets Bangladeshi women who work in home-based businesses exhibit 'over embeddedness' (Waldinger 1995). For them the socially constructed boundaries of business relations, ethnicity, and Bangladeshi neighborhood overlap.

#### **6.4.3. The Costs and Opportunities of Relying on Co-ethnic Markets**

There are numerous debates about the advantages and limitations of depending on co-ethnic markets. One group of scholars suggest that relying on the patronage of co-ethnic customers creates disadvantages for minority immigrants (Aldrich et al. 1985; Granovetter 1985); others argue that a co-ethnic market is simultaneously nurturing and confining since it initially promotes, but ultimately limits a business owner's ability to expand (Johannisson and Wigren 2006; Beckers and Blumberg 2013; Assudani 2009). How women who operate ethnic businesses rely on a co-ethnic market is discussed rarely. The narratives of home-based business operators reveal that a co-ethnic clientele sustains their businesses, however, in many cases, these home-based business operators sell their products/services cheaply which reduces their incomes especially in light of the hours of work they devote to their businesses. From this vantage point, the women are trapped in a constrained market within the neighbourhood.

One of the reasons for low economic returns from home based businesses is the need to be affordable for low-income co-ethnic customers. As Barrett et al. (2002) suggest, ethnic groups often depend on co-ethnic entrepreneurs due to their financial difficulties. Informal transactions with co-ethnic entrepreneurs allow co-ethnics to reduce the cost of services/goods. This trend is

evident in the narratives of home-based business operators. Relying on a co-ethnic female-based market within the neighborhood generates little income for Selina who offers home-based beauty services. Many Bangladeshi women in the residential concentration cannot afford to go to a beauty parlor to have their hair cut, for eyebrow threading and other aesthetic services. Their financial difficulties have created a huge demand for Selina's home-based salon at the expense of her profits. Providing beauty services at prices that are often less than half of the prices in salons is a precondition for the survival of her business.

Selina: You know, no women here in this neighbourhood go to parlor to do eyebrow because they don't want to spend 5 dollars only for eyebrow threading. I do eyebrow for 2 dollars. It is 5 dollars in outside parlors. I take 5 dollars for haircut. It is 10/15 in other places. Even then, women here don't want to pay that...they request me to take less! There is no loss for me though because I do it for cheaper price. That is why more women come to me. They don't go to outside parlors. When there they attend a party and wedding, they come to me.

Other home-based business operators tell similar stories. Some state that there is a demand for their specialized products/services in the neighborhood because they offer lower prices than other stores and enterprises. Nipun emphasizes her special knowledge of baking which most Bangladeshi women in the neighborhood do not possess. As a result, there is always demand for her cakes and pastries at social and religious events in the neighborhood. However, she has to sell her cakes at lower prices.

Nipun: I make cake and pastries, I learned baking. Many women here do not know how to make cakes. So I got orders for birthdays and wedding but people here do not pay much. They pay me less but my cakes are tastier than outside cakes.

Home-based business operators possess little power when bargaining with co-ethnic female customers. Overlapping social and business relations and confinement of their markets within the residential concentration offer business opportunities, and also restrict the opportunities to increase sales and generate profits.

Despite limited opportunities to generate income, for some home-based business operators, particularly those who operate businesses such as child-care and catering that are not legally permitted without proper training and documentation, confinement in the neighbourhood is often desirable. Women prefer to be 'out of sight' from the government agencies that monitor illegal business activities in the residential areas (Bennett and Robson 2003; Dwelly et al. 2006), even though their locations force them to lower their prices. Mira for example, does not advertise her home-based child cares service even though publicity would help her earn more money. Lacking the required training and licensing, she does not advertise her business outside the neighborhood. This situation makes her dependent on co-ethnic women whom she can trust.

Mira: Without certificate I can't earn much from child care. In other areas people get 8 dollars for hour for looking after a child and here in this neighbourhood we get only 3/4 dollars. What is now happening is people here like underground activities. So they don't want to pay even 4 dollars per hour for child care. In government regulatory process, government will give me babies and will pay me. So I won't be paid by the parents. So it is important that I get babies from other areas but I have to wait for completing the course and get the certificate to get govt. designated price. Until then I have to do it for lower price.

Mira's experience underscores the relevance of mixed embeddedness theory that emphasizes how institutional and regulatory structures in the country of settlement shape the characteristics of ethnic businesses (Kloosterman et al. 1999). It appears that dependency on ethnic ties results, in part, from the Canadian legal and regulatory systems that prohibit and regulate many commercial activities within residential dwellings. A key informant (Saroj) describes how many of the home-based commercial activities such as child-care and catering are subject to legal restrictions and additional tax. In this context, the survival of home-based businesses is dependent on co-ethnic ties and solidarity and co-operation from neighbours.

Saroj: There are many activities such as home-based businesses are taking place in the neighbourhood which are not safe. There are safety rules for child care and catering. People here do these things to survive but they should also be careful about the existing laws. That's why many people who run businesses at home do not tell outsiders about their business. If they have a business at home they have to pay tax and have insurance etc. So they keep this as a secret in the neighbourhood.

For some of the home-based business operators, being invisible from any outside gaze is essential to evade taxes, and health and safety laws. Co-ethnic ties also allow home-based business operators to take advantage of the spatial proximity of co-ethnic women, ensure convenience in businesses transactions, and help some of them evade regulation. The institutional and regulatory structures - which are not much emphasized in interactional theory, play crucial roles in creating and/or limiting business opportunities for some home-based business operators.

As described earlier, Bangladeshi women enter into home-based businesses due to low family income and financial difficulties in Toronto. Their business activities are shaped by gender and ethnic ties and relationships and the socio-spatial contexts of the high-rise apartment complexes in the Bangladeshi neighbourhood (Kloosterman 2010; Waldinger et al. 1990). Deriving a straightforward assessment about the negative and positive impacts of their dependence on co-ethnic networks and markets is challenging, since the pros and cons are shaped by the individual social, financial and business context of each woman. Supporting Dallafer (1994), I suggest that women's ability to generate income opportunities by mobilizing social and personal ties needs to be recognized as a valuable business strategy. With this note, I now turn to non-H-B businesses which provide a different perspective on Bangladeshi women's entrepreneurship.

## **6.5. Business Strategies and Accessing Markets: Non-H-B Businesses**

Bangladeshi immigrant women that operated non-H-B businesses are embedded in different socio-spatial and market contexts than home-based businesses. Unlike home-based business operators, non-H-B business operators advertise their businesses and make efforts to extend the customer base beyond the neighborhood. Reaching a wider market and diverse customers is essential for the survival of non-H-B formal businesses. Most women advertise their businesses in the daily and weekly Bengali and English newspapers. In addition, most have business cards to distribute to customers.

Although most non-H-B business operators share similar views about increasing their customers and disseminating information about their businesses through multiple ways, they target diverse customers. Their businesses are not always dependent on ethnic niche markets. The mobilization of ethnic ties for help, support and building customer base varies depending on the business type. Operators of restaurants depend on Bangladeshi customers, while, women who have beauty parlors and clothing businesses rely predominantly on non-Bangladeshi customers. Their dependence on diverse consumers from within and outside the neighbourhood requires different business strategies than those used by home-based business operators.

Non-H-B business operators have mixed business networks in terms of both gender and ethnicity. Bangladeshi women who operate non-H-B businesses defy the ‘conventional notions’ of female-operated businesses that are so noticeable in the experiences of home-based business operators. Their business locations, business types, and the desire to make profits to sustain the business influence non-H-B business operators to deploy varied strategies and take advantage of different and distinct consumer markets.

### **6.5.1. Orientation towards Non-co-ethnic Markets: Clothing and Beauty Parlor Businesses**

Scholars have recently begun to acknowledge that though most enclave businesses are embedded in co-ethnic markets, some business operators are not so dependent on ethnic ties and co-ethnic consumers (Lo 2009b; Rath 2002; Light et al. 1993; Pécoud 2004, 2010). Rather they target non-ethnic markets as a business strategy to have competitive advantages over similar businesses in the same locality (Assudani 2009; Min 1988). In most cases breaking out from co-ethnic consumers and reaching a wider market is essential for business expansion (Bates 1994; Aguilera 2009; Mulholland 1997).

Only a handful of studies discuss minority women who operate non-H-B businesses (Schrover et al. 2007; Anthias 2007). For example, Turkish women in Germany depend on a German clientele (Hillman 1999) and Moroccan and Turkish women in the Netherlands (Essers and Benschop 2009) mainly target non-ethnic markets to access business opportunities. These studies document how Moroccan and Turkish women adopt dynamic business strategies by crossing the socially constructed boundaries of their ethnic and religious identities to attract consumers who are not co-ethnics. A similar trend is observed among Bangladeshi women who operate clothing and beauty parlor businesses in Toronto. Because of the limited business opportunities in the co-ethnic market, they build a customer base primarily comprised of non-Bangladeshis. Reliance on ‘weak ties’<sup>74</sup> - a term used to refer to non-co-ethnic networks (Granovetter 1983) - reduces their dependence on ethnic networks as sources of business opportunities (Assudani 2009; Mulholland 1997).

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<sup>74</sup> Acquaintances who are less likely to be socially involved like close friends (Granovetter 1983: 201)

Operators of clothing businesses mentioned that they do not keep Bangladeshi traditional attire in their stores because there is little demand for these clothes among the Bangladeshis in the neighbourhood. Laili describes how she used to keep traditional dresses (*shari, kamij, urna*) for Bangladeshi women when she started the business but when she noticed that there is no demand for these items, she changed her strategy and started selling western styles for men and women. This decision helped her to survive since a large number of non-Bangladeshi customers come to her store to buy clothing. As Laili describes, the impoverished economic circumstances of Bangladeshi women do not allow them to spend extra money to buy clothing from neighbourhood stores. They buy clothing when they visit Bangladesh or buy clothing at cheaper prices from Bangladeshi women who operate home-based garment selling businesses.

Laili: After starting the business, I noticed that mixed people [from other ethnicity] come here to buy dresses. Before I used to keep lot of Bangladeshi dresses, *fotua* but now based on the clients I have changed the dresses. Now I keep more western dresses. Previously, when I went to Bangladesh and bought lot of *deshi* dresses before but I don't bring *deshi* clothing anymore ... if they [Bangladeshi women] need they go to women who sew dresses at home. They sell dresses at cheaper price. They do embroidery and other stiches so women can order dresses according to their tastes. Also you can talk to the woman and show how you do like the dress, provide your body measurement; you can alter, and that is cheaper.

Laili provides a glimpse of how non-H-B clothing businesses have to compete with home-based businesses that provide similar goods/services at a cheaper price. In this context, attracting non-Bangladeshis is crucial for business survival. The market opportunities for the non-H-B clothing business are influenced by home-based clothing business. Bangladeshi women who operate home-based and non-H-B clothing businesses are interrelated. Targeting non-Bangladeshi customers helps non-H-B clothing businesses avoid competition with home-based clothing businesses.

Rupali and Nishat also tried to sell Bangladeshi traditional clothing for women initially but failed to attract customers. Rupali highlights how Bangladeshi customers convert the price of clothing from dollars to *taka* (Bangladeshi currency) and complain that the price of clothing is high. She states that Bangladeshis rarely understand that she has to pay the rent for the store and tax in dollars not in *taka*. Failing to generate any profit by selling Bangladeshi clothing, she started selling western attire and most of her customers are non-Bangladeshi men and women.

Rupali: I don't sell anything to Bangladeshis. That's why I don't have Bangladeshi items in my store. Bangladeshis don't want to pay even 5 dollars for anything. They always count everything in terms of *Taka* and try to pay less ...

Some of the clothing businesses depend entirely on non-Bangladeshi customers. To attract non-Bangladeshi customers, they sell western clothing at cheaper prices than in bigger stores like Sears and Winners. Nishat describes how the neighbourhood known as 'Bangla town' is home to a significant number of people from different ethnic backgrounds who often prefer to buy clothing from Bangladeshi shops to get cheaper prices.

Nishat: Indians, Pakistanis, Blacks and whites and others, I think they are from the Middle East. Lots of non-Bangladeshis live here. They buy dress, shirt and pant, accessories, suits, shoes, socks like that. Black men like to buy accessories: big rings and pendants, watch ... It is hard to sell Bangladeshi dresses. Bangladeshi women here don't wear summer dresses and western gowns [evening dresses] so there is no market among Bangladeshis for western dresses that I sell.

The majority of Laili's customers are non-Bangladeshis who come from the nearby areas as well as from other Toronto neighbourhoods to buy cheaper clothes. For Nishat and Laili selling clothing and accessories at lower prices than big stores has been a successful business strategy. Access to cheaper clothing encourages non-Bangladeshi customers to come to their stores.

Laili: You saw that a white man and a Pakistani lady just came to my store. They come to my store because they can buy cheaper clothes, same brands that Sears and Winners and

other big stores sell. Some people live close by and when they go to work or go out for a walk in the evening they come to the store and do the shopping too. It is easy for them and why the price is good. Sometimes people come from far away to buy cheaper clothing, when they come they buy a lot ... like last week a woman bought 6 capris, she told me she came from Scarborough just to buy these.

To expand their customer base, women often challenge conventional gender roles (Essers and Benschop 2009; Batnitzky et al. 2008; Raghuram 2008). To increase her income, Shahin provides haircuts and hair coloring services to men and women so she gets a fair number of male customers on a daily basis. Operating a unisex beauty parlor in the neighborhood is quite challenging since Bangladeshi women usually do not provide aesthetic services to men. Bangladeshi social practices emphasize gender separation in work places (Ram et al. 2000; Dhaliwal 1998). The majority of Shahin's customers comprise Bangladeshi and non-Bangladeshi men from different ethnic backgrounds.

Shahin: [Bangladeshi] women don't like to spend money for putting makeup here, they don't attend many parties like before. So I was thinking of how to make sure that my business survives so I planned to include men's hair-cut and hair coloring. See men needs to cut their hair more than women. Men don't keep long hair, they need to cut their hair after one or two months. So men are a good target to have regular income. That's why I cut hair for both men and women ... It is for business I don't care about what others are thinking. People from mixed background come here ... Yes Bangladeshis come but Bangladeshi men come here more to cut hair and color hair. I have Sri Lankan customer, Afghani customer, a few white women also come here.

Including male customers was a strategy for Shahin to compete with other beauty parlors in the neighborhood. Her male and female customer base illustrates how economic interests encouraged her to transcend conventional gender roles regarding the separation of men and women at 'public' business locations.

Bangladeshi women who operate clothing businesses and beauty parlors indicate that the spatial concentration of co-ethnics in the neighbourhood is not always a resource. Sometimes, it

acts as a constraint (Min 1988; Shinnar et al. 2011). Non-Bangladeshis including those who live in and around the Bangladeshi residential concentration comprise their main customer base. Rather than mobilizing ethnic resources these women reach out to non-co-ethnic customers by crossing ethnic and gender boundaries to tap business opportunities.

### **6.5.2. Orientation towards Co-ethnic Customers: Restaurant Business**

In contrast, the restaurants operated by Bangladeshi women are embedded in ethnic markets. These restaurants depend exclusively on Bangladeshi customers from inside and outside the neighborhood. Operators of restaurants highlight the unique nature of Bangladeshi cuisine as the reason that their businesses succeed. The demand for traditional cuisine among Bangladeshis, especially for events such as weddings, birthday parties and Eid parties, enables these women to operate profitable businesses by selling ‘traditional’ cuisine.

Studying Bangladeshi restaurants in Bangla Town, Tanjeem (2012) shows how restaurants produce a supposedly authentic Bangladeshi identity through the taste and smell of food. Drawing on Brah’s (1996) notion of place feticism, she found that “restaurants intentionally create a symbolic space resembling a certain kind of authentic ‘home’ for customers” by serving food that Bangladeshis eat in the home in Bangladesh and in this way restaurant owners fetishize the physical site of the restaurant by constructing authentic Bangladeshi food that had been eaten at home in Bangladesh. Given that fast food is a common component of daily meals among Bangladeshis in urban Bangladesh, Tanjeem argues that the notion of authentic food endorsed by Bangladeshi restaurants is an imaginary concept. However, the notion of the authentic taste of food is appealing to Bangladeshis in Toronto. The importance of authentic Bangladeshi cuisine to an ‘ethnic market’ is evident in the narratives of restaurant

operators (Palmer 1984). Serving traditional Bengali food is the most effective path to economic success for restaurants as Nupur stresses.

Nupur: I had a few common items from the beginning like rice, fish, *vaji* [fried vegetables], *dal* [lentil], I had dried fish from the beginning as it is hard to cook this at home...it smells, and often children don't like the smell. Sometimes people in the neighbourhood complain about the smell of dried fish. So women cannot cook dried fish even if they want to. I thought about these seriously. So I had dried fish in my restaurant from the beginning. Then with time I started adding new items ... like once a boy told me why don't you cook *vuri* [intestine of cow]?. We used to eat this back home it was so tasty. I said ok, I thought no one would want to eat *vuri*. Then I cooked it once but everybody liked it and now customers ask for it. Then I had the idea of having *pitha* [pan cake], exactly the way it tastes at home. Customer will say we had like home type food, real Bangladeshi food, not like Indian or Pakistani food.

Nupur describes how she figured out various means to preserve the unique taste of traditional food which is the secret of her success in running a restaurant. She mentions adding specific items to the menu according to the requests of customers and because Bangladeshis cannot cook at their home because of the smell (i.e.; dried fish) as effective strategies to attract customers. Selling sweets and snacks prepared by Bangladeshi women in their homes in the restaurant is another strategy Nupur adopted to create the notion that she serves home-made food to the customers. Nupur's comments reveal how 'place' shapes Bangladeshi identity in Toronto. Bangladeshi restaurants reproduce 'home' in 'public' places by emphasizing the authenticity of 'home-made food prepared by women' as a marker of Bangladeshi identity.

Serving 'traditional' and authentic Bangladeshi food is central to the success of Bangladeshi restaurant business. Rebeka's experience illustrates how serving traditional cuisine is essential for restaurants to survive in the Bangladeshi neighbourhood. Her restaurant suffered a loss because of the Chinese food on the menu. She thought since all the restaurants in the neighbourhood provide traditional food, if she served Chinese food then she would attract more

customers. However, the strategy did not work, so she changed the name of the restaurant from English to a Bengali name and started serving Bangladeshi cuisine.

Rebeka: No, people here do not like Chinese food. I thought people here want to taste something different than Bangladeshi food. But I realized people come here to have *deshi* food. For Chinese food they will go to downtown. Any Bangladeshi who come to Toronto, come here to have spicy food, fish and biryani. So we are starting the restaurant in a new style. We will change the name of the restaurant as well. We are renovating this place and will change our food menu. We haven't decided the new name so we still have the old name plate yet. I am thinking of a Bangla name.

Her experience illustrates how restaurants serving traditional food in the neighbourhood have more potential to survive. Bangladeshis from all over Toronto as well as those who come to visit Toronto from other cities come to this neighbourhood to have traditional food.

Since the majority of Bangladeshi immigrants (70%) reside outside Bangla Town, dispersed across the Toronto CMA, the survival of Bangladeshi restaurants located in the Bangladeshi concentration often depends on attracting co-ethnic customers from outside the concentration. In addition to enjoying 'traditional' cuisine, Bangladeshis from different areas in Toronto come to the restaurants to spend time with family and friends. Bangladeshi restaurants in the neighbourhood have become places for socialization where Bangladeshis gather and discuss local and national issues and catch up with gossip in their mother tongue. Restaurant operators play Bangladeshi news and movies on TV which also regenerates the sense of 'Bangladeshiness' in the restaurants.

Nupur describes the cultural significance of Bangladeshis gathering over snacks and tea in the restaurants. By providing an outlet for socialization, restaurant operators facilitate socialization and retention of cultural practices (Lo 2009; Kloosterman and Leun 1999; Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993; Smith-Hunter and Boyd 2004).

Nupur: We Bengalis like *adda* [social gathering], we are *addabaj* [fond of socialization] and we love food. There is no source of entertainment here for Bangladeshis here. So eventually people come to the restaurants and spend time with family and friends. They have tea, snacks and discussions like *deshi* style ... yes you feel good and you feel connected to the culture because all the time you study or work and do not get opportunity to enjoy your own food and culture, speak in your own language. So that's why restaurants are good place to socialize.

While the restaurants nurture 'Bangladeshiness', they also exhibit the intersections of ethnicity and religion. Since serving *halal* meat is essential to attract the majority of Bangladeshis who are Muslims, women put signboards in the front of their restaurants to advertise that they serve *halal* food. They also strategically place signboards stating the availability of vegetarian food to include non-Muslim Bangladeshis. Ethnicity and religious identities intersect around food and socialization. By adopting a comprehensive strategy to include Muslim and non-Muslim Bangladeshis, restaurant operators maximize business opportunities. Within the physical space of these restaurants a situated practice of 'ethnic solidarity' and in-group belongingness - across ethnicity and religion - transpires which in turn support the emergence and growth of the restaurant business operated by Bangladeshi women.

Rebeka: We keep all kinds of meat, beef, goat and chicken and duck, not for any particular religious groups ... Hindu or people from other religions backgrounds can come and enjoy food. We also cater food for different religious festivals, Bengali New Year, Eid and Birthdays.

Nupur: The head chef of my restaurant is a Hindu man from Kolkata, so he knows how to cook vegetables and goat in Hindu style. This is good about him that he cooks perfectly for both Muslim and Hindu Bangladeshis. I want all Bangladeshis, Hindu or others to come to my restaurant. I feel happy when I see families with children enjoying food and spending time in my restaurant.

### 6.5.3. Professionalism and Competitive Advantage

Non-H-B business operators are formal in their transactions with Bangladeshi and non-Bangladeshi customers (Walton-Roberts and Hiebert 1997). Unlike home-based business operators, they do not emphasize the importance of convenience and flexibility in transactions with customers. Business dealings with customers from diverse ethnic backgrounds require that beauty parlor and clothing business operators act professionally and formally. Most women describe how they follow particular rules in dealing with customers and avoid mixing personal and business relations so that the customers cannot bargain to reduce the prices of goods and services.

Jinat: I have to win people's hearts to get customers. Customers come if they are happy with my work and my behaviour. There is no place for friendship in business. Women don't come here for friendship I think women come here because they are satisfied with my work. I have seen in many cases friendship destroys business relations. So it is better to avoid those issues.

Jinat stresses that having friendly relations with customers is helpful but it is essential to keep business and friendship separate. Most women have a fixed price menu and written business policies posted on the wall in the stores so that no one, including Bangladeshi customers, can bargain. They emphasize how their 'experience' dealing with customers taught them to be formal and tactical in business relations if they want to survive in the neighborhood. Laili describes how she tackles conflicts with customers by avoiding their unfair requests and sticking to her business policies which she considers essential for a successful business.

Laili: In my life so many customers fought with me cause I wrote 'no exchange/return only in 7 days' in my store. Often they buy dress and then go to party and use for a few days and come back to return. So I told them that I can't take it back cause there is no tag here and I had the smell of perfume. Then they threw it on my face and I didn't say anything. This is business. So I don't have to take this seriously.

The entrepreneurship literature emphasizes that immigrant women rely on social relations to build up business networks, unlike their male counterparts who depend on instrumental business networks and keep social and business relations separate (Smeltzer and Fann 1989; Brush 1992). The overlapping of social and business relations is most often identified as a major factor behind the low economic returns from ethnic businesses operated by women (Dhaliwal 1998). This research reveals that unlike home-based business operators, non-H-B business operators distinguish between business and social relations. Even though they interact with customers at the business site, they do not consider these interactions part of their social activities. Rather, most state that they do not have much time to socialize with friends and relatives as they spend most of the day in the store. Shahin describes her work schedule from morning till evening to emphasize that managing a business does not allow her to have any social life. Though she knows most of her customers for a long time she does not refer to them as 'friends'.

Shahin: I come at 8 or 8:30 am. I work till 9 pm, often till 10 pm. Morning hours are not that busy. People start coming to the store around 3 pm. I spend the whole day here so I have no idea what is happening outside! I do not have any social life ... It is not good to become too close to the customers. They may expect things I cannot offer them. It is a fixed price parlor. So even a friend come as a customer then she is a customer here not a friend. Sometimes, people gossip about each other and then *jhogra* [arguments] starts. It is normal that I know many customers who come here regularly but I keep a distance, yes I talk to them cause I am talkative.

For Shahin it is crucial to draw a line between business and social relations to avoid misunderstandings particularly when customers have unreasonable expectations about the prices of beauty services.

Serving co-ethnic customers requires restaurant operators to build amicable relations with co-ethnics (Aldrich et al. 1989; Aldrich and Waldinger 1990). Hence, they do not reduce the

prices of their goods and services as a favor to any customers. Making a profit is crucial for the survival of the business. Nupur provides a glimpse of how difficult it is for businesses in the neighborhood to survive. She notes that a few restaurants in the area have shut down in last five years. One of the reasons for the loss is selling food at cheaper prices to attract co-ethnic customers. However, the strategy did not work, since the operators of those restaurants could not generate enough profit to pay their costs. These insights encouraged Nupur to sell Bangladeshi cuisine at fixed prices to all customers regardless of their ethnic backgrounds.

Nupur: The price of food is fixed for everyone. I don't sell things in low price cause I don't want to experience loss in business and sell the restaurant like others. ... They [other restaurants] could not continue, many restaurants have closed down because of loss. They sell things in lower price to attract customers but they don't think about rent of the store, salary of employees. If I sell biryani for 5 dollars they sell for 3 dollars. They think that they are taking customers away from me. But customers also compare quality of food. Customers come back to my place after a few weeks. I know what my customers want. Customers want quality. I provide quality food so that they don't feel that they waste money.

Nupur circuitously describes how other restaurant owners compete with her to draw customers indicating the rivalry and competitive relations among business operators in the neighbourhood.

Non-H-B business operators valorize profit generation and the survival of the business which require them to reach larger and diverse consumer markets. The embeddedness of those who operate clothing and beauty parlor businesses in non-ethnic markets and those who operate restaurants in ethnic markets indicate how their customer base and business strategies are linked to their business sector. Although the markets of various non-H-B businesses vary, operators hold similar notions regarding transactions with customers. They separate personal and business relations as a strategy for profit generation. Unlike home-based business operators their business relations with customers are 'instrumental' since they consciously construct a boundary between business and social relations. Women's instrumental business networks are almost never

discussed in the literature (Brush 1992; Verheul et al. 2002). The homogenous representation of women's business networks does not recognize women's ability to tap into non-social, instrumental business networks. Bangladesh women's non-H-B businesses activities problematize the gender-based social/instrumental binary. Their insistence on a separation between business and social relations indicates that business type and business location influence women's social networks and their attitudes about co-ethnic customers. The location of ethnic businesses is an important factor in shaping Bangladeshi immigrant women's entrepreneurial experiences.

#### **6.5.4. Recruitment of Employees in Non-H-B Businesses**

Contrary to most studies suggesting that ethnic entrepreneurs prefer to employ co-ethnic employees for convenience in communication and supervision, Bangladeshi women operating non-H-B businesses exhibit a different approach when recruiting employees (Ram et al. 2001; Phizacklea 1990; Virdee 2006; Basu and Goswami 1999; Waldinger et al., 1990). In most cases they prefer to hire employees who are not Bangladeshis. Most business operators were uneasy about the work ethic of co-ethnic employees and recruited non-Bangladeshis as employees. Some of the women mention that Bangladeshi employees lack enthusiasm and sincerity in carrying out business activities.

Shahin explains how she previously was disappointed after employing a Bangladeshi woman who did not have any training in aesthetics. Shahin recruited her and provided her with an opportunity to learn aesthetic techniques and how to communicate with customers. According to Shahin, the employee was not sincere in learning the required tasks which was affecting the business. Eventually, she recruited Eastern European and Sri Lankan women instead of Bangladeshi women as her employees.

Shahin: I have one assistant from East Europe and another from Sri Lanka. With Bangladeshis, it is not easy to train them. The problem is Bangladeshi women who come to work here when they can't find any other job. They think they will get another job quickly, so they don't pay attention. They keep their face gloomy, people here don't like that. Customers like to talk to us about different things, laugh and share their life stories. So we need to stay lively and talk to them. We need to understand one's personality, how she is what she likes. What she does, housewife or student. Bangladeshi women don't show interest.

Shahin stresses that since most Bangladeshi women take employment in the neighborhood to survive while they look for better jobs, they do not pay sufficient attention to their jobs. The lack of enthusiasm of Bangladeshi employees was also mentioned by Laili. She does not have any regular employees but occasionally used to recruit a Bangladeshi woman to work in the clothing store when she went away from Toronto for more than a week. She was dissatisfied by her employee's lack of effort and interest in selling clothing in her absence.

Laili: Every year in December, I usually go to Disney Land, I got a condo there. So I take my kids for vacation there during Christmas, once a year. Then I keep a lady in the store but customers don't want to buy anything from her. She doesn't make any effort to sell clothing. After coming back I noticed that she did not even move a single thing in the store. I don't know what she did all the time. I didn't ask cause she will get offended.

Though women who run restaurants hired Bangladeshi employees, they often have disputes with them over tasks and responsibilities. Aligning with the study of Asian restaurants in the UK conducted by Ram et al. (2001), women who run restaurants mention how it is often tough to manage and supervise co-ethnic employees. Nupur describes how supervising a Bangladeshi male chef was difficult for her and how she had to hire an Indian man in his place.

Nupur: Cause I had a bad experience with someone. I hired someone; he was a chef in London. He used to think he knows everything about cooking, more than me. If I provided instructions, he used to say I have experience for a long time. I know how to do it. He could not understand what I want, what type of taste ... I was happy to find this boy from India. He did not know how to cook korma or other Bengali dishes. Then I taught him everything. He is still working here.

Non-H-B business operators share similar opinions about difficulties in dealing with co-ethnics as employees in the business. In this respect, they do not mobilize ethnic ties in conducting business as much as home-based business operators. Non-H-B operators' lack of reliance on co-ethnic employees contradicts the interactional theory that highlights ethnic solidarity to describe co-ethnic employer and employee relations as a crucial component for the functioning of ethnic businesses (Light 2004; Zhou 2004; Bonacich and Modell 1980).

Non-H-B business operators claim that they pay the minimum wage to their employees regardless of their ethnic backgrounds. However, a few home-based business operators suggest that most Bangladeshi employers in the neighborhood pay much less than the minimum wage. Priya who works part-time in a Bangladeshi restaurant explains how the owner of the restaurant pays her less because she walks to the workplace and does not have to spend her income on transportation. Another home-based business operator, Parveen states that she is not interested in working for Bangladeshi employers as they make co-ethnic employees work long hours and pay them less than minimum wage. Instead, she is looking for a better paid job.

Priya: Bangladeshis don't want to pay enough ... Bengali restaurants pay you less than other restaurants. They pay 7/8 dollars per hour, cause we are within the community, they think you don't have to pay for transportation; you can walk to your work place that's why may be, wage is very low in Bangladeshi businesses.

Parveen: No the wage is too low here, I am looking for employment outside. If I work for any Bangladeshi employer, I have to work 10 -12 hours a day and I will get 6/7 dollars per hour. It is better to work 8 hours outside for 10/11 dollars per hour.

The conflicts between co-ethnic employers and employees regarding wages, workload and work ethics in the ethnic enclaves are often glossed over in the literature that emphasizes their bounded solidarity (Ram et al. 2001). The contradictory opinions of Bangladeshi women indicate

that the relations between co-ethnic employers and employees are far more complex than most studies suggest. Non-H-B business operator's dissatisfaction with co-ethnic employees and their tendency to hire non-Bangladeshis as employees challenge the notion that businesses operated by ethnic minority women in the enclaves benefit from female-based ethnic ties. The ways in which non-H-B business operators accomplish business goals are shaped by their varied ethnic social capital. The variations among non-H-B business operators in terms of accessing customers and their reluctance to employ co-ethnic employees provide new insights into the relationships among gender, ethnic strategies and resource mobilization that are often overlooked in major theories of entrepreneurship (Aldrich and Waldinger 1990:130). The resource mobilization of Bangladeshi women who work in non-H-B formal businesses in the Bangladeshi neighbourhood in Toronto is not homogenous. Women who operate clothing and beauty parlor businesses are not embedded in ethnic ties. Rather, these ethnic businesses depend on a non-co-ethnic market base.

## **6.6. Conclusions**

Applying a gender perspective to the interactional approach of Aldrich and Waldinger (1990), I have discussed home and non-home based business operators' embeddedness in family and ethnic institutions, their business contexts and strategies, and consumer markets. The juxtaposition of home and non-home based business operators' embeddedness provides valuable insights into the interplay of diverse socio-economic and spatial factors in shaping their mobilization of ethnic ties and networks and dependence on diverse markets.

Women's narratives indicate that, while non-H-B business operators primarily depend on family resources - financial capital and help and support of husbands/other family members - to operate their businesses, home-based-business operators, lacking financial capital and family

involvement, mostly rely for help and support on an ethnic institution - SAWRO – that is located in the neighbourhood. These trends illustrate the notion proposed by Sanders and Nee (1996, 2000) that without family capital, immigrants rely on social ties embedded in the ethnic community to replace family resources.

The social meanings attached to domestic work and the locations of the businesses in the home restrict home-based business operators' access to family support. In contrast, non-H-B business operators seek support from family members particularly from husbands. Since the tasks women do for pay in home-based businesses such as cooking, child care, sewing - complement women's unpaid household work, their husbands are reluctant to be involved in the businesses. Women (not men) are viewed as the people obliged to do paid and un-paid social reproductive work in the home. On the other hand, their ability to expand family businesses and increase the family income through working in a male dominated business sphere makes non-H-B business operators important economic contributors in the family and paves the ways for women to access husband's support. Confirming the findings from other feminist research (Pratt 1998; Anthias and Mehta 2003), the experiences of Bangladeshi women demonstrate how the conventional private/public binary persists in the ways that women's paid work is constructed in Bangladeshi families in Toronto.

The income potential, business types and locations of the businesses influence the two groups of business operators to target two different consumer markets. Residing in high-rise apartment complexes, home-based business operators establish co-ethnic networks and target co-ethnics by taking advantage of their proximity to and interactions with co-ethnic women living in the neighbourhood. Like other groups of immigrant women who operate home-base businesses - Iranian women in Los Angeles (Dallafar 1994) and South Asian women in Toronto (Maitra

2013) - Bangladeshi women strategically mobilize gender- and ethnic-based relations to create a co-ethnic female consumer base. Although this strategy confines them to a constrained market with limited income opportunities, it also enables them to generate a survival income in the absence of any other income sources.

Bangladeshi women who operate non-H-B businesses on the other hand, target consumer markets comprising Bangladeshi and non-Bangladeshi customers from inside and outside the neighbourhood. Like Turkish and Moroccan female entrepreneurs in the Netherlands (Essers and Benschop 2009) and Turkish women in Germany (Hillman 1999), Bangladeshi women who operate clothing and beauty parlor businesses primarily target consumer markets that are not co-ethnic. Restaurants serving authentic Bangladeshi cuisine- highly craved by Bangladeshis in Toronto – tap business opportunities by establishing a co-ethnic consumer base that includes Bangladeshis from outside and inside the neighbourhood.

Home and non-H-B business operators adopt contrasting business strategies to achieve the same goal – income generating opportunities. While home-based business operators endorse social relations with co-ethnic customers to sell their goods and services, non-H-B business operators avoid establishing social relations with their customers to circumvent bargaining and price reductions. Unlike home-based business operators who subcontract work to co-ethnic women, non-H-B business operators prefer to hire non-Bangladeshi employees.

The embeddedness of home-based business operators in local ethnic networks and markets within the neighborhood, contrasts with the reliance of non-H-B business operators on non-ethnic and ethnic consumers from within and outside the neighbourhood. The findings indicate that these two groups of Bangladeshi women operate their businesses in different socio-

spatial and economic contexts – adopting different business strategies. Their entrepreneurial experiences are not identical. Rather, the embeddedness of their businesses is situated in varied social-spatial, economic and market contexts. Bangladeshi women’s home-based and non-H-B entrepreneurship challenges the homogenous representation of immigrant women and their businesses that dominates the literature.

## **Chapter 7: Conclusions**

### **7.1. Introduction**

This dissertation critically examined the relationships between Bangladeshi Muslim immigrant women's identities and the geographies of their paid and unpaid work in the context of ethnic entrepreneurship. Based on a comparative case study of Bangladeshi women who operate home-based businesses and non-H-B businesses in a Bangladeshi neighbourhood in Toronto, the research illustrated that 'business location' is a crucial factor in shaping Bangladeshi women's experiences and diverse roles in ethnic businesses. The findings revealed that in the face of downward social mobility in Toronto, Bangladeshi women's varied family roles and access to family resources, and their involvement with ethnic organizations lead to different pathways to businesses. I have argued that Bangladeshi women's re-negotiation of gender, class, ethnic, racial and religious identities and place specific experiences at their business sites shape the opportunities and barriers to start and operate ethnic businesses. The social construction of feminized home and masculinized workplace is challenged as well as re-enforced in the ways that two groups of women carry out and strategize their business activities.

This research challenges the assumption that Muslim immigrant women play invisible and secondary roles in ethnic businesses due to patriarchal norms and religious restrictions. Taking on Bangladeshi Muslim women's experiences, the research shows how they contribute to ethnic businesses and how their roles are shaped by differences in their identities and the locational characteristics of their businesses. Comparing home-based and non-H-B business operators, I illustrate the importance of place-based intersectionality in understanding the diverse entrepreneurial experiences of Muslim Bangladeshi immigrant women. The varied experiences of home-based and non-H-B business operators also problematize prominent theories of ethnic

entrepreneurship that sometimes overlook women's roles, contributions and challenges in ethnic businesses. This chapter outlines a summary of research findings that demonstrate how understanding Bangladeshi immigrant women's intersecting identities and their involvement in ethnic businesses requires attention to the socio-spatial specific contexts in which they live and work. I also outline the future directions for research that address the study's limitations.

## **7.2. Summary of Findings**

Grounded in feminist theories that analyze women's identities and gendered social and spatial divisions of labour, this research examined how the locations of racialized immigrant women's productive and reproductive work are conceptualized and understood within the literature on ethnic entrepreneurship (Anthias 2012; Butler 1990; West and Zimmerman 1987; Crenshaw 1989, 1991, 1994; Yuval-Davis 2006, 2008; McDowell 2008; Valentine 2007; Walby 2007; Wright 2013). The research argues that the social construction of home and workplace has significant consequences for women's productive and reproductive work that influence the diverse business experiences and identity negotiation of minority immigrant women. Expanding this argument, I outlined how diversity within Muslim immigrant groups defined by gender, class, race, ethnicity and religious beliefs and practices may affect the ways that women participate in ethnic businesses at different locations.

Emphasizing the roles of place in intersectionality, I proposed a comparative study between two groups of Bangladeshi women who work in home-based and non-H-B businesses in a Bangladeshi neighborhood in Toronto. I argued that a place-based intersectional analysis is essential to understand Bangladeshi women's entrepreneurship experiences and the links between their paid and unpaid work.

Three specific research questions were addressed to explore how workplace locations shape Muslim Bangladeshi immigrant women's entrepreneurial experiences in Toronto. The first question investigated the social context in which Muslim Bangladeshi immigrant women become self-employed, the second question examined the factors that influence the characteristics of Bangladeshi women's businesses, and the third question explored how the business strategies of home-based and non-H-B business operators are similar and different.

The study utilized multiple data collection methods that enabled me to investigate how place shapes Bangladeshi women's entrepreneurial experiences in Toronto. The research challenges the quantitative/qualitative dualism in much feminist research by implementing a data triangulation approach that used complementary qualitative and quantitative methods. Information gathered from different sources led to thicker and richer data about Bangladeshi women's identities and their paid and unpaid work. A discussion of the main research findings and their significance for the geographical literature about immigrant women's employment and entrepreneurial activities follows.

### ***The Social Context***

The 2006 census data were analyzed to explore how various social characteristics impact Bangladeshi immigrants' socio-economic integration in the Toronto CMA. The findings describe Bangladeshi immigrants' socio-economic characteristics, labour market experiences and settlement patterns in Toronto which are essential to understand the socio-economic circumstances in which Bangladeshi women participated in ethnic businesses. The analysis expands previous research by Ornstein (2006) and Ghosh (2005) showing how gender, race, ethnicity and visible minority status shape the labour market participation and employment earnings of immigrants in Toronto.

The analysis confirms that Bangladeshi immigrants of both sexes have low incomes despite educational attainment higher than those of white and other visible minority immigrants. Bangladeshi immigrant men and women are concentrated in low-paid and precarious jobs. As a result, compared with white and other visible minority immigrants, home-ownership is relatively low among Bangladeshi immigrants and most live in rental apartments. One third of Bangladeshi immigrants are concentrated in census tracts with median family incomes lower than the Toronto average. The largest Bangladeshi concentration is located in Victoria Park and Danforth area. Although, there is a link between low income and concentration of Bangladeshi immigrants as Ghosh (2005) suggested, enclave residence does not explain why the median family income of all Bangladeshi immigrants, the majority of whom are dispersed across the Toronto CMA, is much lower than the Toronto average. The findings indicate that Bangladeshi immigrants are more likely to work in low paid jobs whether they live inside or outside the Bangladeshi concentration in Toronto.

Among Bangladeshi immigrants in the Toronto CMA, there are substantial differences in labour force participation between men and women. The proportion of women with full-time employment was two times lower than that of their male counterparts. Compared with men, women's unemployment rate was two and a half times higher and their self-employment rate was more than two times lower. Responsibility for unpaid care and household work is also greater for Bangladeshi women than for other immigrant women; the proportions of Bangladeshi women who spent more than fifteen hours on housework and child care were two times higher than those of men. The findings reveal the importance of gender roles in shaping Bangladeshi women's paid work. Bangladeshi women's responsibility for household work and childcare may impact their labour market participation.

The multinomial logistic regression analysis assessed the relative influence of selected factors in shaping Bangladeshi immigrants' employment status. The findings indicate that women are four times more likely to be unemployed than their male counterparts and the probability of Bangladeshi women engaging in self-employment is one half of the probability of Bangladeshi men. The analysis confirms that the likelihood of unemployment increases for Bangladeshi immigrants with less education, though level of education only slightly affects their inclination towards self-employment. Older people aged 45 and above are more likely to be unemployed but they are also more inclined towards self-employment than younger Bangladeshi immigrants. Length of residence in Canada reduces the chances of unemployment for Bangladeshi immigrants and increases the probability of being self-employed. Different cohorts of Bangladeshi immigrants who settled in Toronto at different times have different labour market experiences. Recent immigrants face more challenges to secure employment and self-employment than earlier cohorts. The presence of pre-school aged children that has a significant influence on Bangladeshi immigrants' probability of unemployment has a modest influence on their probability of self-employment. Bangladeshi immigrants who were home-owners are more likely to be self-employed but home ownership does not influence the probability of unemployment. Bangladeshi immigrants who are not members of a low income family are less likely to be unemployed and self-employed. Newly arrived Bangladeshi immigrants are more likely to be unemployed, while older and established Bangladeshi immigrants are more likely to be self-employed in Toronto.

While analysis of the 2006 census data enabled me to describe a wide range of general trends regarding Bangladeshi immigrant women's labour market integration, it provided limited information about their engagement in entrepreneurship. The census identifies self-employed

persons as those who own and operate formal businesses that are often registered officially. Previous studies show that immigrant and ethnic minority women often work in family businesses owned by their husbands or other family members and in most cases they are not documented as owners and co-owners (Dallalfer 1994; Dhaliwal 2000). The involvement of couples and siblings in family businesses makes it difficult to identify female operated businesses (Carter et al. 2015). Bangladeshi immigrant women who worked in family businesses but did not report their activities were excluded from the census analysis.

Informal entrepreneurial activities are recognized as a crucial source of income for unemployed and underemployed immigrants in Toronto (Akter et al. 2013). Akter et al. (2013) found a link between the settlement patterns of immigrants and their engagement in informal businesses; recent immigrants who reside within ethnic enclaves turn to informal business activities as a strategy to cope with blocked mobility in the formal labour market. Unemployment and underemployment encourage enclave residents, particularly women, to engage in informal business transactions with co-ethnics who share a common identity. Although a large percentage (41.2%) of Bangladeshi women was outside the labour market in 2005, the absence of data did not allow me to explore Bangladeshi immigrant women's involvement in informal entrepreneurial activities. Many women could be involved in informal income generating activities that are not captured in the data.

Although regression analysis indicates the influence of various social factors on Bangladeshi immigrants' propensity for self-employment, it is not clear whether these factors have similar effects on Bangladeshi men's and women's propensity towards self-employment. Due to data confidentiality it was not possible to disaggregate the analysis of self-employment among Bangladeshi immigrants by gender.

### *Different Pathways to Entrepreneurship*

Comparing the two groups of Bangladeshi Muslim immigrant women, one group operating informal businesses from their homes and the other group operating non-H-B formal businesses in the Bangladeshi neighbourhood near the intersection of Victoria Park and Danforth Avenues in Toronto, the qualitative part of the study examined the social circumstances that shape their different pathways to entrepreneurship. The study compares the resource mobilization and business strategies of home-based and non-H-B business operators. Qualitative analysis captures the subjective experiences of ethnic entrepreneurship, including the coping strategies and negotiations of identities and gender roles from the perspectives of Bangladeshi women.

Intersectionality served as an effective approach for acknowledging how Bangladeshi women's diverse identities and roles in the family shaped their pathways to ethnic businesses. Taking account of their business locations allowed me to identify how the links between their identities and business activities vary across locations. The study shows the connections between Bangladeshi women's identity construction and the geographies of ethnic entrepreneurship.

For the Bangladeshi women in this study, gender roles, class positions, their roles in the family and their identities as Bangladeshi Muslim women are linked to the locations of their businesses. Discrimination in the primary labour market and resulting financial difficulties are the root causes for starting many women's businesses in Toronto. Most Bangladeshi women in this study encountered blocked mobility at two levels since their husbands and other male family members also had difficulty securing permanent employment. Family strategies adopted in response to employment barriers influenced entry into ethnic entrepreneurship. Male family

members' economic integration and the resulting financial situation of the family shaped the ways that these Bangladeshi women looked for paid work and their pathways to entrepreneurship. For the home-based business operators in this study, male family members' entry into low-paid jobs or their enrollment in skill development programs compelled them to take full or partial responsibility for the family's financial survival. Lacking financial resources, some women started home-based informal businesses that require little financial investment. Their home-based businesses are often the only or main source of family income in Toronto. Many of them operate several businesses and take additional part-time employment to generate income. Despite their labour intensive work, these home-based business operators from middle class backgrounds in Bangladesh adopted the life style of working class women in Toronto. In contrast, male family members' involvement with businesses and access to financial resources helped other Bangladeshi women in the study to work in businesses jointly with family members or to establish independent businesses. Located away from home in 'public' spaces, these businesses help the non-H-B business operators and their families secure middle class status.

### ***Influence of Religious Identities and Practices***

Previous studies indicate that Muslim Bangladeshi immigrant women are either invisible or play secondary roles in ethnic businesses due to religious restrictions (Ram et al. 2000). This study demonstrates how a small group of Bangladeshi women interpret their religious identity through the lens of their ethnic identity and cultural practices. The findings reveal diversity in their religious sentiments and spatial practices.

Bangladeshi women in this study relate their religious views and practices to their business activities in varied ways. Creating multiple boundaries, they align and dis-align with

various established Islamic practices to rationalize their business activities. Most Bangladeshi women in this study constructed an ethnicity-based Bangladeshi Muslim identity that challenges the notion of a single global Muslim identity. At the same time, they differentiate between conservative and liberal Muslim views that cut across ethnicity and nationality. The majority of these women agree that there are two parallel religious ideologies relating to women's paid work and their mobility outside the home. While some Bangladeshis support and encourage women's employment, others, endorsing conservative Islamic principles, oppose women's employment and their presence outside the home. In the study, Bangladeshi women constructed a boundary between themselves and Bangladeshis who practice conservative Islam.

Despite identifying with liberal Islam, the women who participated in the study stated contrasting views about the importance of Muslim women's dress code and its relevance to their paid work. While the 'hijab' wearers reject the notion that the 'hijab' implies women's seclusion from the 'public' sphere, most non-wearers who emphasize feminist interpretations of Islam suggest that wearing the 'hijab' is not mandatory for Muslim women. Many of the women indicate that their awareness of physical appearance is connected to their spatial practices. Uniformly, they underscore the importance of women's modest outfits and behavior especially at workplaces where they interact with other people. Many Bangladeshi women in this study, regardless of wearing the 'hijab', construct their embodied identity by re-affirming established Islamic norms that emphasize de-sexualization of women's bodies in 'public' places.

Though Bangladeshis are members of a growing community in Canada, they are generally categorized either as South Asian or as part of the Muslim diaspora. Consequently, Bangladeshis are often lost in the shadow of other South Asian and Muslim groups (Islam 1997). Both of these categories fail to represent the historical and cultural uniqueness of the

Bangladeshi community and the diversities within the community. This research demonstrates the importance of acknowledging the diverse cultural and religious practices in Canada's Muslim immigrant population.

### ***Patterns of Unpaid Household Work***

The narratives of women in this study indicate that a patriarchal division of household labour prevails in most Bangladeshi immigrant households that were studied. These women's entry into home and non-H-B businesses and their earnings do not always lead to a significant change in gender relations with regard to household work. Depending on their class positions and family relations in Toronto, women in this study interpret their domestic roles from various perspectives. Some women perform household responsibilities to be recognized as ideal wives and mothers. Others support the patriarchal authority of their husbands who have lost their previous occupational and social status after migration by taking sole responsibility for household work. This strategy helps some of the women avoid marital conflicts and maintain the image of a 'good wife' within the Bangladeshi community in Toronto. Male family members' downward mobility in Toronto often increases the pressure on many Bangladeshi women to accept domestic responsibilities as well as engage in wage work. Although most women in this study do not explicitly challenge their gender roles in the home, they implicitly challenge traditional gender roles by taking on wage work.

The locations of these Bangladeshi women's entrepreneurial activities also influence the ways they negotiate household labour. The absence of physical and social boundaries between their business and family activities makes it difficult for home-based business operators in this study to juggle business and family responsibilities. Separation of the business site from the home allows some non-H-B business operators to negotiate a more equitable division of

domestic responsibilities. Emphasizing their long hours of work outside the home, this group of women successfully engages their husband and other family members in domestic tasks.

### ***Resource Mobilization***

Identifying the lack of research that examines the embeddedness of immigrant women operated ethnic businesses; the study describes how Bangladeshi women mobilize ethnic and class resources and adopt strategies to create business opportunities. This research provides a gender perspective on the interactional theory of ethnic entrepreneurship (Aldrich and Waldinger 1990) with a specific focus on how women's social positions and characteristics of businesses sites conjointly influence their business strategies and resource mobilization.

In myriad ways both groups of women in this study rely on 'ethnic specific' resources. However, while home-based business operators depend on non-family ethnic networks and institutions, non-H-B business operators depend on family resources: financial capital and male family members' business expertise to start and operate their businesses. Even though family, business and home overlap for home-based business operators, many male family members are reluctant to participate in the businesses. Operating businesses in the domestic sphere which is generally considered to be women's domain of unpaid social reproductive work reduces the importance of some women's business activities for male family members. Lacking financial resources and family involvement, home-based business operators rely heavily on SAWRO – a community based organization located in the Bangladeshi neighbourhood - for help and advice and to build a customer base. SAWRO plays crucial roles in generating social capital especially helping women who operate home-based businesses in the Bangladeshi neighbourhood build networks with co-ethnics.

Unlike home-based business operators, for most Bangladeshi women in this study who operate non-home based businesses, family is the main source of financial resources and emotional support. The contributions of husbands go beyond investing money as they also contribute to business plans and strategies. Male patronage helps some Bangladeshi women start businesses outside their homes. Working in a 'public' space and generating income for the family means the women and their businesses are seen as important economic contributors in the family. For women who work in family businesses, dividing tasks and responsibilities among family members is a strategy to ensure the success of the business and the survival of the family in Toronto. Most women in this study preferred to expand or complement the business operated by male family members by starting a similar or related business. This strategy allowed family members to support each other. The aspiration to achieve economic success and upward social mobility of the family as a collective encourages these women to mobilize family resources and establish and operate businesses outside the home. Family is the main source of social and financial capital for most non-H-B business operators. They do not rely on non-family ethnic institutions for business opportunities.

### ***Business Networks and Market Opportunities***

Comparing the business strategies and market opportunities of home-based and non-H-B business operators, the findings reveal that Bangladeshi women operated home-based businesses are entirely dependent on co-ethnic networks and an 'ethnic protected market'. To generate incomes, these women build up and maintain relations with co-ethnic women in the neighbourhood and they collect business related information and customers mostly through co-ethnic networks. Proximity to Bangladeshis in the high-rise residential concentration provides the opportunity for this group of women to utilize social and interpersonal relations for business

purposes. Involvement with SAWRO also encourages most home-based business operators in this study to exclusively depend on other Bangladeshi women as customers. Although their dependence on co-ethnic customers within the neighbourhood reduces the potential to expand their businesses, women whose businesses are not legally permitted without relevant training and documentation prefer to confine their business activities within the neighbourhood to evade legal restrictions and business tax. The institutional and regulatory systems emphasized in mixed embeddedness theory (Kloosterman et al. 1999) play crucial roles in shaping home-based informal businesses of Bangladeshi women in Toronto. The survival of most home-based businesses depends on co-operation from co-ethnic neighbors and such dependency enforces business operators to offer products and services at low prices.

In contrast, the non-H-B businesses that were studied are not always dependent on co-ethnic customers to reach a wider market. Most women in this study advertise their businesses in the daily and weekly Bengali and English newspapers. The mobilization of ethnic ties for help and support and to build a customer base varies depending on business types. While, restaurants cater to Bangladeshi customers, beauty parlors and clothing businesses predominantly rely on non-Bangladeshi customers. Their business locations, business types, and the requirement to generate profits to sustain the businesses influence non-H-B business operators in this study to target distinct consumer markets. They defy the 'conventional notions' of female-operated businesses as they have business networks that are mixed in terms of gender and ethnicity. Unlike home-based business operators, non-H-B business operators in this study distinguish business and social relations. They do not emphasize convenience and flexibility in transactions with customers, rather, they prefer formal transactions with Bangladeshi and non-Bangladeshi customers to avoid bargaining. This group of women is also less reliant on co-ethnic employees.

Their dissatisfaction with co-ethnic employees contradicts the interactional theory that recognizes ethnic solidarity as a crucial factor for successful ethnic businesses. Business strategies of non-H-B business operators in this study confirm that businesses operated by immigrant ethnic minority women in enclaves are not always dependent on ethnic protected markets, nor are they embedded in co-ethnic female ties.

Analyzing Bangladeshi women's diverse business strategies, the research shows that a gender perspective is essential for understanding the social and spatial processes of ethnic entrepreneurship. The research calls for a closer examination of immigrant women's entrepreneurial activities to capture how their multiple identities and business locations intersect.

### **7.3. Considerations for Future Research**

Research concerning immigrant women in Canada has identified the settlement and labour market challenges facing many immigrant women. This case study of Bangladeshi Muslim immigrant women in Toronto reveals diverse forms of entrepreneurship and the various pathways leading to self-employment. Small in size, the case study illustrates the numerous social processes that affect immigrant women's business activities and business strategies and underscores the important influence of place on entrepreneurship.

While the quantitative analysis provided detailed information about the social and economic context of Bangladeshi immigrant women's businesses, a rich qualitative analysis is central to the study. This qualitative research relies mainly on content analysis of the women's own narratives. To a large extent, I have accepted women's comments at face value. In future research, discourse analysis would add to the insights from content analysis and enable a more critical interpretation of the women's views.

My views as a non-practicing Bangladeshi Muslim immigrant woman completing doctoral studies in Canada shaped this research, affecting the location for participant observation, the recruitment of participants, and the interpretation of the narratives. Since I do not wear any form of Islamic dress, I worked with a community-based organization (SAWRO) instead of a Mosque to conduct participant observation and recruit interview participants in the Bangladeshi neighbourhood. My religious views also led me to emphasize the experiences of moderate Bangladeshi Muslim immigrant women who are less likely to participate in Mosque centered activities. Interpretation is always selective and in this instance, may well downplay the role of the Mosque and conservative Bangladeshi Muslim immigrant women. Comparative research that begins with different institutional partners and explicitly investigates how conservative religious views and practices affect women's entrepreneurial activities is needed to complete our understanding of Muslim women's businesses.

The findings from this case study are not completely statistical, so like all qualitative research findings, they are difficult to generalize. Smith (1990) argues that women's experiences are embedded in social relations of power and structured by institutional practices. In their everyday lives, women affirm, challenge and negotiate social institutions, such as patriarchy and class hierarchies. Drawing on Smith's notion, this qualitative and small-scale study of Bangladeshi Muslim immigrant women illustrates how institutions affect the entrepreneurial experiences of many recent minority immigrant women and the critical influence of place on their struggles with institutional constraints. Paying attention to the institutional contexts such as patriarchal gender relations in the household and racialized barriers in the labour market in which racialized immigrant women negotiate their identities and gender roles through paid and unpaid work has the potential to provide specific understandings of their integration challenges.

This study investigated the socio-economic and labour market contexts in which Bangladeshi immigrant women adopt distinct pathways to start and operate home-based and non-H-B ethnic businesses in Toronto. Comparing Muslim Bangladeshi immigrant women who operate home-based and non-H-B businesses in Toronto, the study emphasizes the interrelationships between place and ethnic entrepreneurship. I argued that considering the locations of work is essential to understand Bangladeshi women's entrepreneurial experiences. However, this study explored in depth the experiences of women in one Bangladeshi neighbourhood. The findings cannot be generalized for all Bangladeshi women who operate businesses in Toronto. There is a need for further study to explore how workplace locations influence entrepreneurial experiences of Bangladeshi women who operate businesses outside the Bangladeshi concentration. Building on the findings of this study, future research may also investigate the intersections of immigrant women's identities at different geographic scales, such as the neighbourhood, city and nation to understand the similarities and differences in their socio-economic integration challenges.

The study found that Bangladeshi women who experience financial difficulties tend to depend on SAWRO for help obtaining paid work. Proximity to SAWRO encourages Bangladeshi women who reside in the high-rise apartment complexes in Victoria Park and Danforth area to seek help from the organization. The research revealed that SAWRO's roles are mostly limited to providing training for precarious jobs and home-based work (for example, child-care, catering and sewing). SAWRO's initiatives enabled a number of Bangladeshi women to engage in survival jobs, poorly paid and insecure work. The value of this training strategy warrants scrutiny since a recent study conducted by the Wellesley Institute showed that most immigrants who engage in informal businesses need multiple income sources to survive in

Toronto and their businesses rarely lead to stable incomes (Akter et al. 2013). In the home-based businesses promoted by many SAWRO programs, Bangladeshi immigrant women have few opportunities to upgrade their English language proficiency and their work experience is undervalued by Canadian employers. Additional research is needed to examine the long term impacts of operating home-based businesses on Bangladeshi immigrant women's economic circumstances.

These research findings raise questions about contemporary Canadian immigration policies that are rooted in a human capital discourse and emphasize a "neo-liberal ideology of the 'self-sufficient citizen'" (Dyck and McLaren 2004: 42; Agnew 1996). Under the 1978 Immigration Act and The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA), 2002, economic class immigrants expected to contribute immediately to the economy are assessed through the point system on the basis of age, education, occupation, work experience and knowledge of the English or French language (Belleau 2003; Dyck and McLaren 2004). Overtly gender neutral, current immigration policy promotes rigid masculine and feminine roles for immigrants that marginalize many immigrant women (Yax-Fraser 2007).

Although women may enter Canada as principal applicants by being awarded points for their education as well as their work experience (Tolley 2003), the majority continue to migrate to Canada under the dependant and family class categories. In 2009, 39% of immigrant women were admitted as spouses and another 29% of immigrant women were admitted under the family class category (Chui 2011). As dependent immigrants, many women "fall outside a human capital discourse that stresses self-sufficiency based on labour market participation ..." (Creese et al. 2008: 271). Focusing exclusively on the labour market potential of economic class immigrants, the existing immigration policy has failed to recognize the ways in which the

majority of immigrant women who arrive in Canada as dependants of male family members make labour market contributions.

The study reveals how a patriarchal social system in Bangladesh that valorizes men's educational attainment, employment status and breadwinner roles encourages male family members to migrate to Canada as principal applicants. Consequently, the majority of Bangladeshi women in this study came to Canada as spouses and dependants of male family members. Their educational qualifications and work experiences were not considered in the immigration process. As dependants of economic class migrants, Bangladeshi women did not expect and were not expected to participate in the labour market and contribute to family income. However, women's expected gender roles in relation to paid work were transformed remarkably after migration. They play crucial roles to help their families overcome financial insecurity in Toronto by operating diverse ethnic businesses. The findings of this study confirm the need for additional consideration of the diverse economic contributions of immigrant women in immigration policies.

#### **7.4. Conclusions**

Feminist theories that conceptualize the relationships between identity, place and work have provided a useful theoretical lens to analyze Muslim Bangladeshi immigrant women's diverse entrepreneurial experiences in Toronto. The case study highlighted how Bangladeshi women's experiences of race and gender-based employment barriers and downward social mobility in Toronto influenced their engagement in home-based and non-H-B businesses. Analyzing the links between Bangladeshi women's reproductive work and business activities in the home and formal workplaces, the study demonstrated that the interrelationships between place and identity are simultaneously dynamic and stable. The analysis began by situating

Bangladeshi immigrant women as a homogenous group relative to other visible minority and non-visible minority immigrants. The findings of the qualitative analysis confirm the diverse gender roles, class positions, and religious practices of Bangladeshi women and the significance of these differences for their entrepreneurial pathways in Toronto. Above all, the case study highlights that the identity constructions and the socio-spatial processes of Bangladeshi immigrant women's integration in Toronto are diverse and context-dependent.

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## Appendix A: Informed Consent Form



### **Study Name: Does Workplace Matter? Identities and Experiences of Bangladeshi Immigrant Women Operating Businesses in Toronto.**

#### **Purpose of the Research:**

The research will investigate gender roles in diverse work places through a case study of self-employed Bangladeshi Muslim women in Toronto. The case study will describe their involvement in paid work, its links to unpaid domestic work, and the impact of paid and unpaid work on women's gender roles and identities. This study will increase our understanding of the settlement experiences of Bangladeshi Muslim women.

#### **What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research:**

If you agree to participate in the research, you will be asked to fill in a brief questionnaire about your migration to Toronto, current family composition and demographic and social characteristics and to answer open-ended interview questions about your involvement in paid and unpaid work in Toronto. The interview will take around 45 minutes and it will be in Bengali. I may also ask to spend 4 or 5 hours at your workplace and observe your activities there.

#### **Risks and Discomforts:**

I do not foresee any risks or discomfort from your participation in the research.

#### **Benefits of the Research and Benefits to You:**

The research will add to our knowledge of the Bangladeshi community in Canada and the settlement challenges facing Bangladeshi women.

#### **Voluntary Participation:**

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer will not influence the ongoing relationship you may have with me or with York University either now, or in the future.

**Withdrawal from the Study:**

You can stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide. If you decide to stop participating, you will still be eligible to receive the promised payment for agreeing to be in the project. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with me, York University, or any other group associated with this project. In the event you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible.

**Confidentiality:**

All information you supply during the research will be held in confidence and unless you specifically indicate your consent, your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research. Your data will be safely stored in my computer. Only my advisor Valerie Preston and I will have access to digital data. After five years, all digital records will be destroyed. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

**Questions about the Research:**

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee; York University’s Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, York Research Tower, York University.

**Legal Rights and Signatures:**

I ....., consent to participate in the study (Constructing Gender in Diverse Work Places: A Case Study of Self-employed Bangladeshi Muslim Women in Toronto) conducted by Marshia Akbar. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Participant

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher

## Appendix B: Announcement to Recruit Research Participants



### **SELF-EMPLOYMENT: WHAT CHALLENGES BANGLADESHI WOMEN FACE IN TORONTO?**

I am a Bangladeshi student doing a PhD in Social Science at York University. I am conducting research to better understand what it has been like for Bangladeshi women to involve in self-employment in Toronto. The research project is for my PhD dissertation.

I look forward to sharing the experiences of Bangladeshi women who have different types of home-based business (catering, child-care, sewing etc.) and who have her own or family business like retail stores, restaurants, electronics, beauty parlor etc. at public places in Toronto. I would also like to talk with Bangladeshi women who are working as real estate agents and with those women who are working in the community based organizations. The purpose is to better understand the problems and limitations that Bangladeshi immigrant women face while trying to establish a source of income through self-employment in Toronto

Participants in the Research Please Note: Your name and identity will be confidential according to the guideline of research ethics of York University. Only your opinions, views, problems and needs regarding your home-based and other types of businesses will be used for research. So don't hesitate to share your knowledge about working in the self-employment sector.

If you are interested in helping with the study, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire during a meeting that will take about 30 minutes. You will also be asked to participate in an interview regarding your experience in starting and managing your own businesses or other forms of self-employment. The interview will take around one hour.

## **Appendix C: Interview Guide for Business Operators**

### **1. Introduction:**

Working in a business in Toronto is often quite challenging especially for immigrants. So-

- A) How did you come up with the idea for this business?
- B) What tasks do you do each day to run the business?
- C) How satisfied are you with the sales and profit coming from the business?

### **2. Characteristics of the Businesses:**

I would like to know more about the business that you are operating:

- A) What services or products do you offer and why did you choose them? How satisfied are you with your current mix of products and services?
- B) Are you working on your own or with other people? How many other people work in your business? Who are these people (i.e.; paid employees or family members who contribute to the business)? Are all of them Bangladeshis? Why did you hire Bangladeshis (i.e.; knowledge of products and services, skills to make products and deliver services, knowledge of language etc.)
- C) Tell me about your customers, are they only Bangladeshis or do they include people from other backgrounds? How do you advertise your business (word of mouth, ads in Bengali newspapers, local newspapers or on Bengali-language radio or TV, flyers at mosque and community centers, flyers delivered to people's doors etc.)

### **3. Work Experience in Bangladesh:**

I would like to know about your life in Bangladesh?

- A) How many family members did you have in your home?
- B) Did you have a job (paid work) outside the home? What kind of job you had?
- C) Did you have anyone to help you with household work?
- D) What kind of work your husband used to do in Bangladesh?
- E) What activities did you do on a typical day?
- F) Did you have any plan to look for paid work after coming to Canada?

### **4. Migration and Settlement Experiences:**

Now I am interested to know about your migration experience.

- A) Why did you decide to migrate to Canada?
- B) Did you come to Canada alone or with your family (husband/children/parents etc.)?
- C) Why did you come to Toronto rather than other Canadian cities?
- D) Do you have any relatives or friends in Toronto? Did they help you find a house here? Was it hard for you to find a suitable house here and why?
- E) Is there any reason to choose this particular neighborhood? Are you happy with the neighborhood environment in general? Do you have any complaint about the neighbourhood?
- F) Did you seek help from any non-government or community based organizations for housing, employment or any other purposes? What kinds of help did you get from

organizations? How satisfied are you with the help that you got from each organization?

### **5. Employment Experiences in Toronto:**

Would you please share your experience in looking for a paid work in Toronto? Like-

- A) Did you look for a job before starting this business?
- B) Do you think it is hard to get a job here and if so, why?
- C) How was the job searching experience for your husband?
- D) Why do you want paid work here?
- E) Why did you prefer self-employment as a source of earning?

### **6. Starting Business in Toronto:**

Starting a business in a new place is always challenging. That is why I would like to talk about your experience in starting this business.

- A) Why did you decide to start this particular business?
- B) Did you participate in any training program related to this business?
- C) How did you obtain necessary information for starting this business? Did you get any help from family, friends, and relatives?
- D) Did you get any help from organizations? Which organizations and how did they help?
- E) How did you finance this business? (Loans from financial institution or organization, money from your family in Toronto, money you and your family brought to Toronto, money from friends in the Bangladeshi community, money from family in Bangladesh or other countries)
- F) What are the major challenges that you faced while starting the business?

### **7. Roles of Women at Places of Work:**

Now would you tell me about your activities in the Business?

#### **Home-based Businesses**

- A) I am curious about why women work from their homes. Some women prefer home-based work to take care of the family and earn money at the same time. What do you think?
- B) Why did you prefer to start a home-based business? What are the benefits of working at home for you? What are the disadvantages?
- C) How do you communicate with customers and get orders? How do you deliver your products/services to the customers?
- D) How much do your family members help you deal with customers (placing orders, delivering orders, advertising etc.)?
- E) Do you supply products to any retail store or restaurant or any other places? Do you make the deliveries and collect orders or does anyone else help you?
- F) Each day how does your business affect household work at home? How and when do you do household work? Who helps you with household work? Is combining the business with work getting easier, harder or staying the same, why?

- G) Do you face any problem with your business (i.e. lack of work and storage space, difficulty in attracting customers etc.) because you work at home? Do you wish to have a separate work place outside your home? why?

#### **Non-Home-based Businesses**

- A) What are the reasons that you chose this particular place for your business? How long have you been operating business here?
- B) What kind of tasks do you generally do in your business place? Do you handle cash or your family members help you with that?
- C) Do you prepare anything (i.e. snacks, food items, handicrafts, clothing or other stuff) at this place to sell? Do you prepare any of those things at home and then bring to your store to sell? If so, do you make the products at home by yourself or do family members and other people help you?
- D) How do you feel about working in public? How do you feel about interacting with customers and other people? Do you feel any discomfort? Under what circumstances and why?

#### **Home-based and non-home-based Businesses**

- A) How do you make business related decisions for example about buying and selling goods, financial transactions, preparing budget, managing business and household expenditure?
- B) Do your family members or anyone else help you with business related decisions? What types of help do you get?
- C) Do you need to purchase any products for your business from other places? If so, how and from where do you buy those products? Does anyone help you buy necessary products for the business?
- D) How would you describe the ownership of your business? Is this business a family operated business or is it operated only by you?

#### **8. Household Work:**

Now would you tell me more about your activities at home?

- A) How many family members live in your home? What are their ages? Do any of them need special care, e.g. seniors, children etc.?
- B) Would you please tell me about your household activities like what kind of household work you usually do each day?
- C) How do you handle household work (such as cooking, cleaning, looking after children and helping them with studies etc.) while working for your business? Does anyone help you with the domestic tasks in your absence at home?
- D) Does any family member help you with household work? How? How often?

#### **9. Location of the Business:**

Location of a business is quite important in terms of building a customer base and making profits. Would you please tell me:

- A) What are the benefits of having a business within this Bangladeshi neighbourhood? Do you think this location is better for your business? Why?
- B) Are there any problems associated with having a business in this Bangladeshi neighbourhood (like having more competition, getting fewer customers etc.)?

- C) What do you think about the social environment in this neighbourhood? What is good about this neighbourhood? Advantages and disadvantages?
- D) Do you feel the neighbours are friendly towards women who operate businesses?
- E) Do you think you would have more freedom to interact with customers and carry out business related activities outside the Bangladeshi neighbourhood? Why?

**10. Cultural and Religious Practices:**

Often it is hard for immigrants to continue their cultural and religious practices in a new country. I would like know about your experiences living and working in Toronto:

- A) Do you go to the neighbourhood Mosque? Do most Bangladeshi women in this neighbourhood go to the neighbourhood Mosque? Why do you go to the Mosque, for religious purposes, social activities, cultural activities, other? Do other Bangladeshi women go for the same reason?
- B) How about local community-based organizations and women's groups, are you involve with them? Which organization and groups? How often do you go to meetings or activities? Where do the meetings and activities take place? (school, office or someone's house)?
- C) What do you think of Bangladeshi people's reaction towards Bangladeshi women who work in 'public' places? Do they show positive attitudes towards women who work in 'public' places?
- D) What is your opinion about wearing the 'hijab' at work places? Do you think that people in the Bangladeshi neighbourhood expect women to wear the 'hijab' while they are working outside their homes? What kind of problems can arise for a woman who does not wear 'hijab' while she is at work in the neighbourhood?
- E) How important it is for you to use/serve 'halal' goods for business purposes? Why is it important or not important?
- F) Do Bangladeshi women working in businesses that require interaction with other people face any problems in the Bangladeshi neighbourhood?
- G) Do you think home-based business is a popular option for work among Bangladeshi women? Why?

**11. Future Plans:**

- A) When you think about the future, what kinds of changes in your business do you expect? Are you satisfied with the current mix of services and products? Do you want to expand your business, change its location etc.?

**12. Concluding Remarks:**

- A) Is there anything else you want to say about your experience with self-employment in Toronto? Have we missed anything?

**Thanks you very much for your participation in the Research.**

## **Appendix D: Interview Guide for Key Informants**

### **1. Introduction:**

- A) When did you start working for this organization?
- B) How was your employment search experience in Toronto?
- C) What kind of challenges did you face to find a job here?
- D) What inspired you to work for this organization?

### **2. Information of the Organization:**

- A) When was this organization established?
- B) Can you please describe the main goals of this organization?
- C) What kind of support this organization offers for Bangladeshi immigrants?
- D) Are there any specific programs for Bangladeshi immigrant women?
- E) Does this organization provide training programs for Bangladeshi women to enhance their employment opportunities?
- F) What kind of challenges this organization face in Toronto?

### **3. Bangladeshi Immigrant Women's Employment Experiences in Toronto:**

- A) Why do Bangladeshi immigrant women seek employment in Toronto?
- B) What kind of challenges Bangladeshi women face in the labour market?
- C) What kind of help Bangladeshi women seek when they come to this organization?
- D) Do you experience any difficulties to provide help and support to Bangladeshi women?

### **4. Self-employment of Bangladeshi Immigrant Women:**

Many Bangladeshi immigrant women in Toronto operate businesses-

- A) Why do Bangladeshi immigrant women become self-employed?
- B) What are the positive aspects of becoming self-employed for Bangladeshi women?
- C) What are the challenges Bangladeshi women face when they operate businesses in Toronto?
- D) Do Bangladeshi women come to this organization to seek help to start a business? What kind of support they seek?
- E) What kind of support this organization provides Bangladeshi women to start a business?

### **5. Home-based Businesses:**

- A) Why do Bangladeshi women engage in home-based businesses?
- B) What are the advantages and disadvantages of working at home for Bangladeshi women?
- C) What is your opinion about Bangladeshi women's roles in home-based businesses?

D) What factors influence the success of Bangladeshi women operated home-based businesses?

**6. Non-home-based Businesses:**

Many Bangladeshi women operate businesses on Danforth Avenue-

- A) Why do Bangladeshi women involve in non-home-based businesses?
- B) What is your opinion about Bangladeshi women's roles in non-home-based businesses?
- C) What factors influence the success of Bangladeshi women operated non-home-based businesses?
- D) What are the advantages and disadvantages of operating non-home-based businesses for Bangladeshi women?

**7. Influence of Religious and Cultural Practices:**

- A) What do you think of Bangladeshi people's reaction towards Bangladeshi women who work in 'public' places? Do they show positive attitudes towards women who work outside the home?
- B) Do you think that people in the Bangladeshi neighbourhood expect women to wear the 'hijab' while they are working outside their homes?
- C) What kind of problems can arise for a woman who does not wear the 'hijab' while she is at work in the neighbourhood?
- D) What are your views about the experiences of Bangladeshi women who work inside and outside the home in this Bangladeshi neighbourhood?

**Thanks you very much for your participation in the Research.**