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Renegotiating Home and Identity: Experiences of Gujarati Immigrant Women in Suburban Montréal

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Abstract

This study examines the meaning of home for 19 Hindu Gujarati immigrant women living in the Montréal suburban municipality of Dollard-des-Ormeaux. Adopting a qualitative approach, this study redefines home as a multiple and dynamic concept, referring not only to the house but also the homeland, neighbourhood, cultural community and even the abstract feeling of belonging or being 'at home.' While this study concentrates on the women's present homes and neighbourhoods, the idea of the home as being reinvented across a variety of spaces and social relationships is a central theme. Home-making is argued to be an evolving social process that begins in the childhood and marital homes in India and continues with the transition into new homes in Montréal. The house and home spaces (the neighbourhood and cultural community) are sites where multiple dimensions of the women's identities are given a voice and reinvented. The women define the character of the home spaces, and also negotiate culture, ethnicity and identity within them. Through the construction of hybrid cultural identities, the women are able to make themselves and their families 'at home' between cultures. This study points to complex and sometimes paradoxical meanings of home, and emphasizes the significance of the suburban, rather than inner city, quality of home-making and adaptation processes among immigrant women in Montréal.

Résumé

Ce mémoire examine la signification donnée au concept de 'maison' ou du 'chez-soi' par dix-neuf (19) femmes immigrantes Gujarati qui demeurent dans la municipalité de Dollard-des-Ormeaux dans la banlieue de Montréal. En suivant l'approche qualitative, cette étude redéfini la maison en tant que concept multiple et dynamique, se référant non seulement à l'élément bâti, mais aussi à la patrie, à la communauté culturelle et même au sentiment abstrait d'appartenance ou d'être chez soi. Bien que cette étude se concentre sur les maisons et les quartiers actuels de ces femmes, l'idée que le concept de maison soit réinventé à travers une multitude d'espaces et de relations sociales est un thème central. Créer un chez-soi est un processus social dynamique qui débute dans la maison d'enfance et maritale en Inde, et qui se transforme lors de la transition les domiciles montréalais. Les espaces de la maison et du chez-soi (incluant le quartier et la communauté culturelle) sont des lieux où les dimensions multiples d'une identité sont articuleés et réinventées. Les femmes définissent le caractère des lieux de leur maison, et négocient aussi leur culture, leur qualité ethnique et leur identité. Par la construction d'une identité culturelle hybride, une femme est capable de rendre sa famille et elle-même 'chez soi' entre la culture d'origine et la culture d'accueil. Cette étude désigne les significations complexes et parfois paradoxales du concept de maison et souligne l'importance de la banlieue, plutôt que le centreville, la qualité de la création d'un chez-soi et les processus d'adaptation parmi les femmes immigrantes à Montréal.

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I do not wish to have my windows closed and my doors shut. I want winds from all cultures to blow freely about my house. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any.

- Mahatma Ghandi

I, too, have ropes around my neck, I have them to this day, pulling me this way and that, East and West, the nooses tightening, commanding *choose, choose*.
I buck, I snort, I whinny, I rear, I kick. Ropes, I do not choose between you. Lassoes, lariats, I choose neither of you, and both. Do you hear? I refuse to choose.

- Salman Rushdie

Chapter One

Introduction

This study presents a story of home. The fabric for this study is woven from the stories of 19 Hindu Gujarati women who immigrated to Canada between 1967 and 1980 and who currently make their homes in the suburban municipality of Dollard-des-Ormeaux[1] on the Island of Montréal (Figure 1.1). Their stories allow us to view home through multiple lenses and understand it as a dynamic place with elaborate meanings. Usually when you think of home, the image is of the house where you were raised or where you now live. The women in this study point to more complicated meanings of home as a place with fluid borders. Not only does home refer to the physical dwelling, but also to the neighbourhood where they live, their cultural community, and their homeland in India. More than a place, home is also described as a sense of belonging, in other words, a place where one feels 'at home.' In this context, home-making takes on a broader meaning referring not only to the domestic work within the realm of the physical dwelling but to the making and remaking of social identities that are able to find places of belonging between different social worlds[2].

The personal impulse to examine this topic has evolved out of my own experiences as a first-generation Indian-Canadian who has lived in both Canada and India. While feeling 'at home' in both societies, I have often encountered situations in which my self-ascribed identity as an

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[1] From here on, Dollard-des-Ormeaux will also be referred to as Dollard or DDO.

[2] I will be using Shibutani's definition of social world: "a culture area, the boundaries of which are set neither by territory nor formal group membership, but by the limit of effective communication. There are special norms of conduct, a set of values, a prestige ladder, and a common outlook toward life (Shibutani in Pratt 1982, 140)." Social worlds may vary along a number of dimensions in size, the spatial distribution of their participants, the extent and clarity of their boundaries, in their solidarity and the extent of identification felt by the participants. A person may be oriented primarily to one social world or may participate in many different social worlds. Values and social meanings, including conceptions of self and the symbolic meaning of objects will potentially vary across social worlds (Pratt 1982, 139).

Figure 1.1 Location of Dollard-des-Ormeaux

Legend:
▲ Dollard-des-Ormeaux
● Montréal City Hall
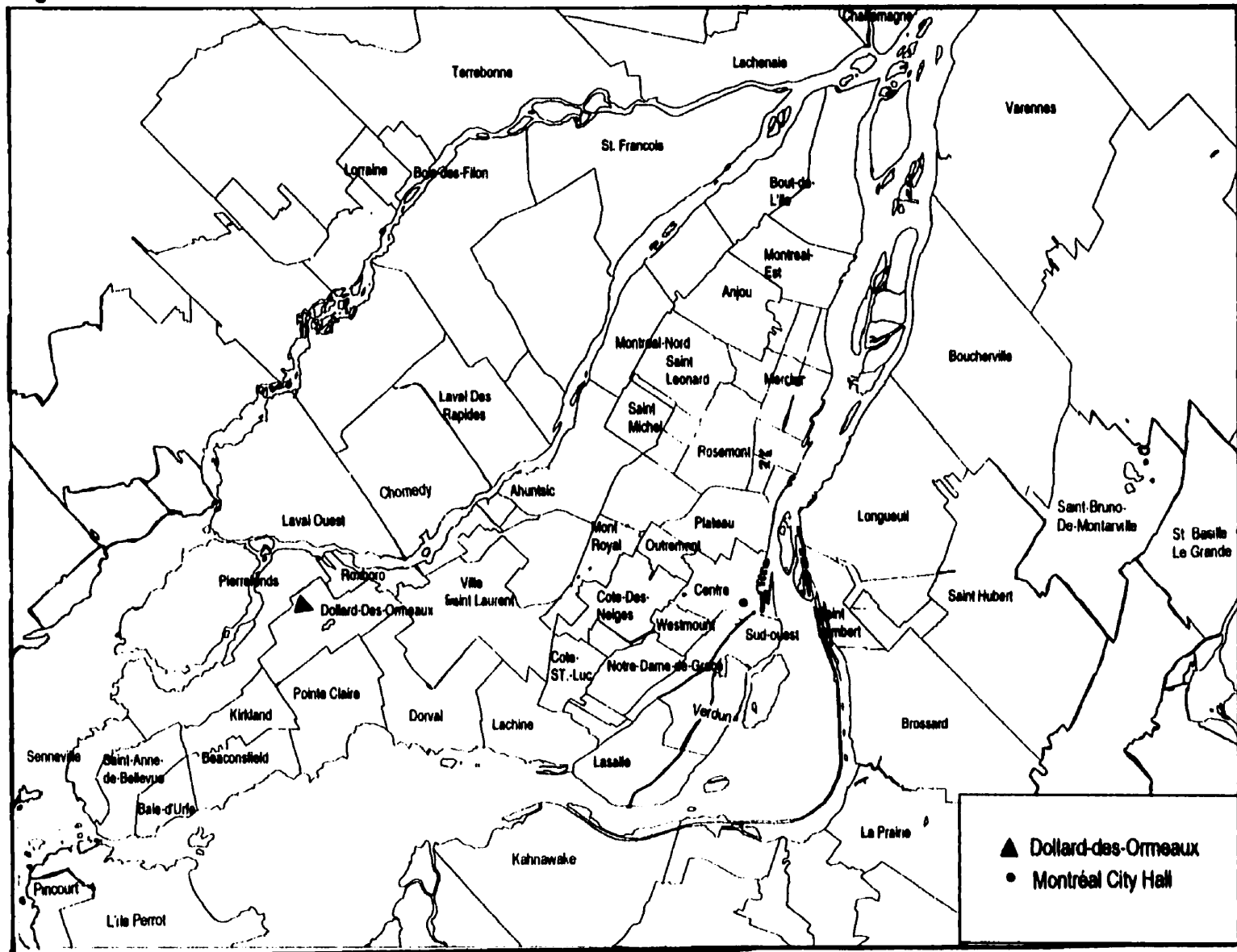
Indian-Canadian has clashed with the externally imposed identities that others have placed upon me. Questions such as "Where are you *really* from?" posed by other 'white' Canadians and comments such as "Indians from North America are not *really* Indian but American" from Indians have often made me question my 'place' in either society. I have an apartment in Montréal and it is my home but where do I feel 'at home?' Thinking about the relationship between making a home and making oneself 'at home' and the links between home and identity prompted my interest in how this issue is experienced by immigrants and other displaced populations. If I am born and raised in Canada and still experience occasional feelings of displacement, how must an immigrant born and raised in one country and who is attempting to make a home in another, feel? What does the physical home mean to her/him? How does a displaced person achieve a sense of belonging? Does s/he ever? Are their particular places in which s/he feels 'at home?' How does identity change through this process? These are the questions that inspired this research.

This study focuses on the experiences of 19 Hindu Gujarati immigrant women living in owned-housing in DDO. While an explanation for selecting such a circumscribed population is made in further detail in the next chapter, I will provide a sketch of the respondents' backgrounds here. All of the women are from the state of Gujarat in India (Figure 1.2)[3], have children living at home, and practice either Hinduism or Jainism. Within Hinduism, all of the women are from upper castes and all are from middle-class backgrounds[4]. In terms of age distribution, 1 woman was between 50 and 55, 9 between 45 and 49, 8 between 35 and 44, and 1 woman was between 30 and 34.

Table 1.1 provides further background information on the women. The women arrived in Montréal between 1967 and 1980. Aside from Kanta who studied in New York for four years and Priti who lived in Toronto for four years, all of the women came directly to Montréal from India. All but five of the women were sponsored by their husbands (14 of 19). Kanta and her husband both went to the US as students for four years before being offered jobs in Montréal. Shifali and Maya

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[3] The women were all either born and raised in Gujarat, or born elsewhere in India but spent part of their lives in Gujarat. Three women were born in East Africa but moved to Gujarat when they were children. For more on the selection criteria used in constructing the study sample, please see Chapter II.

[4] Class was determined by how the women described the socio-economic status of their family or the occupation of their father. Most of the women are either from the Brahman or Kshatryia castes, two upper-castes in Hindu society. Although high status is defined supposedly only in terms of ritual practices and not by superiority of economic or political position, upper castes usually occupy the most influential positions in society and have a middle- to upper-class economic status along with a great deal of privilege (Hardgrave 1986, 7).

Figure 1.2　　　　　　　　**Location of Gujarat in India**

India

- ▨ States
- ▢ Union Territories
- ‑‑‑‑ Line of control between India and Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir

CHINA

AFGHANISTAN

TIBET

HIMACHAL PRADESH

PUNJAB

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

PAKISTAN

SIKKIM

BHUTAN

NEPAL

NAGALAND

BANGLA-DESH

MANIPUR

MEGHALAYA

MIZORAM

BURMA

TRIPURA

Daman (U.T.)

DADRA AND NAGAR HAVELI

BAY OF BENGAL

GOA

KARNATAKA

LAKSHADWEEP ISLANDS

Madras

ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS

Pondicherry (U.T.)

KERALA

SRI LANKA

▲ = Gujarat

Source: Hardgrave and Kochanek 1986, 129

Table 1.1 Migration History and Family Background

Name	Arrival to Montréal	Immigration Status	Household Type (India)	Household Type (Canada)	Present Household Size
Mira	1974	Sponsored (husband)	Multiple	Nuclear	4
Vina	1969	Sponsored (husband)	Multiple	Nuclear *	4
Kanta	1967	Student	Multiple	Nuclear	3
Panna	1976	Sponsored (Husband)	Nuclear	Nuclear	4
Maya	1974	Sponsored (Sister)	Nuclear	Multiple	4
Mohini	1974	Sponsored (Husband)	Nuclear	Nuclear	4
Priti	1978	Sponsored (Husband)	Nuclear	Nuclear	4
Ami	1975	Family class	Multiple	Nuclear *	4
Jagruti	1974	Sponsored (Husband)	Multiple	Nuclear *	4
Falguni	1976	Sponsored (Husband)	Multiple	Nuclear *	4
Sonal	1977	Sponsored (Husband)	Multiple	Multiple	5
Jayna	1974	Sponsored (Husband)	Multiple	Multiple	5
Usha	1976	Family class	Multiple	Multiple	9
Nisha	1979	Sponsored (Husband)	Multiple	Nuclear *	4
Madhu	1976	Sponsored (Husband)	Multiple	Multiple	3
Shifali	1975	Sponsored (Sister)	Nuclear	Nuclear *	4
Hema	1974	Sponsored (Husband)	Nuclear	Nuclear	4
Jyostna	1972	Sponsored (Husband)	Multiple	Nuclear	4
Gita	1976	Sponsored (Husband)	Multiple	Nuclear	4

* Household is multiple during part of the year when parents or in-laws come and visit

were sponsored by their sisters and brothers-in-law and came here to study. They both returned to India to marry and then later came back to Canada and sponsored their husbands. Ami was sponsored by her brother and his wife. She immigrated along with her husband and their two children. Lastly, Usha came when she was 14 years old, along with her parents, brothers and grandparents in 1976.

Migration to Canada brought many significant changes in the experience of home. Adjusting to home in Canada was especially difficult for five women who never wanted to leave India after getting married. Coming to Canada was also the first time many women had ever lived outside of a multiple family (13 of the 19 lived in either parental or marital homes before migration). For most women, it was the first time they would be living with their husbands as some women only met their husbands within weeks of marriage. As such, adjusting to a new home also involved learning about their new spouses. Other adjustments included joining the workforce, as only Kanta and Madhu had worked before migration. Finally, learning French and, in some cases English, was another challenge. How these issues have affected home-making in Montréal will be examined in further detail later.

This study examines a number of themes such as the meaning of home as a physical and social space in India, the adaptation process in Canada, and the transition from renting to the ideal of homeownership. Most of the study concentrates on the present homes in DDO, how the physical space is used and the meanings attached to it. The significance of home spaces beyond the physical dwelling is also explored. Finally, the importance of the house and home spaces in the shaping of ethnic identities and creation of a place of belonging is discussed. Through this study I attempt to shed light on the meaning of home, its relationship to identity and the process of home-making for a group of immigrant women struggling to find a place for themselves in Montréal society.

Montréal Context

Montréal provides a particularly challenging setting for this study in that it best embodies Canadian French-English duality. Immigrants negotiate social identity in a city where struggling

with issues of language and ethnicity is a part of everybody's daily life. Montréal is a socially pluralistic city with 17% of its population having been born abroad.[5] According to the 1991 Canadian census, 88% of Québec's immigrant population live in urban areas, mainly in the metropolitan area of Montréal (Seven in ten of Québec's immigrants live on the Island of Montréal and four in ten live in the city limits).

While the majority of immigrants live in the inner city, significant numbers reside in suburban areas. An examination of the distribution of South Asian immigrants indicates that the majority live in inner city neighbourhoods such as Parc Extension (Figure 1.3). Suburbs, conversely, appear to be sparsely populated with South Asian immigrants. If one were to look at the population of South Asian immigrants as a percentage of each census tract, however, the proportion of immgrants in certain suburbs, notably DDO, is significant (Figure 1.4). Among the most recent waves of immigration (arriving between 1981 and 1991), 53% live in the city of Montréal but 47% live in suburban areas such as Ville-Saint-Laurent, Dollard-des-Ormeaux, Pointe Claire, Brossard and Laval, especially in neighbourhoods where the number of immigrants is already relatively high (above 25%).

DDO Setting

The increasing importance of suburbs as receiving areas for new immigrants prompts us to realize that we must abandon images of immigrants residing in inner city neighbourhoods and recognize the importance of suburban spaces for immigrant settlement and home-making. It is for this reason I have chosen to focus this study on DDO. DDO is a suburban municipality on the Island of Montréal, 29 km northwest of the downtown. DDO was used for farming until 1958 when suburban development began and the Trans-Canada Highway was routed through DDO territory. Major housing developments were completed in 1964, and in 1970 DDO officially became part of the Montréal Urban Community (MUC). Seventy-seven percent of DDO is designated for

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[5] The present population of Montréal is 3 326 510 people.

Figure 1.3   **Distribution of South Asian Immigrant Population, Montréal CMA**

Parc Extension

DDO   Cote des Neiges
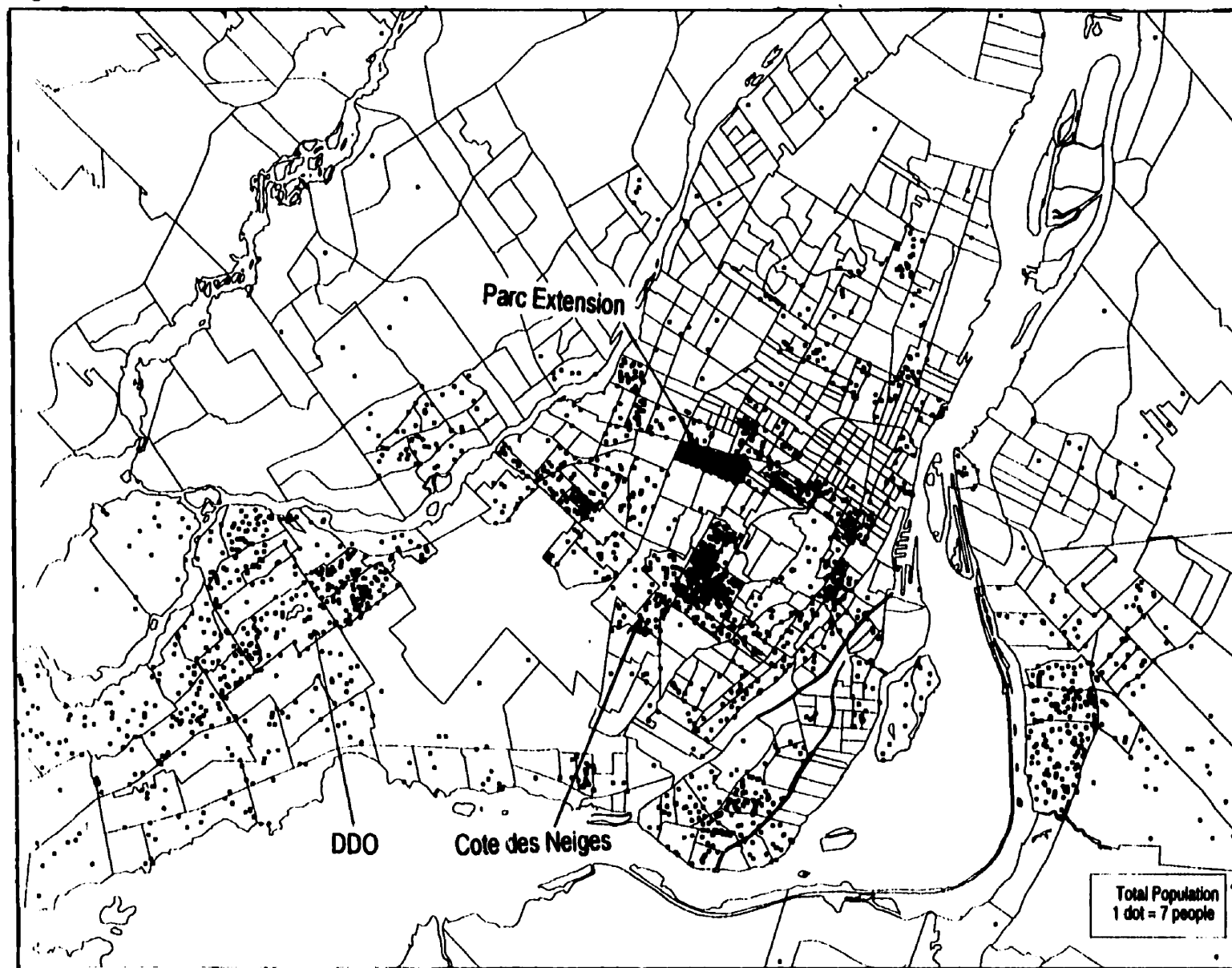
Total Population
1 dot = 7 people

Figure 1.4   **South Asian Immigrant Population as Percentage of Total Population of Each Census Tract**

Parc Extension

DDO   Cote des Neiges

Percent of Census Tract Population

■ 5.1 to 20	(17)
■ 2.1 to 5	(54)
■ 1.1 to 2	(69)
▨ 0.51 to 1	(79)
□ 0 to 0.5	(105)
□ No South Asians	(425)
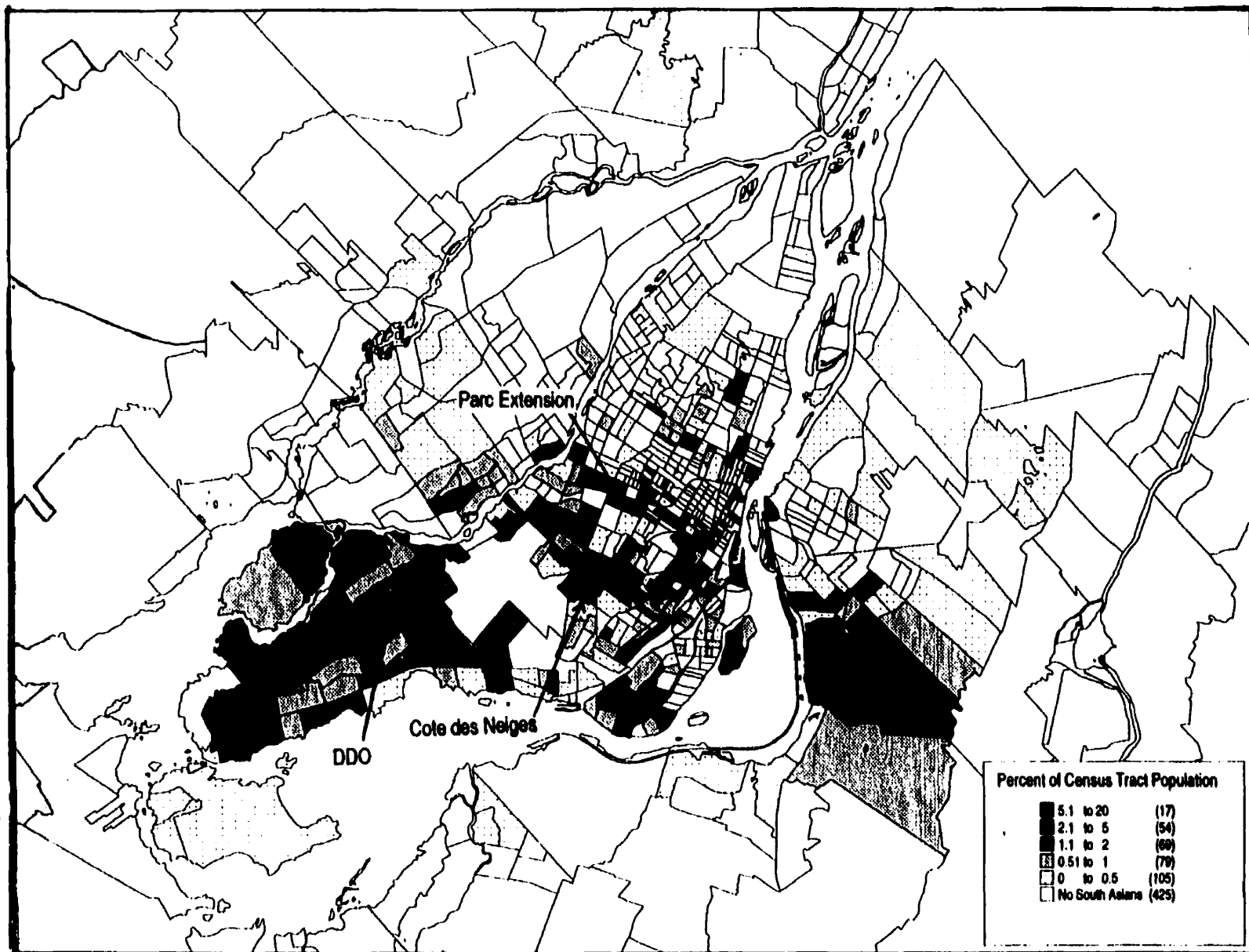
Source: Statistics Canada, Special Tabulation, 1991

residential development, 2% for commercial development, 8% for industrial development, 12% for parks and 1% as 'city-core' (Ville de Dollard-des-Ormeaux, General Information 1983).

Although DDO has not reached its target population of 80,000 people, it has experienced considerable growth[6]. In 1961 DDO's population was 1,800 and by 1969 it had already grown to 19,200. Of 14,530 private dwellings, three-fifths (61.3%) are single-detached housing units and of 12,530 census families in private households, nearly two-thirds (63.7%) are nuclear families (DDO, Population profile, 1991, 1). Over half (56%) of the population speaks English as a mother-tongue or as one of several languages spoken in the home (Ibid., 2). The 1991 census indicates that the immigrant population of DDO stands at 31.2%. The 1,310 South Asian immigrants (2.8% of the total population) make the South Asian community one of the largest ethnic groups in the municipality. Suburbs remain under-researched places for immigrant communitites. The presence of immigrants in suburban areas, however, makes these city spaces important locales for challenging dominant images of suburbia and the immigrant experience in North American cities (Jackson, 1985).

Objectives

There are three main objectives in this study. First, I want to examine home through multiple lenses as a place with fluid borders and complicated meaning. Among others, home is a place where patriarchal relations are maintained, a site for women's resistance, and a refuge from a racist society. Not only does home refer to the physical dwelling but also to the neighbourhood, cultural community and a feeling of belonging and of being 'at home.'

Secondly, home is dynamic and continuously reinvented. This reinvention of home is part of a continuous home-making process which begins in the parental home in India, and carries through to the marital home and the home in Canada. Home is reinvented as a physical space in which Indian culture is preserved and maintained and as a site for the mediation of Canadian culture. It is also reinvented in response to changing social relations in an attempt to make oneself 'at home'.

The third objective is to examine the interplay between home and identity. People form attachments to or identify with particular places. In physical dwellings, as well as other places,

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[6] According to the 1991 Census, DDO's present population is 46,922.

women communicate their identity and reinvent themselves. Social identity is transformed and changes according to social relations in particular places. The relationship is dialogical. Place constitutes identity, and the attachment one feels to a particular place provides meaning to that place which, in turn, often reflects identity. How women redefine the social spaces of their homes, and how they use the physical spaces, reflect their effort to reconcile identities imposed upon them by others with the identities they ascribe to themselves. As we shall see, the result is often a creation of transcultural identities that allow them to feel 'at home' within different social worlds.

This research challenges images of South Asian immigrant women as victims of oppressive cultural and religious systems. In my interpretation, women are challenging their marginalisation by using home and home spaces to formulate positive, and often hybrid, Indian identities and to create a 'place' for themselves in Montréal society. I argue that although we cannot deny the patriarchal nature of home as an institution, home has other important meanings as well. This research brings to light the importance of suburbs as meaningful sites for immigrant integration; it demonstrates the need to examine how immigrants contribute to and redefine ideas of place, membership, citizenship and belonging in Canadian society.

The next section of this chapter examines the body of literature that I have used to define 'home', its significance in feminist theory, and the importance of identity, particularly the social construction of ethnicity and gender. After establishing a theoretical context, this chapter concludes with an outline of the themes covered in the remainder of the study.

The Changing 'Place' of Home and Transforming Social Identities

In order to understand the various relationships between home and identity for the 19 Gujarati women in this study, it is necessary to situate the ideas of home, gender, ethnicity and place within current debates in social science literature. The intention is to first construct a concept of home that is multifaceted in that it is not only physically, but also socially and metaphorically significant; secondly, to acknowledge the complicated and often difficult relationship women have with the home but emphasize that home is still a meaningful place and finally, to understand home-making as, in part, the making or shaping of social identities, in particular ethnic identities.

From Static to Dynamic: Multiple and Evolving Meanings of Home

The Emergence of the Concept Home

Before industrialization in the Western world, there was relatively little distinction between the public and private spheres. The house was the family's place of residence where various domestic/private activities such as eating, sleeping, and child rearing took place. The house also functioned as a place for many activities for which public institutions now take responsibility. For example, the household served as a site for production, as an educational institution, and even as a place for religious worship. The household also served the entire community by taking in dependent members (as lodgers) who were not related to the family and by helping maintain the social order (Hareven 1991, 255). Thus in the preindustrial society, the family conducted its work and public affairs inside the household. Its public and private activities were inseparable, and domestic life was often conducted with non-family members present.

It was in the modern bourgeois society of private property in the West that the 'house' emerged as a source of individual identity. Many pre-modern societies had grand castles and palaces, but typically a whole society of servants and crafts people inhabited them. Industrialization meant urbanization and the growth of factories and industries. This resulted in the movement of production away from the home to factories and a subsequent division between two spheres of life - between the public sphere, associated with the work place and production, and the private sphere associated with the home and reproduction. According to Hareven, it was in this context that the home acquired a greater symbolic meaning. Family time became restricted primarily to the home, and leisure, comfort, and privacy became important aspects of domestic life.

> Following the removal of the workplace from the home as a result of urbanization and industrialization, the household was recast as the family's private retreat, and the home emerged as a new concept and existence. Eventually other agencies took over the functions that had been earlier concentrated in the family. Factories and business places took over the family's formal educational functions, and asylums and correctional institutions took over the family's functions of welfare and social control (*Ibid.*, 259).

In the early modern period, living spaces went through considerable transformation. Great halls disappeared and were replaced by enclosed, more intimate rooms intended for different functions (Stone 1991). By the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the house became the site for familial affection and for display of furnishings that reflected the family's social position. In this new scene of domesticity emerged notions of women as guardians of sentimentalized affection,

and as keepers and caretakers of decorative domestic objects (Okin 1982 in Young, unpublished, 16).

Gradually in the the twentieth century, the ideal of a single-family house, with fine furnishings and separate rooms for different family members and activities, ceased to be a privilege of the upper classes alone. With rising standards of living, the fantasy of a 'home of one's own' took on realistic meaning for many people (Young unpublished). The overlap between the concept of 'home' and of 'family' is crucial in understanding the relationships between the ideological and the material nature of the home. Houses are assumed to be homes because they are the principle environment within which family relationships - close, private, and intimate - are located. While it is true that individuals also have homes, a crucial element in the everyday understanding of home is the notion of a place within which children are reared and, which therefore is a place of origin, a place of belonging, and a place to which to return (Bowlby et. al. 1997, 344). Recently, the need to reconceptualize home has become an issue of importance in social science literature. It is important to consider home not only as a physical space, but also as a value and feeling of belonging.

Home as a Physical Dwelling

Many studies examine the home as a physical structure focusing on its design, and the psychological attachments people have to their homes (Belk 1991; Cooper 1975; Cooper Marcus 1995; Csiksenthmihaly and Rochberg-Halton 1981; Hareven 1991; Joy and Dholakia 1991; Pratt 1982; Rybczynski 1986; Rykwart 1991). Some of these studies have examined how architectural changes in housing have reflected changes in attitudes towards the home and the roles of people living there (Hasell and Peatross 1990; Matthews 1987; Monk 1992). Other studies, in housing and studies motivated by interests in consumer behaviour, examine the use of the home and the symbolic value people attach to the home and the possessions they keep in it (Cuba and Hummon 1993; Feldman 1996; Sadella et. al. 1987).

Studies examining architectural changes not only point to the manner in which designs of space reflect family needs but also the gendered nature of the space of the house. Monk (1992), with a cross-cultural perspective, describes how gender distinctions are not only evident in the landscape of public monuments but are also obvious in the spaces in the home. She examines a

variety of cultures and historical periods to show how ideologies of gender are expressed in architectural design and in the ways people behave in space (Monk 1992, 126).

Many housing studies, as well as others on consumer behaviour, focus on the house, and the objects stored in it, as symbolic in our lives and of ourselves (Belk 1991; Cooper 1974; Csksenthmihaly and Rochberg-Halton 1981; Dawson and Bamossy; 1991; Dittmar 1991; Joy and Dholakia 1991; Kamptner 1991). "The home is much more than a shelter, it is a world in which a person can create a material environment that embodies what he or she considers significant. In this sense the home becomes the most powerful sign of the self of the inhabitant who dwells within (Csiksenthmihaly and Rochberg-Halton 1981, 123). " Many of these works on the symbolic nature of home take inspiration from Clare Cooper's thinkpiece "The house as a symbol of self" (1974). According to Cooper, the house has not only a use and exchange value but also a symbolic value. The dwelling, through its interior and exterior, reflects and is symbolic of how one views oneself with both an intimate inside and a public façade (a persona or a mask in Jungian terms) (Cooper 1974).

> The furniture we install, the way we arrange it, the pictures we hang, the plants we buy and tend, all are expressions of our images of ourselves, all are messages about ourselves that we want to convey back to ourselves, and to the few intimates that we invite into this, our house (Cooper 1974, 131).

In her more recent work, Clare Cooper Marcus (1995) continues to examine the house as a place that mirrors the self. She extends her argument further by suggesting that the house is closely tied to identity. She again uses Jungian psychology to examine the subtle bonds of feeling we experience with dwellings from our past and present. Jung introduced the notion of individuation, or the striving toward an inner state of wholeness and believed that the unconscious was a source of insight for the person in the process of individuation. Cooper Marcus argues that in striving to be wholly ourselves, place, especially the house, is important. "Whether we are conscious of it or not, every relationship, mishap, event can be perceived as a "teaching guiding us to being more and more fully who we are...[T]he places we live in are reflections of that process and indeed the places themselves have a powerful effect on our journey toward wholeness (Cooper Marcus 1995,10)." In other words, she believes that as we grow and change our psychological development is punctuated by meaningful relationships with people, but also by affective ties with a number of significant physical environments. People invest emotion in objects

and places that reflect their lives, and changes they make in their homes often reflect different stages of life (*Ibid.* 12).

Other studies also show how people invest time in changing their homes in attempts to personalise the space and express their identity. Gwendolyn Wright (1991) writes about the 'model homes' people create, because judgements on a family are often based on the appearance of that family's home. Wright suggests that people often try to establish a pleasant home atmosphere to create the illusion of a happy home experience within the four walls. "A 'nice home' can cover emotional and physical violence within all sorts of households. Appearance leads us to expect that family life should work out because the setting looks right" (Wright 1991, 219).

According to Becker (1977), personalisation of the home occurs both inside and outside the house. What one does inside the home is known only to ourselves, our families and close friends. What is done to the exterior is done for the benefit of outsiders, in the rest of the community. People personalize their homes not only to reinforce their own self- identity but also to express their identity to others. Such efforts visible to others in the community are seen to stimulate social interactions and may facilitate the breakdown of negative stereotypes which residents have of one another and which may serve as barriers to the development of a sense of community (Becker 1977, 65). Often the home displays one's membership in particular cultural and social worlds (Duncan 1973; Duncan 1982; Pratt 1982; Rappoport 1982).

The meaning of home and the importance of homeownership have been the focus of some immigrant studies (Despres 1993; Ganguly 1992; Joy and Dholakia 1991; Ray and Moore 1991). Annamma Joy and Ruby Dholakia, for example, point out how, for the Indian community in Canada, the acculturation process creates a new conception of home and possessions. The home and possessions suddenly become visible markers of a sense of permanent transience that Indians experience. Artifacts and space are used to create an atmosphere that reflects the past. The home is also a vehicle through which children are socialized into Indian culture.

What the above authors are discussing is the idea of place-identity. Belk (1991) argues that there is an association between our homes and the experiences we have there. Our biographies become mirrored and memorialized in home. In that sense, "besides representing personality, history, and feelings of belonging, the home provides us with 'place-identity' – it nurtures and protects as much as our body does (Belk 1991, 25)." Similarly, Cuba and Hummon (1993) define place-identity as an interpretation of self that uses environmental meaning to

symbolize and situate identity. Place identities affiliate the self with significant locales and bring a sense of belonging and order to one's sociospatial world (Cuba and Hummon 1993, 113). Identity may be affiliated to dwelling but also to community or region.

Studies on the home are particularly important in geography where the home as a meaningful place has seldom been a research focus, especially in recent human geography. Even Edward Relph (1976) who, in his examination of the sense of place in *Place and Placelessness*, did not mention the home. Studies in time geography, geographical studies on housing and residential patterns, and even some feminist geography discuss what happens in the neighbourhood spaces where houses are situated or in the context of the public sphere/private sphere debate (Hagerstrand 1970; Evendon and Walker 1993; Pratt 1986; Smith 1989) but little attention is paid to what happens inside the home.

> In geography, interest in residential patterns wanes at the garden gate, as if the private province of the home, as distinct from the larger public spaces constituting residential areas, were beyond the scope of a subject concerned with maps of place (Sibley 1995, 92).

The studies mentioned above show how the home is personalized by people and how it, in turn, reflects the identities of their owners dwelling within it. For immigrants, the home not only reflects and mirrors identity but it is an important space that is used to create particular home exprèriences. In addition to being an important physical space, home embodies metaphoric meanings that are especially important for persons struggling to belong in a new society.

Home as Metaphor

Recent debates have pointed to the need to reconceptualize 'home' in light of recent changes in the global community (Bammer 1992; Douglas 1991; Kearns and Smith 1994; Massey 1992). Whereas at one time the home and the notion of the private sphere were used interchangeably, increasingly the significance of home is changing (Foord 1986; Wright 1991; Bradbury 1994; Davis 1983; hooks 1990). Home and the private sphere remain overlapping concepts insofar as the home is viewed as a dwelling and the space in which private and domestic activities occur. More and more, however, the definition of home is expanding to signify more abstract meanings of a sense of place and a feeling of belonging. 'Home' is ideologically and socially constructed. Its meaning becomes particularly significant when examining the experiences of 'home' for women, refugees and, especially, visible minority immigrants.

Doreen Massey (1992) argues that the re-emergence of 'home' as significant has been the result of rapid global changes since 1945. In particular, changes in the last twenty years have been enormous. There has been a move from modern to post-modern, from industrial to post-industrial, from manufacturing to service, from Fordism to post-Fordism. The underlying direction of change has been towards globalization, which is being accompanied by revolutionary changes in technology. These changes make communication and contact across the world instantaneous in time. The link between culture and place is being ruptured more intensely than ever before (Massey 1992, 3-5). Massey refers to the phenomenon of 'time-space compression'.

> Each geographical 'place' in the world is being realigned in relation to the new global realities, their roles within the wider whole are being reassigned, their boundaries dissolve as they are increasingly crossed by everything from investment flows, to cultural influences, to satellite TV networks. Distance seems to be becoming meaningless, so relations in time, too, are altered. This combination of changes in our experience of space and time which has given rise to the powerful notion that the age we are living in is one of a new burst of 'time-space compression' (Massey 1992, 6-7).

Time-space compression produces a feeling of disorientation, a sense of fragmentation of local cultures and a loss, in its deepest meaning, of a sense of place[7]. In these times, the notion of place and having *your* place has once again grown as an important human concern not only for geographers but for other disciplines in the social sciences.

Literature dealing with the problem of the homeless in Western societies has brought forth debates over what it means to be homeless and addresses the issue of homelessness as being more than the absence of a shelter or dwelling (Kearns and Smith 1994; Rowe and Wolch 1990; Sommerville 1992). These studies point out that although street people may be literally homeless, without a dwelling or shelter, they may still feel 'at home' if a sense of home is established through informal street encampments or street-based social networks which provide a constant point of reference in the daily path of homeless people's lives (Rowe and Wolch, 1990). Home, in this sense, is a social space and refers to a support system rather than an actual dwelling.

On the other hand, these studies also point to how a women who is a victim of domestic violence may have a physical shelter and still feel a sense of displacement, or what can be termed

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[7] It must be said, however, that this sense of placelessness is not necessarily a new phenomenon. A sense of placelessness has always been familiar to those living in ex-colonies whose encounter with colonizers, their economic systems, cultures, and values resulted in immediate and intense change in their lives (Massey 1992, 9). The intensity and velocity at which these changes take place, however, are greater than ever before.

'metaphoric homelessness', in that she may not feel 'at home' in her dwelling or family. In short, while it is possible for one to be homeless, that is, without a physical home/dwelling, but yet feel 'at home' or have a sense of belonging, the converse can also be true. A person may have a physical dwelling but still not feel at home or feel a sense of displacement. This is what Sommerville refers to as rooflessness (literal homelessness) in contrast to rootlessness (metaphoric homelessness) (Sommerville 1992).

In relation to the discussion of migrant populations, I would expand on the arguments presented here. For a displaced population, home is both physically and metaphorically important. When an immigrant comes to a new country, finding shelter or a physical dwelling is an immediate concern that is usually easily accomplished, while feeling 'at home' in the new society is more difficult. Often immigrants experience feelings of cultural displacement or metaphoric homelessness. The home may be used to counter these experiences in that it becomes central to the family's adaptation into the host society, the focal point around which relationships and ties with the neighbourhood, the South Asian community and the larger host society can form.

In this sense home also exists as a wider local, national, and even international spatial context. The sociospatial boundaries between home and other significant scales of social organization are important to social understanding of the nature of 'home'. The neighbourhood and community can be important physical and social spaces in which a more metaphoric sense of home may be found (Bammer 1992; Giles 1997; Hanson and Pratt 1988). Through experience, memory and intention, individuals and communities develop attachments to place and in this way are able to feel 'in place' (Eyles 1985).

While it is true that home mirrors identity and often reflects gender relations, I argue that the home is also an important social space where identity and experience are created. In this sense, rather than view home as a vehicle through which identity is reflected, the home is a tool by which identity may be reinvented and shaped. The physical dwelling can be used as a boundary or border between what is personal, inside and the society outside. While the individual may not exercise much control over what occurs outside the house, s/he may control it, to a greater degree, inside the home. The home is a space whose social meaning is defined through social relationships.

For immigrants, the home may be a space in which to recreate the culture of the homeland, through language, food, music, furnishings and decoration. It may be a place where

social relations from the home country are maintained. At the same time, the home may be used as a place where a transition into a new culture is made. Elements of two cultures are introduced and blended out of which an new, hybrid culture is born. Through recreating and inventing new experiences in the home, the identities of the women and their families are shaped and transformed. Homi Bhabha's discussion of 'third space' is useful in illustrating how this redefining of home and experience takes place. Terms such as and 'third space' and 'liminality' are being constantly redefined and applied to various social and socio-spatial situations (see Bhabha 1990; Chauncey 1994; Pile and Keith 1993; Pile 1994; Routledge 1996; Soja 1996; Turner 1974; Zukin 1991). I adopt the interpretation of Bhabha as helpful in understanding some of the ways in different experiences of home are produced and identity is shaped (see Chapter V).

The home is a place in which immigrants can introduce and define culture by appropriating some aspects of the outside society and culture and rejecting or excluding what they do not want. Out of this blurring of two cultures, comes something entirely new. Homi Bhabha refers to this merging and creation of a new and hybrid culture as 'third space'. Bhabha describes hybridity by use of a psychoanalytical analogy,

> so that identification is a process of identifying with and through another object, an object of otherness, at which point the agency of identification - the subject - is itself always ambivalent, because of the intervention of that otherness. But the importance of hybridity is that it bears the traces of those feelings and practices which inform it...so that hybridity puts together the traces of certain other meanings or discourses. It does not give them the authority of being prior in the sense of being original, they are only prior in the sense of being anterior. The process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation or meaning and representation (Bhabha 1990, 211).

For immigrants, I argue, it is through this hybrid space that identities and an important identity politics are constructed from which the cultural displacement and exclusion in the outside society are challenged. The home is used as a place of acculturation, where parents can mediate identities for themselves and their children which enable them to straddle very different social worlds (see Chapter V). Women play an important role creating these home experiences, inventing culture and redefining their identities while shaping those of their children.

As we have seen thus far, home has a meaning that is physically, metaphorically and socially significant. Home may refer to the house, the neighbourhood, a cultural community or to an abstract feeling of belonging. The house, along with the neighbourhood and cultural community, are important spaces where immigrant women, in particular, may create a place of

belonging for themselves and their families. Many scholars have defined the house as a place that symbolizes and mirrors the self, or as a landscape in which gender relations can be read. All the authors agree that it is a space in which people are engaged in shaping and reshaping the home to express identity. I would add to these arguments that the home is a place which is used to create particular experiences and reinvent identity. I use the idea of 'third space' to illustrate the dynamic nature in which the home can be used. The next section examines the various relationships between women and home discussed in feminist literature and argues that while patriarchal interpretations of home cannot be underestimated, positive readings of home and women's home-making efforts must be acknowledged and remembered.

Feminist Readings of Home

The meaning of home for women is a passionately debated topic in feminist research. Here, I examine various and contradictory views on the meaning of home for women and argue that while oppressive readings of home cannot be denied, the idea of home must not be completely abandoned. Much of the work women do in terms of home-making goes unnoticed or is undervalued which leads many feminsts to reject home. For many immigrant women, however, the home is important as a site for self-expression and the creation of a meaningful identity politics.

First, I examine the emergence of the concept 'home' in the late nineteenth century, its meaning for middle-class women in this period, and how this image of middle-class women in the home spurred reactions and debates. I shall examine a series of feminist scholars who have concluded that the home should be rejected. While acknowledging the negative meanings attached to home, I align my argument with those feminist scholars who still find a value for home (Bhavani and Coulson 1986; hooks 1990; Young, unpublished).

History of Home: Recognizing Different Home Experiences

The concept 'home' which emerged at the end of the nineteenth century was an invention of the middle class. Home-making became idealized as part of the cult of domesticity and was accorded special social status (Beecher 1865; Harevan 1991; Matthew 1987; McDowell 1986). Glenna Matthews, in her book *Just a Housewife* (1987), discusses how women in the home were considered the locus of moral authority in society. Domesticity was elaborate and highly valued, which meant that the housewife had access to new sources of self-esteem.

For middle class women, the home was not only the shelter for the family, it was also the workshop of the mother. The women claimed the home as the sphere of society where they could most effectively exercise their power. The home was not only a place to live but a place where the women were to love, care, and labour for the family. Christine Stansell (1987), in her examination of working class women in nineteenth century New York, discusses how middle-class women tried to mould the identities of working class women by forcing them to live up to idealized images of woman as "a pillar of civilization, an incubator of morals and family affections, a critical alternative to the harsh and competitive world of trade and politics" (Stansell 1987, 41). Women were responsible for domestic life and men for public life.

The view of society as divided into separate masculine and feminine spheres has generated a response from feminists who argue that this myth of 'separate worlds' renders women's work invisible (Foord et.al. 1986; Kobayashi et.al., 1994; Peake 1994). In reality the reproduction of labour power is not a set of processes that takes place solely in the home, just as production processes do not lie totally outside it (Peake 1994, 12). There is overlap between the two spheres; they are not mutually exclusive. "[T]he reality of women's lives goes beyond simple dichotomies, and are embedded in active engagement with subjecthood, identity and social transformation, whatever their political positions" (Radcliffe 1993).

Experiences of home vary for different women. Middle-class images of home are not universal experiences for all women. Even in the nineteenth century, working class white women and women of colour had always been a part of the public sphere. The women were first earners and only secondarily housewives (Bhavani and Coulson 1986; Davis 1983; hooks 1990). For them, the 'housewife' role reflected only a partial reality of their lives. For example, according to Angela Davis, for black women who worked as domestics, housework was a part of their lives but the home was never a central focus in their lives. They had a double burden of working outside of their homes in the homes of white women, while still having to care for their own families (Davis 1983, 232). How home has been viewed and from whose perspective it has been defined has determined the experience women will have in the home. Women may have different relationships to home based on class, race, ethnicity and sexuality. As a result, some feminists have called for home to be rejected while others have argued for more positive interpretations.

Feminist Rejections of Home

Iris Marion Young draws attention to a number of articles in "Housing and Home: Feminist Reflections on a Theme" (Young, unpublished) by feminist scholars who have interpreted the home in a variety of ways: as an oppressive site for women's work, as a metaphor for women to whom men turn to for support as a substitute for the lost womb, and as a metaphor for a stable fixed identity and mutually affirming community defined by gender, class, or race (Beauvoir 1952; De Lauretis 1990; Honig 1993; Martin and Mohanty 1986). All of these scholars have concluded that feminists should reject the discourse of home. Their arguments are extremely important in pointing out how home is oppressive, exploitative and, when used as a metaphor for a sisterhood among women, essentializing.

Simone de Beauvoir, for example, writing in the 1950s, describes the home as an oppressive space by examining the role women play in taking care of the home. She compares housework with the torture suffered by Sisyphus in Hades who was condemned to the tedious task of eternally rolling a rock up to the top of a hill only to have it roll back down again. The home becomes a space where women do monotonous and uncreative tasks, while men work outside the home at interesting and often creative jobs. Minnie Bruce Pratt, in her narrative "Identity: Skin Blood Heart (Pratt 1984)," reviews the places she remembers as 'home' while growing up and realizes that much of her identity and comfort of home was built on the exclusion of others. The security of being a white woman in the southern USA rested on being not black (racism), not Jewish (anti-Semitism), not lesbian (heterosexism). Looking back, she realizes that she was often on the side of the oppressor and concludes that her stable identity or home was an illusion because it was based on the exclusion of others. She is writing in an attempt to rebuild an affinity or 'home' with other feminists of different races, classes and sexualities by situating herself at the intersection of various power relations, carefully reading and recognizing her own social location.

Martin and Mohanty use Pratt's essay to point to 'home' as a metaphor for unity, a bond or common ground among feminists as problematic (Mohanty 1997; Martin and Mohanty 1986). It is not even possible to speak of homes within feminism as there are no absolute divisions between various sexual, racial, or ethnic identities. They also argue that home or the experience of a stable identity is a privilege that is based on exclusion of the Other.

> 'Being home' refers to the place where one lives within familiar, safe, protected boundaries; 'not being
> home' is a matter of realizing that home was an illusion of coherence and safety based on the
> exclusion of specific histories of oppression and resistance, the repression of differences even
> within oneself (Martin and Mohanty 1986, 197).

De Lauretis (1990) similarly argues that the notion of 'home' as stable identity must be abandoned in favour of the reality of plural identities. Honig further suggests that the use of 'home' implies a preserve away form politics. She calls for feminist politics to fight against and be prepared to face dilemmas facing women (Honig 1993 in Young, unpublished).

While these studies acknowledge home as oppressive and exploitative, and identify how discourse on 'home' is exclusionary and dismisses the differences among women in terms of race, class and sexuality, it is important not to forget that home has other potential meanings for women. Other feminists have been attempting to reconceptualize home in terms of wider meanings.

Positive Meanings of Home for Women

Many feminists have argued that there is no universal experience of home for women and that for many women, for example some women of colour or women in other cultural contexts, home may be an empowering place. bell hooks, for example, says that the home, for African-American women, developed out of the slavery experience into a place of resistance. For black women who spent their days working in the homes of white people, their own homes were spaces of refuge where they could return and care for their own families.

> Despite the brutal reality of racial apartheid, of domination, one's homeplace was the one site
> where one could freely confront the issue of humanization by making homes where all black people
> could strive to be subjects, not objects, where we could be affirmed in our minds and hearts
> despite poverty, hardship and deprivation where we could restore ourselves dignity denied us
> outside in the public world (hooks 1990, 42).

In other words, the home has become a place of liberation struggle. Black women have shared the experience of making the home a community of resistance especially in a white supremacist society, although there is much sexist thinking about the nature of domesticity and the way the black women's experience in the home is perceived. Black mothers are praised for being self-sacrificing but it is seen to be their expected and natural role. hooks emphasizes how women's role and idea of 'home' is consciously exercised. "Failure to recognize [women's conscious home-making efforts] obscures the political commitment of black women to racial uplift and to the

eradication of racism. And their efforts to make the homeplace is valued because it is access to a private space where white racist aggression is not encountered directly (*Ibid.*, 46)."

Women's experiences of home vary also according to society and culture. Studies on peasant women in Spanish villages (Gilmore 1990; Harding 1975) suggest that the domestic sphere has been greatly devalued in the western view and that our preconceptions regarding power and its proper locus in the public domain hinder us form appreciating its different expression in other societies. These studies found that Spanish women actually exercise great power in the home and that it is a place of empowerment for women.

Iris Marion Young, on one level, agrees that feminist and postcolonial critics are correct to claim that it is a privilege today to have the stability and comfort of home. She also agrees with views that the nostalgic use of home that offers permanent respite from politics and conflict and which continues to require of women that they make their husbands and children comfortable should be criticized. She argues for four normative values of home that should be available to everyone: safety; shelter; privacy; and preservation. Home is a place of preservation in that it is a site for the construction and reconstruction of one's identity as a living history through meaningful objects and practices in the home (Young unpublished, 61). Such meanings of home and women's activities often go unnoticed. She calls for conceptualizing these positive values of home, and criticizing a global society that is unwilling to extend those values to everyone.

Thus, feminists are divided between those rejecting home and those valuing it. I argue women's experiences of home are multiple and not easily dichotomized as being either oppressive or non-oppressive. Home is undeniably a place where women may be exploited and where patriarchal relations are maintained. It is also a place, however, in which women undertake important activities that must be acknowledged. In particular, they are keeping culture and family history alive and are reinventing social identities. For immigrant women, I argue that it is through the shaping of a fluid identity that they and their families can be 'at home' in a pluralistic society. In order to understand the relation of social identity and home one must understand how ethnicity, race and gender are socially constructed, the role of place in their constitutions and the interplay through which place and identity result in a sense of home.

Reinventing Ethnic Social Identities and a Sense of Place

Social identity is who we are, where we are coming from, in short the background against which our tastes, desires, opinions and aspirations make sense (Taylor 1994, 80). Identity is a reflexive relation which is socially dependent. Identity is a relation of myself to myself but it is a mediated relation: I relate to myself through my interactions with others and with the world. Thus identity is not fixed and unchanging but rather is negotiated through dialogue with others, formed by social relations, place and time (Taylor 1994; Caws 1994).

For an individual, ethnic identity is not only subject to internal definition but is externally imposed. Keith and Cross argue that the construction of the ethnic individual mediates between self-ascription and outside definition (Keith and Cross 1993, 24). While self-definition is often inclusive, external classification may be exclusive and objectifying (Anderson 1987; Winsboro 1993). Through this mediation, one may add new facets to identity. Ethnicity is one aspect of social identity that is subject to both external and internal processes of social construction (Giles and Preston 1996).

Ethnicity, along with other terms like 'race', gender, and culture have been continually redefined in social science literature. On the one hand, ethnicity has often been treated as a relatively static concept. Those arguing from such an essentialist position, for example, have taken ethnicity to be a 'natural' division for human populations. Essentialists argue that an ethnic group is defined as a people sharing common, observable cultural or even phenotypic (i.e. racial) attributes. Language, religion, and folk traditions are emphasized as criteria that define ethnicity. Others reject the notion of ethnicity as a 'natural' division arguing that ethnic categories or groups are created. The social construction of ethnic groups is a two-way process through which members of a group define themselves internally, while also being externally defined by others (Barth 1969; Isajiw 1974; Jenkins 1994). These external definitions may or may not correspond to that group's internal definitions of itself.

Ethnicity as a Construction: External Forces

Many authors demonstrate how the discourse of 'race' and ethnicity can be manipulated in negative ways that perpetuate unequal power relationships between dominant and minority groups (Anderson 1987; Kallen 1995; Kobayashi 1993; Li 1988). Kobayashi, for example, discusses how cultural geography has become more politicized and has shifted emphasis to the processes

through which relations among cultural groups are negotiated. "This shift has resulted in a critical reinterpretation of social 'facts', as socially constructed and moreover, institutionally mediated and contested" (Kobayashi 1993, 206). She examines multiculturalism as a Canadian institution and argues that institutions such as multiculturalism have perpetuated divisions in Canadian society by equating special status to some groups over others[8]. Multicultural policies have allowed for the concretization of the conceptual separation of the charter groups [English and French] as 'ordinary Canadians' and others as 'ethnics'(Kobayashi 1993, 222).

Li, in his examination of ethnic inequality in Canada (Li, 1988), emphasizes that dominant groups have the power and, therefore, the capacity to define and categorize subordinate groups based upon physical and social features. "The basis of racial or ethnic groups is, therefore, not so much any inherent traits, whether physical or cultural, but rather only those which are considered salient by the dominant group (Li 1988,23)." The dominant group is able to attach social meaning to physical or cultural characteristics of a group, thus defining their value as workers in the market place. This is reflected in wage discrimination and job segregation experienced by many people of colour in Canadian society[9] (Ibid., 24). Li argues that social divisions along racial and ethnic lines frequently overlap with class divisions. Discourse constitutive of ethnicity helps to maintain certain ethnic and racial groups in lower class positions thus ensuring the perpetuation of the capitalist system through a constant supply of cheap labour. "Ethnicity becomes a liability for those who suffer discrimination in the capitalist labour market but an asset for those who control in a privileged position (Ibid., 24)."

Examining ethnic groups in the US, Winsboro similarly points out that the beliefs of many ethnic groups have been "rendered powerless through an externally imposed silence and invisibility, and through a process of colonization that has denied them the right to construct and represent their own reality (Winsboro 1993, 5). In short, dominant groups in society, through institutions, markets, and discourse have often been able to perpetuate negative images of particular groups and have kept them in oppressed positions with limited access to power and resources. This literature shows that the manipulation of discourse on 'race' and ethnicity as

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[8] Institutions have been identified as "sites of struggle" wherein cultural hegemony is produced and reproduced ideologically (Kobayashi 1993).

[9] Wage disparities and job segregation are, of course, further complicated if one also considers gender differences.

social constructs has resulted in the naturalization of 'unnatural' divisions in society. It has also served as a justification for the exclusion of subordinate groups from many of the material and symbolic rewards of status and power by the dominant groups.

<u>Seizing Ethnicity: A Political Strategy</u>

Many ethnic minorities have chosen not to be absorbed by the dominant culture and instead to construct and maintain ethnic boundaries as a political strategy to resist homogenization, affirm difference, and build solidarity around that difference. That is to say, rather than rejecting ethnic and racial divisions, minority groups are reclaiming these divisions as a political choice (Gates Jr. 1990; Morrison 1989; Sollors 1989; Trinh 1993; Winsboro 1993). This rediscovery of ethnicity has been a powerful cultural and organizing tool for many marginalized groups.

Cater and Jones (1987), when examining South Asian housing experiences, argue that ethnic identity is self-ascribed and positive, while race is an externally opposed label that is limiting. The result has been that Asians have a both privileged yet oppressed position in British society.

> Asians are exclusive and excluded, ethnically assertive yet racially oppressed, economically deprived yet economically successful. This schizophrenic reaction on the part of British observers stems from the fact that Asian Britons are simultaneously identified by both race and ethnicity... Ethnicity is the identity which members of the groups place upon themselves, race is a label foisted onto them by non-members... while racial identity may be a crippling disability, ethnicity acts as a positive force for the protection and promotion of group interests...especially where cultural consciousness and fraternal solidarity are as powerfully developed as they are among the Indian and Pakistani groups in Britain (Cater and Jones 1987, 191).

Literature provides some excellent examples of how ethnic groups, categorized and defined from without, not only reclaim the categories, but also push to redefine those categories and their identities. While working with their own culturally specific and sometimes ancient traditions, contemporary ethnic writers, in depicting their characters' efforts to define themselves, demonstrate their understanding of the need for change rather than simple regression. "They recognize that as group power is derived from the constructed group identity, individual power is derived from the construction of the individual identity (Winsboro 1993, 21)."

In the *Buddha of Suburbia*, for example, author Hanif Kureishi's protagonist Karim is constantly fighting a conflicting battle of defining himself in terms of, on the one hand, his experiences as a bisexual Londoner and, on the other, by his Anglo-Indian roots in the South Asian community (Kureishi, 1990). This story comically combines eastern religion and mysticism with

confrontations of racism and discrimination to show how Karim mediates an identity while caught between two cultures.

Similarly, in *Beloved* Toni Morrison combines African religion, folktales and philosophy with Christianity and the experience of Black slavery in the Southern United States. *Beloved* tells the story of a slave woman who escapes with her children to the home of her mother-in-law (who had been bought out of slavery). Upon being caught, the slave woman attempts to kill her children to prevent them from experiencing the degradation of slavery. She succeeds only in killing her two-year old daughter. This daughter returns first as a ghost who takes possession of the house for 18 years before then returning in the flesh as a twenty-one year old woman named Beloved (Morrison 1987).

> For Morrison, the past is incarnated in the ghost of the beloved or as embedded in the geography of a place, lives in the present. One must neither ignore the past nor allow it to dominate one's life but, rather, confront it, examine it, and understand how it has shaped one's own identity. Furthermore, one's individual past cannot be separated from the collective past of the group; African Americans, *Beloved* suggests, share a common heritage - captivity in Africa, the Middle Passage, and three hundred years of slavery in America. By confronting that shared past and then exorcising it, African Americans can liberate themselves from enslavement to a past that, when repressed or left unspoken, possesses all the more power to destroy. To know, oneself, to claim or to construct an identity, Morrison suggests, one must know the past, both individual and collective (Winsboro, 1993).

The literature examined brings up a number of important issues about the nature of ethnicity, how it changes over time and space, and how it takes on new meaning in different contexts. Ethnicity is situationally defined, constructed according to the social and political environment, in the course of social transactions that occur at or across (and in the process help constitue) the ethnic boundary in question (Barth 1969; Cater and Jones 1987; Jackson 1987; Kobayashi 1993). As such, ethnicity is understood to be a relative and dynamic concept, generated through history, politics, culture, and geography. Ethnicity is an emergent phenomenon (Yancey 1976, 392).

These studies show that in the invention and reinvention of social identity lies a tension between voluntarism and choicelessness (Keith and Cross 1993, 22). The categorizations prescribed from external processes are often naturalized in discourse which exclude ethnic groups from fully enjoying membership in their new home. At the same time I argue, however, that because the maintanence of ethnic boundaries is interactive between members and non-members that through the power to self-ascribe ethnicity, an individual exercises choice in mediating,

defining or defending social identity. In this respect, particular places become significant in the negotiation of identity at a local level.

Social identities can be multiple and mediation of identity extremely complicated and personal. In order to understand how identity is reinvented among immigrant women, one must look at the intersections between race, ethnicity and gender (hooks(a) 1984 ; hooks(b) 1990; Kobayashi and Peake 1991; Pettman 1994; Trinh 1993). For immigrant women of colour, socially constructed meanings of ethnicity and gender cannot be viewed separately. As Ghosh (1984) suggests, women are minorities within minorities. South Asians form a minority group because they are disadvantaged with regard to their power and position in the society as a whole. South Asian women form a minority within this group. The problems of women in an ethnic minority group are in addition to the common conflicts and psychic consequences of perceived discrimination suffered by all members of the group. Other studies demonstrate how South Asian immigrant women are often portrayed in the media as backwards and oppressed victims of their cultural and religious systems (Agnew 1997). The choices South Asian immigrant women make in mediating and reinventing social identity often must challenge both gender and racial categorizations. By joining particularly cultural groups and choosing to reside in particular neighbourhoods or types of housing, the women are redefining their identities and challenging externally ascribed categorizations.

As Bondi argues, identity politics is about deconstructing and reconstructing (necessarily multiple) identities in order to resist and undermine dominant mythologies that serve to sustain particular systems of power relations (Bondi 1993, 46). How social identity is reivented will depend on place. Pratt and Hanson (1994) argue that gender (along with other social identities) is constituted differently in different places because place and space are not neutral backdrops or uncomplicated stages for people's lives. Neither are they simply containers within which social relationships develop. Places are constructed through social processes and, so too, social relations are constructed in and through place. Different social relations result in the reinvention of identities befitting the social context (Pratt and Hanson 1994, 25; Soja 1989).

John Western (1992) argues in *Passage to England* that identity becomes contextual. Who one is becomes dependent on the place where they are living or even on who is asking the question. The Barbadian-Londoners interviewed in Western's book felt like foreigners in the

context of discrimination experienced when they first arrived in England. But after living there for years, most felt at home in England and considered themselves Londoners.

I argue that while the women in this study may feel at home in different social contexts, the physical house and particular home spaces outside the house also become critical locales for the reinvention of social identities. The women play important roles in shaping that identity for themselves and their families and, through their efforts, challenge and change notions of what it is to be Canadian and the meaning of home in Canada. The women, rather than remaining marginalized and excluded, have chosen to revitalize and reconstruct their own realities and world views to represent and validate their attitudes and beliefs. This is taking place in the local level, of the women in the home, neighbourhood and local cultural community.

Individuals, through time, may develop an attachment to particular places (Cuba and Hummon 1993; Tuan 1977). Where individuals form a sense of attachment, they feel free to express social identites and develop a feeling of belonging. How the home is reconstructed in a new society, and how the meaning of home changes for immigrant women, is not a well-understood area of research about the immigration adaptation process.

This brief review of the literature indicates how research on Gujarati immigrant women and the home can fill a gap in terms of understanding the experience of migration and how the home is a very meaningful place both physically and metaphorically in the process of making a transition into the host society. It is also important in showing how social identity is negotiated on an individual level and how the home is a significant place of mediation between two cultures.

Research focusing on the South Asian community is particularly important given that South Asians are seldom the subjects of social science research, especially in Québec. Much of my research takes inspiration from studies conducted in Britain by geographers, urban planners and sociologists about the South Asian community and its experiences of employment, housing inequality and racism (Cater 1987; Jackson 1987; Smith 1989). These studies are valuable in providing a theoretical and substantive starting point but are weak in their attention to the aspirations and everyday geographies of South Asian women. There is a growing literature about women immigrants in Quebec and Canada but not much has been written on the South Asian community (Jerabek et.al.1994; Labelle et.al. 1987; Meintel et.al. 1985).

Those studies done on the South Asian community in Canada and Québec have been mainly sociological, and focus on issues of the historical migration and settlement experiences

(Buchignani et.al. 1989; Israel *et. al.* 1993), and intergenerational family relations and family dynamics in the diaspora (Dhruvarajan 1988; Kurian 1986; Israel 1987). There have been some studies on gender and South Asian or Indian ethnicity (Dua 1993; Ghosh 1984; Naidoo 1985; Ralston 1987) and most such studies have been quantitative analyses using large sample sizes (Ghosh 1981a, 1981b, 1984; Naidoo 1980; 1984; Ralston 1991). While all of these studies are valuable in their contribution to our understanding of the South Asian community in Canada, the large samples sizes do not allow for an intimate knowledge of the intricate and everyday experiences of women as they adapt to a new city and society. Nor do many studies take into account the highly fragmented nature of South Asian society along regional, linguistic, religious and caste lines and the impact of this on a woman's migration experience, her role in society, the family and the home.

In conclusion, this study attempts to understand the meaning of home for a particular fragment of the larger South Asian community. It aims to comprehend how the women understand themselves, and how through the negotiations of ethnic and cultural social identities they reinvent and make homes for themselves in Montréal. What I suggest is that home is a place that has a meaning that extends beyond the four walls of the dwelling thereby also including the community and neighbourhood as meaningful home spaces. It is from home and home spaces that meanings are contested and identities, culture and ethnicity are negotiated through social interactions. It is also in these spaces where challenges to membership and belonging in this society are made clear.

In the following chapters, I hope to provide a better understanding of how a group of women struggle to reinvent homes for themselves in the social and physical spaces of Montréal society. Chapter Two provides a more in-depth examination of the sample population, the methods used to select the group, and the use of a qualitative methodology. Chapter Three examines home as a physical and social space in India, as well as the experiences of home for the women in this study prior to their arrival in Montréal. It is necessary to understand the background of the women and their experiences in marriage, the parental and marital home in order to appreciate how home and the women's identities and roles in the home change after migration.

Chapter Four focuses on the settlment process in Montréal, especially with regards to mobility and, in particular, housing. An attempt is made to situate the women in this study within a

broader context of the South Asian community and their housing experiences in Montréal. This chapter aims to highlight the importance of suburbs as places for immigrant home-making.

Chapter Five focuses on the house as an important physical and social space. In Canada, the women cultivate relationships to home that are very different from previous experiences in India. As immigrant women of colour, the home can be viewed paradoxically as both a place of oppression and a refuge from a racist society. Women play an important role, however, in defining the use of the space in the home. In particular, they use it as a place to create new hybrid cultures, communicate identity, and reinvent ethnicity.

Chapter Six examines spaces beyond the walls of the physical dwelling as important places where the women make themselves at home and shape the landscape around them. While the women experience exclusion at various scales in this society, they live locally and it is in the local spaces of the neighbourhood and cultural community that they make their homes. It is also in these spaces that they are able to exercise choice in articulating multiple identities.

Chapter Seven concludes with an overview of the study and a discussion of the reconceptualizations of home and home-making. The efforts of immigrant women in challenging present notions of membership, citizenship and notions of "who is Canadian" are addresed. The importance of qualitative research in geography and the need for a renewed interest in home if it is to truly understand social space is also discussed.

Chapter Two

**Focusing on a Fragment: Delimiting the Study
Population and Research Methodology**

In this chapter I discuss the methods used to examine the experiences of home for

Gujarati immigrant women in Montréal. My research focuses on a sample of Hindu, Gujarati

women with children who immigrated to Montréal between 1968 and 1980, the period during which

South Asian primary migration to Canada was at its peak. This study further concentrates on

women who live in owned housing, mainly single-detached, and who have settled in Dollard-des-

Ormeax on Montréal's West Island[10]. Here, I outline the complex nature of the South Asian

community of Montréal by providing a brief migration history and socio-demographic profile.

Following, I explain the sampling criteria used to delimit the study group, certain methodological

difficulties I encountered and the strengths of a qualitative approach in understanding the

experiences of immigrant women.

South Asian Communitiy: A Brief Migration History and Social Profile

Statistics Canada classifies 'South Asian immigrants' as individuals who were born in

India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, or Nepal. South Asian migration to Canada can be first

dated to the late 19th century. Most of the immigrants were men who came to work temporarily

either for Canadian steamship companies or for businessmen in British Columbia. South Asian

male labourers were viewed as a cheap alternative after a $500 head tax barred further

immigration of labourers from China (Buchignani 1984; Das Gupta 1995, 60). Like earlier Chinese

and Japanese immigrants, the first South Asians to come to Canada were confronted with blatantly

racist immigration and settlement policies[11]. Prime Minister Robert Borden expressed some early

attitudes to Asian migration as follows:

> It is my opinion that the immigration of Oriental aliens and their rapid multiplication is becoming a
> serious menace to living conditions on the West coast and to the future of this country in general.
> This government shall take immediate action to bring to an end such migration for residence
> purposes (as quoted in Walker 1992, 1).

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[10] Two of the 19 women interviewed for this study technically live in the municipality of Pierrefonds but on streets
bordering DDO. Given the similarities of Pierrefonds to DDO in terms of socio-economic levels, ethnic composition
and dwelling types, I included them in the study.

[11] For more studies on the discriminatory nature of Canadian immigration policies see Buchignani, Indra and
Srivastava 1985, Collins and Henry 1994, Taylor, 1991, Walker 1992, Whitaker 1987.

In such a context, early South Asian migrants faced barriers to enfranchisment and employment. Permanent settlement was rendered virtually impossible for most South Asian women through restrictions forbidding wives and children to reunite with their husbands (Das Gupta 1995, 60). Only in 1919 were South Asian women and children allowed into Canada to join their husbands under a quota system that operated until the late 1960s.

The objective of immigration policy, until regulatory changes were introduced in 1962 and 1967, was to limit visible minorities and favour immigrants of European origin, particularly those from Britain and Western Europe (Whitaker 1987). After 1968, significant numbers of South Asians began to settle permanently in Canada. Regulatory changes by-passed some of the most blatantly discriminatory aspects of the 1952 Immigration Act and placed emphasis on the skills and educational qualifications of the independent applicant through a point system.[12] While the selection process targeted mainly independent migrants, the changes also facilitated family reunification. It was also during the 1970s that the first South Asians refugees arrived, especially those from East Africa. In the 1980s, refugees also entered from Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

Although the point system allows for more South Asians to enter the country, few women have entered as independents. Immigration policies favour male migrants. The selection process for both independent and assisted relative immigrants is based on a points test which is underscored by a masculine view of 'skill' (Fincher et. al. 1994, 165). Women are at a disadvantage in the immigration process because their domestic work, paid or unpaid, is not recognized as a skill. Due to their role as the primary caregiver, moreover, they have often had less access to the same education and paid work opportunties as men (Ibid 165-167). Arriving as a sponsored immigrant also reduces a woman's access to income support given that her sponsor is obliged to support her for between 3 and 10 years after her initial residence in Canada (Ibid. 168). Out of 721 women who were born in India and who immigrated to Québec in 1993, 594 or 82% came under the family class category. Figure 2.1 shows that more women enter as

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[12] The point system assesses applicants in terms of criteria that are assigned various weights. For example, in the original system 20 points were based on years of formal education or training, ten were granted for occupational skill (usually reflecting years of paid labour force experience), and thirty points were given on the basis of a definite job offer in Canada. Originally 5 points were given if a relative was able to help the applicant in the settlement process but points for this criterion were removed in system revisions in 1985. Other changes have tended to the increase relative weight given to the applicant's perceived ability to satisfy current labour market demands (Fincher et. al. 1994, 165).

sponsored and family class immigrants. Out of all Indian immigrants arriving under the family category in 1993, 55.8% were women and 57.1% of all sponsored Indian immigrants were women.
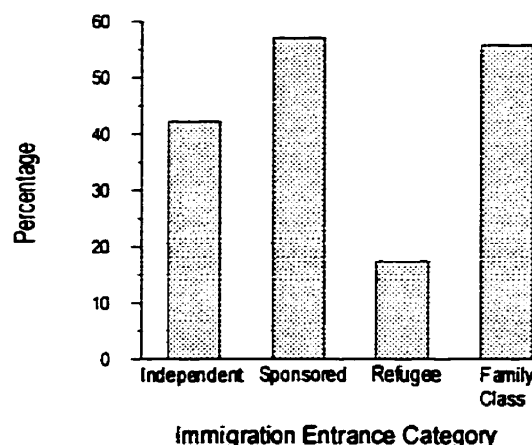
Figure 2.1 *Percentage of women in each immigration category (source: L'immigration feminine au Quebec, Bulletin statisque, Vol 4, 1993)*

The South Asian community of Montréal reflects the tremendous heterogeneity of the Indian sub-continent in terms of culture, language and religion.[13] There are 34 305 South Asian immigrants and South Asian Canadians in Montréal (1.4% of the total population). Of the total South Asian population, 19 785 are immigrants making up 3.2% of the city's total immigrant population. The South Asian immigrant community in Montréal is composed of a population from the Indian subcontinent, Africa and the Carribbean who speak over seven different South Asian languages and dialects and practice at least six different religions (Profils 1995).

The Indian community alone, which makes up 60% of the Montréal's South Asian population, exemplifies the great diversity that exists along religious and linguistic lines[14]. The largest linguistic group among Indians in Montréal is the Gujarati community followed by the Punjabi and Hindi speaking communities and these make up 16%,13%, and 8% of the Indian community respectively. The community is also divided by religion: half are Hindus (50%), 15%

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[13] In India alone, for example, there are 12 major languages and over 500 other less widely spoken languages, indigenous languages and dialects. All of the major religions of the world are represented in India however, the vast majority practice Hinduism (83%). Within Hinduism, there are over 2, 000 different castes (Hardgrave and Kochanek 1986).

are Sikh, 13% are Muslim, 10%are Catholic, 5% are Protestant and 3% are Jain, Buddhist, Zoarastrian, and others (Profils 1995).

Of all the South Asian communities in Montréal, the Indian community is, by far, the one with the most balanced distribution by sex (48% female), in contrast to the Pakistani (44% female), Sri Lankan (41% female) and Bangladeshi (30% female) communities (*Ibid.*). Out of 1 430 Indian-born immigrants, who arrived in Québec in 1993, 721 (50.4%) were women (L'immigration 1996, 48). South Asian communities are largely English, rather than French, speaking and this is also true for South Asian immigrants. In 1993 only 6 (0.4%) of the 1 430 Indian-born immigrants who came to Montréal knew only French out of the two official language, 436 (30.5%) knew only English, 28 (2%) knew both and 960 (67.1%) knew neither (L'immigration 1991, 49). When considering South Asian immigrant women, the percentages that knew either official language are even lower. Out of the 6 Indian immigrants who knew French, 3 are women (50%); 167 (38.3%) knew only English; 8 (28.6%) new both and 543 (56.6%) know neither official language (L'immigration 1991, 49). Some South Asian women in Montréal may be somewhat isolated in their communities or may have had little opportunity or need to learn French or English even though they may have lived here for years (Personal communication, SAWCC, 1996).

In short, the category 'South Asian' masks the complexity and diversity of this population. It refers to people whose roots are in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, the South Pacific, East Africa and the Caribbean. The construction of such a term comes out of the processes of interaction between immigrant groups and native-born Canadians to encompass distinctly different ethno-cultural groups.

> The important theoretical point is that the experience of being a South Asian immigrant woman is fundamentally a social matter, not an individual attribute. Being South Asian refers not so much to the personal qualities of individuals (who come from specific territories outside Canada), but rather to social characteristics which are constructed and maintained in the relationships between South Asians and other members of Canadian society. It is socially constructed and reconstructed in the historical and ongoing processes of relationships in specific social and economic contexts. Things like national origin, language, religion, culture, food customs, dress and skin colour become organized as 'differences' which have consequences for individuals and groups (Ralston 1988, 64)[15].

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[14] Unless stated otherwise, these figures refer to both immigrant and Canadian-born populations.

[15] In much the same way, the term "immigrant woman" refers not so much to legal status as to a process of social construction in everyday life which describes women who are visibly "different" in skin colour, language, religion, dress, customs, work activities and the like. In legal terms, they may be Canadian citizens who have been permanent residents for more than twenty years. On the other hand, the term "immigrant woman" is seldom applied to white,

As such, there are great problems inherent in discussing a 'South Asian' experience overall. The South Asian community of Montréal is divided by culture, language, religion and, for Hindu South Asians, by caste. This complexity is further augmented by differences in period of migration, place of residence in Montréal, and type of residence. As a consequence, this study concentrates only on Hindu women in the Gujarati community, the largest South Asian group in Montréal so as to highlight the role of their cultural and other contextual factors that may not be shared by all South Asian groups. By further concentrating on middle class women living in suburban areas of Montreal, a greater understanding of one particular component of the fragmented South Asian community, rather than a very general understanding of the population, can be developed. The following section examines the Gujarati community of Montréal and explains how the study population was delimited.

Narrowing down the study population

In important ways, the Gujarati community of Montréal is itself divided. While the majority of Gujarati families are from India, some are from the Carribbean and a large number have emigrated from, or were forced out of, East Africa. In terms of religious composition, Gujaratis may be Hindu, Jain or Muslim. The Gujurati Hindu community is also split into two independent cultural organizations - the Gujarati Samaj and Mandata Mandir. There are conflicting stories regarding this separation, but class and rural versus urban origins seem to be the most important factors.

The Gujarati Samaj formed in 1980. Its members are an agglomeration of two other Gujarati cultural organizations. The first group formed in the early 1970s and was known as 'the Detroit Group', named for a group of men who had immigrated to study engineering in Detroit before they settled in Montréal. The second was made up of Gujarati immigrants who had emigrated from Africa. Most Samaj members came from urban centres in India and Africa but tend to live in suburban areas of Montréal (personal communication, 1997).

anglophone, Christian, western women who have entered Canada from the Commonwealth, Northern Europe or the United States (Ralston 1988, 84).

Mandata Mandir, on the other hand, was formed in the 1980s. The members of this organization are mainly part of a particular Hindu caste known as the Surati Patels[16] and generally come from more rural areas, particularly fishing villages in Surat, Gujarat. Most of its members arrived during a period of increased 'chain' migration (migration mediated through community social networks) to Canada. As the number of immigrants from the Gujarati community grew in the 1970s, they eventually split from the Gujurati Samaj and formed Mandata Mandir, as well as a separate community temple called the Ramji Mandir located in downtown Montréal. Most of the members of Mandata Mandir live in downtown Montréal, especially in the inner city neighbourhoods of Parc-Extension and Cote-des-Neiges (Ibid.).

In order to narrow down the sample population for this study, the following criteria were used. The women had to be members of the Gujarati Samaj of Montréal, be Hindu (or Jain) in religion, from India and English-speaking. They also had to have immigrated to Montréal between 1968-1980 and be currently living in DDO. I chose to focus my study on Gujurati Samaj members for three reasons. First, the organization is larger, has existed for a longer period of time and, consequently, provided a larger pool of women from which to sample. Secondly, many of the members reside in suburban areas. Finally, most of the women come from middle-class family backgrounds and had a good knowledge of English, which made discussion somewhat easier[17].

From within the Gujarati Samaj, I interviewed women from India. The Gujarati population from Africa, by virtue of their experiences as minorities in African societies and forced migration, are different relative to their Indian counterparts. I did, however, interview three women who were born in Africa but who had moved back to India when they were children (before they were 14 years of age) and were not part of the forced migration flow.

I did not distinguish between women who were followers of Hinduism and those who were followers of Jainism. Although there are differences between the two religions, Jain teachings closely resmble the Sankya school of Hindu philosophy (Embree 1988, 53). Both religions are viewed as ways of life and are practiced through activities in daily life. Jains often perform all the domestic rites of Hinduism and even employ brahmans (a Hindu priestly caste) to carry out the

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[16] Patel is the name of a Kshatryia or warrior caste. This particular group are often called Surati Patels because they are mainly from the region of Surat in Gujarat (personal communication 1996).

[17] While the middle class is not the wealthiest stratum of Indian society, exposure to westernization requires a certain class position and a relative comfort with communication in English (Tyagi 1996, 47).

rituals. Jains not only worship many of the Hindu gods believed to bestow temporal blessings, but they also have their own versions of the most famous Hindu legends (*Ibid.*, 57).

The period of immigration, between 1968 and1980, was selected again for language reasons[18]. Immigrants who arrived in this period would have lived here for at least 15 years and may have developed a greater command of English. The women have also lived in Montréal long enough to have formed ideas of home within a Montréal context which immigrants from more recent cohorts may have not yet developed. All of the women live in Dollard-des-Ormeaux (DDO), a quintessential suburban municipality, and reside in owned housing. The group of women I interviewed may seem quite circumscribed, but it reflects my belief that to study other South Asian women who live in a different area of Montréal, who immigrated during a different time period, or who are from a different linguistic or religious group, would produce very different results.

Making Contact

I made contact with the community first through the South Asian Women's Community Centre of Montréal where I have been working as a volunteer. This organization was able to put me in contact with the president of the Gujarati Samaj who referred me to some initial interviewees. I also met women through a personal contact in the Gujurati Samaj with whom I attended Gujurati functions and celebrations. I used a snowball sampling method to meet women who were not among my initial interviewees. It was necessary to use this method given the difficultly of identifying Gujarati immigrant women from India through any other means (Figure 2.2). For example, if one were to consult a telephone directory or even a Gujarati Samaj directory, it would be impossible to distinguish between Indian immigrant and Canadian-born members, or Gujaratis from India as opposed to those from Africa or the Caribbean.

In addition to my own research, I have had the opportunity to meet with members of the Gujarati community on other occassions. In 1996 I worked as a research assistant conducting semi-structured interviews for a research project focusing on social networks and use of local space by Gujarati and Malayalee women in Montréal.[19] Although this project focused on

[18] Thirty-eight percent of Indian immigrants arrived in this period (Profils 1995).
[19] This project is entitled 'Les réseaux d'entraide et de sociabilité des femmes immigrantes après quelques années d'établissement à Montréal: le rôle de la proximité', part of the SSHRCC Strategic Grant "Women and Change" 1995-

Figure 2.2 Snowball sampling method

LEGEND

— — — — Direct friend or acquaintance

· · · · · · · Found from community directory or class list
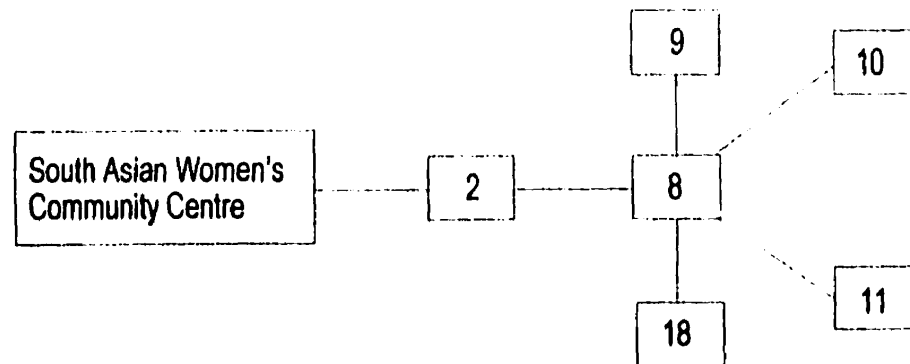
△ Interview not used
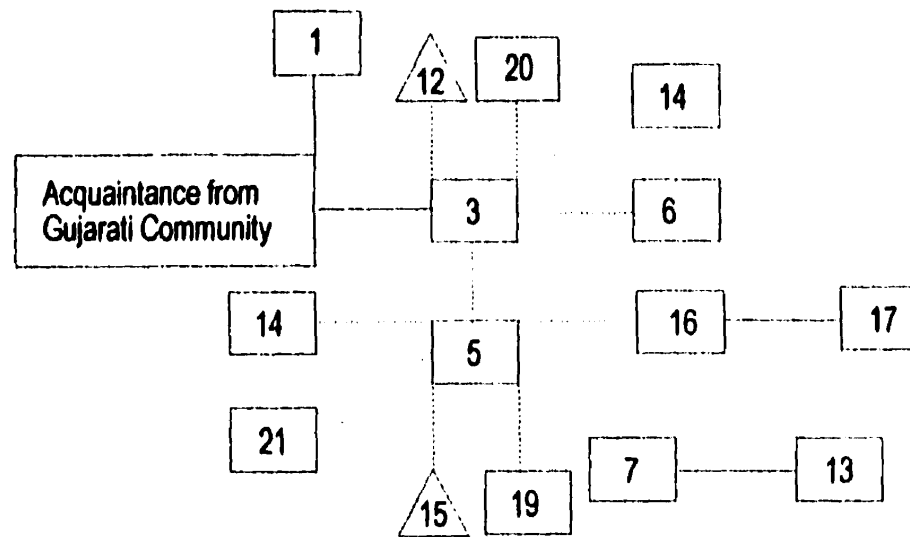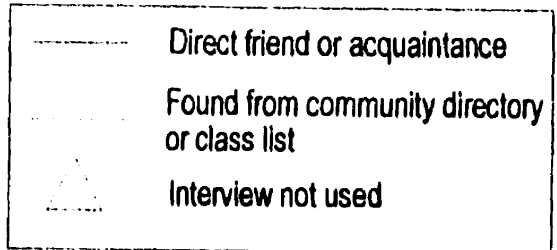
Pseudonyms corresponding to numbers

1. Mira
2. Vina
3. Kanta
4. Panna
5. Maya
6. Mohini
7. Priti
8. Ami
9. Jagruti
10. Falguni
11. Sonal
12. Discarded interview
13. Jayna
14. Usha
15. Discarded interview
16. Nisha
17. Madhu
18. Shifali
19. Hema
20. Jyostna
21. Gita

immigrants arriving between 1988 and 1991, through the interviews, I learned more about the importance of community networks and neighbourhoods for immigrant women which provided me with necessary background for understanding the social meaning of home especially as extending beyond the walls of the physical dwelling. From a personal perspective, participating in religious and social functions and assisting a few of the women with some of their personal projects has helped foster relationships of reciprocity and rapport with the larger community. In the past seven months, I have also had the opportunity to meet with the women on more informal occasions which has allowed me an opportunity not only to get to know them better but also to observe family interactions and dynamics.

Data

In-depth, open-ended interviews were conducted over a six-month period (see Appendix for interview schedule). Information was also gathered through participant observation and informal conversations with the interviewees and other members of the Gujarati and larger South Asian community. I interviewed 21 women out of which 19 are used in this study. Two interviews have been discarded. I decided against using one interview with a Gujarati woman who had spent almost all of her life in South Africa. After comparing her interview with those of the other respondents, it was clear that her point of reference for discussing home emanated from a previous sense of cultural displacement as an Indian living in Africa. The second discarded interview was not completed due to the influence of the respondent's husband who insisted on remaining during the course of the interview. The man often spoke for his wife and, when I said that I was interested in hearing about the experiences of women not men, the woman replied, "He knows my experiences better than me." The interview was cut short but the experience was useful in gaining perspective on the dynamics of gender relationships in some South Asian marriages.

The interviews were conducted in English and were taped so as to record the experiences of the women in their own words and to avoid disrupting the flow of the interviews through note taking. Some women were more comfortable with being recorded than were others. In cases of uneasiness, I would often remain and talk with the women after the tape recorder was turned off and then make notes afterwards. It was often in these unguarded moments that many of the

1998. The project coordinators are Joanne Charbonneau and Damaris Rose, INRS-Urbanisation and Brian Ray,

women felt most comfortable and willing to talk about more emotional issues such as discrimination or family relations.

Each interview lasted between one to three and a half hours and took place in the women's homes. Not only was this a more comfortable setting for the interview, it was also essential in order to talk about the physical homespace. Whenever possible, I tried to conduct interviews when the women were at home alone and therefore able to speak freely. The names of the women have been changed to ensure confidentiality.

Some of the themes pursued in the interviews include how home, for the interviewees, its meaning and their role in the home have changed through the migration process. I also examined the meaning given to the physical home through how space is decorated and the activities that take place in it. I also asked about social and physical spaces outside of the physical dwelling and their importance in aiding the women to construct a sense of home and belonging in this society. Finally I examined how they saw their identity as changing over time and where they feel home is today.

In general, my affiliation with the South Asian Hindu community, though not specifically the Gujarati community, has had both disadvantages and advantages. The disadvantages were primarily linguistic in that the interviews were conducted in English, a reflection of my linguistic limitations. Consequently, the interviews might have been slightly different had they been conducted in their mother-tongue. Being South Asian was advantageous in that I felt the women talked more candidly of their relations with the host society and other ethnic and cultural communities. This was especially important when discussing racism. Being South Asian but not Gujarati also helped in terms of breaking the ice at the beginning of the interview in that we were able to discuss Indian functions that we may have both attended, or talk about differences between my community (from Kerala in South India) and the Gujarati community.

In addition to the interviews and participant observations, I worked with special tabulation data from the 1991 Canadian census. This data, organized at the census tract (CT) level,

comprises variables about housing conditions and socio-economic characteristics among immigrant groups at both the Montréal metropolitan area (CMA) and intra-urban (DDO) level. I have concentrated on the following variables: (1) Birthplace; (2) Period of immigration; (3) Dwelling type; (4) Tenure; (5) Total household income; and (6) Household type (Table 2.1 contains a description of the categories for each variable). The number of categories per variable is small relative to the total number available from Statistics Canada so as to maximize the number of cells in the tables with observations[20].

The data set, contains 15 different birthplace groups. This study, however, will only examine two groups: individuals born in Canada who define their ethnicity as French or British, and individuals born in South Asia who have immigrated to Canada. I refer to the first group as the 'French/British.' Although they constitute a relatively small percentage of the total Canadian born population, especially in DDO (62.4% of Montréal's total population defines themselves as being of French or British ethnicity; 22% of DDO's total population define themselves as French or British), they are the benchmark groups against which the behaviour of immigrant groups has traditionally been measured (Breton et.al. 1990; Ray et.al. 1997).

When interpreting the special tabulation data, it is important to bear in mind the following. First, the data are based on individuals and not households. This means that the 'household type' variable refers to the number of individuals who belong to a particular household type rather than the number of households falling within a particular category. Secondly, the data are limited to persons over the age of fifteen given that the number of immigrant children in any birthplace group is usually relatively small, especially when compared to the number of children born to Canadian parents (Ray et. al. 1997, 84). Thirdly, data are provided for individuals born in South Asia and it is important to recognize this as problematic given the ethnic, cultural, religious and even political differences within this group. Not only does it make it impossible to examine Indian immigrants or the Gujarati community specifically, but it dismisses important differences between these populations which are seldom acknowledged by the Canadian general public, media or government. As a consequence, the South Asian data is used to establish a general context for the examination of the Gujarati community and the meaning of home among women.

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[20] Statistic Canada suppresses counts in cell tables with less than 10 observations in order to maintain confidentiality. This therefore demands that some amalgamation of categories be undertaken (Ray et. al. 1997, 84).

Table 2.1 *Special Tabulation Variables and Categories*

(1) *Birthplace*
  China, Taiwan, Hong Kong
  Canada (only French and British)
  US/UK/Europe (excluding Italy)
  Haiti
  Jamaica
  Guyana
  Remainder of the Caribbean
  Central America
  South America
  Vietnam
  South Asia
  Africa
  Italy
  Canada (all non-British/French ethnicities)

(2) *Period of immigration*
  Before 1968
  1969-1980
  1981-1991

(3) *Total household income*
  Less than $25 000
  $25 000-$59 000
  $60 000 or more

(4) *Household type*
  Two-person family, with or without children
  Lone-parent family household
  Multiple family household
  Non-family household

(5) *Dwelling type*
  Single-detached house
  Semi-detached house
  Low-rise (includes duplexes, triplexes and apartments < 5 storeys)
  High-rise apartments (over 5 storeys)

(6) *Tenure*
  Own
  Rent

Why a qualitative approach?

I have adopted a predominantly qualitative approach in order to gain a deeper understanding of the individual experiences of the Gujarati women in this study and to get an idea of the nature and meaning of home and identity for this small group of immigrant women. Most of the study is based on personal histories, subjective interpretations and story-telling about home life in India, use of home space in Canada, meaningful personal possessions kept in the home, and the sense of belonging and place cultivated in Montréal and DDO over time. A rigid quantative methodology, for which measurement is paramount, would not capture the subtle and individual meanings of home. It is only with a qualitative approach that an understanding of the complexities of culture in everyday life, the process of decision making, and the emotional hardship of making a home in a new society can be gained (Goodson-Lawes 1994; Halfacree and Boyle 1993; Johnson 1978).

When using a qualitative approach there is always the danger of misrepresenting the subject's life or story, although this approach allows the interviewer to develop an atmosphere of mutual learning, where power relationships are less predetermined, and a dialogue and negotiation surrounding interpretation with the respondent can be established (Dyck, 1997; Goodson-Lawes 1994; Borland, 1991). It is important to acknowledge that the researcher, by selecting particular research themes, presenting data, and situating research within a particular body of literature, is not neutral or detached from the study. As Trinh T. Minh-ha argues, in writing and research there is no object because research, its questions, analysis and writing are always imposed and influenced by the scholar. "The structure is therefore not something given, entirely external to the person who structures, but a projection of that person's way of handling society..."(Trinh 1989, 141). As such, it is critical to acknowledge the importance of interpretation, open-mindedness and reflexivity (Eyles 1998; Duncan and Ley 1993; Johns et. al 1994, 256; Smith 1988; Western 1992).

Bearing in mind the role of the researcher, this study is largely interpretive and, in presenting the findings, I have taken inspiration from the approaches of John Western in *A Passage to England: Barbadian Londoners Speak of Home* (1992) and Elijah Anderson's *Streetwise: Race, Class, and Change in an Urban Community* (1990). Both of these studies rely on multiple voices and points of view to interpret the nature of identity and place in particular urban contexts. Western's work, in particular, is not written to offer 'right' or 'factual' answers, but rather

to provide a subjective representation of people and their relation to place; considerable onus is placed on the reader to interpret the words and meaning of the respondents who tell their stories.

Conclusion

The South Asian immigrant community is highly divided and it is important to acknowledge the differences in this community and how these differences may influence the meaning of home, home-making and the use of spaces in the home. It is for this reason that I have attempted to focus on a very small and relatively homogenous fragment of that population. Given the small number of interviews, a statistically significant representation of South Asian or even Indian experiences is not possible. In fact, a generalizable experience of home is itself highly problematic given that Gujarati women may live in a number of different kinds of housing – from high rise apartments to bungalows – and their experiences of place are strongly linked to their time spent in Canada. A qualitative approach does, however, allow one to understand the everyday geographies of a particular group of women and their experiences of home as both a critical locale for the (re)constitution and negotiations of ethnicity, culture, and identity and as a metaphoric feeling of belonging or sense of 'place' within Canadian society. The interviews are complemented by the use of statistical data on housing in the larger South Asian community. These data will be looked at in greater detail in Chapter IV and will allow us to situate the 19 women within the context of the larger South Asian population. The story of home for the 19 women begins with the next chapter that discusses the physical and social space of homes in India.

Chapter 3
Hinduism, Gender and the Home in India

Through the stories of 19 Gujarati women, we are able to understand home and home-making as an experience and a continuing social process that begins with the changing nature of home after marriage in India and continues through housing changes and an incessant struggle to feel 'at home' in Montréal. This chapter focuses on the home in India before migration to Canada. The women in this study came from predominantly urban areas in India, though a few women lived in smaller cities. Fourteen of the women grew up in single-detached housing, four lived in apartments and one woman was raised on a farm. Thirteen of the nineteen women lived in multiple family households either before or after marriage if not both.

When the women talked about their childhood homes and the homes where they lived after marriage, they picked out both physical and social details as memorable. The stories shared by the women about their childhood homes, marriage, family relations and migration, in this and chapters to come, elucidate how the women negotiate identities in light of family pressures and continually reinvent homes across a variety of geographical locations and social settings. The women do not discuss home as a place that reflects identity but, ultimately, they speak of home in India as a social space where social relationships are reinforced, enjoyed or suffered and where identity is often fixed and unchanging due to gender, class, and caste.

This chapter begins with an examination of the home in India as a physical space highlighting some of the differences between homes there and in Canada. The remainder of the chapter concentrates on the home as a social space where their behaviour and identity as upper caste middle class Hindu women was shaped through family relations. In order to understand these social relationships, it is important to first examine how home, marriage, family and images of the ideal woman's role within these institutions are valued and naturalized through discourse in Hindu religious texts, mythology, social customs, and even law. The women's experiences in their parental and marital homes are then discussed, as well as the manner in which these experiences were sometimes influenced by pressure to meet the ideals of gender roles.

The Home in India as a Physical Space

When remembering their homes in India, many women pointed to the cultural importance of home, the use of its space and the differences between housing styles in India and Canda. Some women pointed to physical details of the house in terms of building materials and design. Jyotsna, for example, was raised in an urban centre and described how houses in India are designed differently from those in Canada as they are made out of cement, clay, concrete and adobe. The walls are thick and high to keep the heat out and there are ceiling fans in every room. Houses do not even have window glass on the windows, just steel bars. Even in big cities like Bombay and Calcutta, doors and windows remain open at all times of the day and night. Usha remembered how very colourful was her house in India. The exterior walls of her adobe dwelling were bright red with big white dots. Her home was separated from the main street by a high cement wall with a big iron gate. It had a flat roof upon which people could hang laundry, dry chilies, or look out to the world beyond the compound walls. These walls served to separate the family from the outside world. Just before Usha migrated with her family when she was young, she spent most of her time hidden behind those walls. As a young girl, she was not allowed out of the house unless accompanied by the family.

Most women discussed the permanence of housing in India, the divisions of space in the home, and how household size influenced the use of that space. For this reason, the criteria established by Altman and Chemers (1980) in their study of how homes are a window to seeing and understanding cultures is useful in structuring a discussion of the home in India relative to housing in the Western world. Adopting a cross-cultural perspective, they apply three sets of criteria to housing as: i) permanent or temporary; ii) differentiated or homogeneous and; iii) communal or non-communal (Altman and Chemers 1980, 157).

As Altman and Chemers found, housing in contemporary Western society is permanent in that the actual, physical dwelling is an immovable structure (the obvious exception would be a mobile home). Although housing varies according to socio-economic status, most houses have differentiated spaces. That is, each room of the dwelling is specialized. For example, kitchens, bedrooms and bathrooms each serve distinct functions. Western houses are also mostly non-communal in that usually only one household occupies a single dwelling.

In India, housing may vary even more according to socio-economic status than in the West. For nomadic cultures, shelters, if used at all, are temporary and mobile; squatters often

occupy straw or clay huts that are easily destroyed and rebuilt if they are forced off their land. For wealthier families, housing is usually permanent. Houses are often passed down from generation to generation within the family and, in that sense, are 'more permanent' than in North America. It is also not as common for a family to buy a house and then sell it for profit or to sell it in order to buy a new one. In this sense, perhaps, I would add a fourth criteria, of housing as commodified or non-commodified[21].

The sense of home as permanent is also often a privilege enjoyed mainly by men in Indian society. This is because housing is usually passed down through sons. Daughters, on the other hand, generally grow up knowing that they will be leaving their house once married. In that sense, the house may be a permanent structure, but a daughter's presence in that house may be temporary. Ami's father, for example, bought five lots of land on which he built houses for each of her five brothers. *When they grew up, they [each] had their own house...They didn't have to worry...[about] when their wives came [because] they knew they had a house.* It was expected that Ami would move to her husband or in-law's home and would therefore not need a house[22].

Whether housing in India is differentiated or homogenous depends, as is also the case in Western society, on the socio-economic status of the residents (Altman and Chemers 1980, 158). Wealthier families of India, like North American families, usually live in homes with differentiated space. Poorer families may live in single-room dwellings where all activities, including living, cooking and sleeping, take place in a single space. Often, there are no bathrooms or kitchens in such low-income households. At other times, extended families, in low-income households, may live in a cluster of single-room clay huts but share a common kitchen (Gulati 1981).

All of the women in this study were privileged enough to live in housing with differentiated spaces. Jayna described her house as a space where women did all the work and pointed to the kitchen as epitomizing the notion of women's space as a workplace. Even though there were domestic workers to do the cleaning and help with the cooking, the kitchen was a place where only women entered. The kitchen in Indian homes is often the most devalued place in the house and is

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[21] More and more families in urban areas are living in nuclear family arrangements and are moving into apartments before making the transition to home ownership. Even in such cases, however, a home is often provided to the family by parents, or is built on family land. Even if it is purchased, it is not easily given up unless one is leaving the city or town.

often left with cement floors and no decorations at all. She described it as gray, bare and designed for cooking only. There were no tables or chairs. While men had no reason to enter the kitchen, it was the site where the women spent most of their day. *In India, [women] get up at 5:00 and cook, eat, clean up. Then by that time, 2:00, cooking lunch, eating, then tea-time, then supper time. The whole day is spent cooking.* Another important feature in the Indian home is the family temple or *puja*[23] room for prayers. According to Rakoff (1977), the home in Indian society holds a multiple significance in that the house acts as a place of nurturing as well as a holy place.

> In many traditional societies, for example, houses enclosed sacred space: deities dwelt there, religious rituals were performed while profane activities were proscribed, and the hearth, like the temple, helped to unify natural, social, and supernatural realms and to resolve symbolically the conflicts among them (Rakoff 1977, 86).

The use of the kitchen and prayer room in India influenced the manner in which several of the women in this study redefined the rooms of their homes in the Canadian context (see Chapter V).

Finally, many houses in India are also communal spaces shared by multiple families. While each family has a separate bedroom, the kitchen, dining and living rooms are shared. Sometimes, more than one family may even share the same room. Many of the women in this study grew up sharing rooms with their sisters, cousins or unmarried aunts. In a communal house, the 'private sphere' is often very public because one's personal business and space is shared by many. Madhu commented, *Everyone knows when you get up, go out, and generally everything you are doing.* While she loved her family, she sometimes found it frustrating to share space. She only felt at peace when she was alone in the bedroom with the door shut. Nisha described a space divided to maintain a greater degree of privacy: each bedroom had a private bathroom and that ensured that some aspects of life were kept behind closed doors. These ideas of sharing space and having a space of one's own also influenced, as Chapter V will discuss, how the women redefined spaces in their new homes.

In India, most of the women lived in multiple family households owned by either their parents or in-laws. As such, no one discussed home as a place which reflected a personal identity. Often identity for the women was communicated through other visual cues such as their dress or

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[22] Nowadays, women from wealthy families may have land or a house that is offered as a form of dowry (personal communication, member of the Gujarati Samaj, 1997).
[23] *Puja* refers to the Hindu prayer ceremony.

food habits which could indicate their caste or class (Rappoport 1981; Young 1987). Priti, however, commented about how houses in India and Canada communicate ideas of Indian and Canadian culture and values. She said that in India the doors are always open and the people are very open. There is always somebody stopping by. In Canada, with the cold weather and social customs, doors are always shut. *Sometimes I feel like I am closed up in a box when I'm in Canada.* Some Indian homes are surrounded by high compound walls. These walls act as barriers from which the women are able to look out and see the world beyond while maintaining a distance. This idea of barriers that become fluid and penetrable will be used to discuss the home in the Canadian context.

The house in terms of the layout, use of space and concept of shared space, as we shall see later, has influenced what sort of homes in Montréal have best suited the women. We will also see how they have redefined the spaces of Canadian homes to suit their needs, and reflect Indian family and spiritual values. How they use spaces in the home to challenge often patriarchal gender roles will also be discussed.

The physical qualities of the home are significant, but the women also pointed to various socio-cultural aspects of the home in India as being tremendously important in the ways in which they remember and conceptualize the home. When examining the women's relationships to family and home, it is important to consider women's roles and behaviour as defined by Hindu religious texts and laws. The women discussed these issues in relation to their own experiences and how they addressed family expectations of their behaviour inside the home.

The Indian Home as a Social Space: The Influence of Hindu Ideals on Home Experiences

Discourse of the ideal woman, as presented in the discourse of religious texts, folklore, and even legislation has shaped, influenced, and naturalized the ideological relationships between Hindu women, family and the home[24]. Hinduism, although commonly known in the West as a religion, is a way of life with a culture that defines social organization, codes of conduct, and life practices (Embree 1988; Gokhale 1970). While India is a self-proclaimed secular state, religion remains one of the major ideologies around which identity for the individual or group is formed.

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[24] It is mainly for the upper caste Hindus that the home is so central. For lower caste Hindu women, as for working class women, the home has had a different meaning. The home has never been their exclusive sphere of influence as they usually work outside, although occasionally inside, the home to support the household.

The division between secular and religious life that has taken place in the West has not occurred in this pluri-religious society. Rather, religious ideology and ritual are embedded in everyday life (Embree 1988).

Hindu society is divided into several castes (*varna*), each of which has social customs which regulate marriage, food habits, occupations and attitudes towards other groups. The overarching feature of the social system is the ascription of social status on the basis of ritual purity or ritual practices (Embree 1988, 205)[25]. Aside from social roles and obligations defined by caste, religious texts discuss the ideal life of an individual as divided into four stages - studentship, householdership, forest dwelling and renunciation[26]. Traditionally, it was usually men who would pass through these four stages while a woman's life was divided into three main phases - maidenhood, marriage and, if her husband should die first, self-immolation on her husband's funeral pyre[27], or widowhood. Today, it is accepted that both men and women may pass through the four stages of ideal life although it is in the householder stage that the majority of Indians live. Only a few people, for example a *sanyasi* or saintly person, may move to the next stages through renunciation of the material world. Marriage is an essential part of the householder stage of life.

Female Identity in the Hindu Family

Traditional notions of woman, as based on Hindu texts, interpret female identity solely in relation to male identity closing off any possibility of women forging independent identities (Young 1987, 82). Discourse in popular mythology, literature, art and even law have further perpetuated images of the ideal woman as wife and mother. These ideas are particularly influential in some upper-caste Hindu households where status is often associated with keeping women at home and out of the labour force. The home, for an upper caste Hindu woman, is an important space, and sometimes the only space, for cultivation of female identity.

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[25] A complex social phenomenon such as the caste system results from the interaction of a variety of factors. The word "varna" means colour or complexion which indicates that one of the influencing factors of caste divisions is conceptions of 'race' based on phenotypic characteristics (Embree 1988, 215).

[26] By passing through these stages, an individual should be able to realize the four ends of life which are kama (pleasure), artha (material gain), dharma (virtue) and moksha. Known as Nirvana in Buddhism, moksha is the breaking free from the cycle of rebirth, where one's soul becomes one with the universe. It is what each individual strives for by following one's dharma to avoid rebirth (Embree 1988, 274-5). The concept of the four stages of life seeks to resolve the conflict between two ideals, the consolidation of society and the spiritual emancipation of the individual. Although these ideas only represent a picture of an ideal society, these practices continue to dominate the thinking of many, Hindus and non-Hindus in India (Embree 1988, 216-17).

Patriarchal interpretations of Hindu philosophy led to the concept of *stridharma* or the ideal behaviour of Hindu women, emphasizing loyalty, chastity, docility, and humility, as well as strength (*Ibid.*, 72). The *Manu Smrti (Lawbook of Manu)* tells of how a woman is viewed in relation to the men in her life and how the private sphere is her exclusive domain of nurturing and caring. This text describes how a woman's

> father protects her in childhood, her husband protects her in youth, her sons protect her in old age - a woman does not deserve independence...Regarding this as the highest dharma...husbands, though weak, must strive to protect their wives. His own offspring, character, family, self, and dharma does one protect when he protects his wife scrupulously...The husband should engage his wife in the collection and expenditure of his wealth, in cleanliness, in dharma [religious rites], in cooking food for the family, and in looking after the necessities of the household...Women destined to bear children, enjoying great good fortune, deserving of worship, the resplendent lights of homes on the one hand and divinities of good luck who reside in the houses on the other - between these there is no difference whatsoever (Embree 1988, 228-229).

After marriage, the upper-caste woman's sphere is exclusively in the home[28]. The woman is to focus on her *pati* or husband; he is to be her 'god.'[29] Although the married couple is supposed to represent complementarity, there remains an inequality in that a woman's appreciation of her husband as pati or god is more central to her daily religious life and spiritual values than wife as goddess is to her husband's spiritual life (Young 1987, 75). Men's rituals are often performed externally and are offered in prayer for good crops or general prosperity. Women's rituals focus more specifically on family welfare, and prosperity within the walls of the home (Wadley 1980 in Young 1987, 73). For women, religion is often internalized, lived by, and supported through their own integrity or self-interest. Hindu religious practices are transformed and transfigured to fit the domestic religiosity of women (Young 1987, 73).

> [S]o pervasive is the attribution of divine characteristics to a human, and human traits to a deity, that one wonders whether the religious psychology of a Hindu wife did not approximate that of the polyandrous woman, that is one woman with two *patis*: she cooked for both, she served both, she entertained both, she was devoted to both (*Ibid.* 76).

Images of the ideal woman are visible in the landscape of Indian cities, for example in temples, goddesses are portrayed caressing the feet of their Lords (*Ibid.*, 78). Myths passed down

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[27] This practice, known as *sati* has been outlawed, but historically it was a tradition for some segments of society.
[28] It should be noted that increasingly, more and more women work for paid employment in upper and middle class families, although there are still cases where women a woman's working inside the home is equated with greater status.
[29] In fact, an examination of the word *pati* can be bifurcated to mean either "god" or "husband"(Young 1988, 75).

orally stress the feminine qualities of *stridharma* in the relationships between husband and wife. In literature one encounters stories of maidens making vows for securing husbands, a practice that is still common among some unmarried women.

The epic Ramayana tells the story of Sita who follows her husband Rama into the forest and endures the hardships of forest life. Sita is then kidnapped by the evil king Ravana and held hostage until Rama rescues her. When Sita insists on accompanying Rama to the forest, she argues that a woman's place is with her husband, that a wife shares her husband's fortunes and karma, that the shade of his feet is greater than all palaces, and that she has trained her mind for the hardships of the forest (*Ibid.*, 78). When her fidelity was in doubt after being held by Ravana for so long, she proves her chastity through a fire ordeal.

In more extreme cases, ideals of a woman's dedication to home and her husband are legislated in social customs and Hindu laws. *Purdah*, which literally translated means 'curtain', is a common practice among Hindus in North India and some Muslims in various countries. Purdah encompasses a wide-range of social practices including such actions as lowering eyes and acting modestly, especially in the company of men, as well as physical geographic restrictions on married women between the ages of fifteen and forty. These restrictions generally mean that women remain inside the home compound, notwithstanding visits to the natal home or gatherings with other women in the village (Jung 1987). Practices such as the alienation of widows and the laws forbidding widow re-marriage have also naturalized the notion of woman's identity as existing only in relation to men. Traditional beliefs among many Hindus in various parts of India are that a woman, once widowed, should no longer seek pleasure from life, wear any jewelry, add spices to her food, or attend auspicious occasions. While the laws prohibiting widow re-marriage and the mistreatment of widows have recently been revoked, in many parts of India, social customs and popular beliefs perpetuate the stigma of widowhood (Conference proceedings, 1994).

The willingness to give first priority to the family and husband, even above and beyond one's own personal desires, is a valued trait among Indian woman. These images reinforce those values. Instead of the complementarity of the couple being promoted, it is the ideal of a woman being dedicated to her husband and family that is often emphasized.

Today, the status of women is changing tremendously and opportunities for women in education, careers, and their participation in social movements and politics have increased irrespective of class or caste. Yet, in spite of changes in the status of women, ancient ideas about

gender remain pervasive throughout Indian society, particularly among the higher castes (Young 1987, 98). Bharathi Mukherjee, in her autobiographical novel *Days and Nights in Calcutta*, sums up the contradictory images of women being presented in India twenty years ago (the time at which many of the women in this study were marrying and immigrating to Canada) and that still exist today.

> The trouble, it seemed to me, was that even in the India of 1973-74 with its woman Prime Minister and its impressive lists of women in politics, medicine, law, journalism, and labor unions, the average woman modeled her life not on these modern examples, but on Sita and Savitri of ancient Hindu literature. The stories of Sita and Savitri were kept alive by oral tradition, while the modern models were accessible to only the urban few who could read newspapers (Blaise and Mukherjee 1977, 231).

All of the women in this study agree that, today, women in India have more opportunities in terms of careers and education. Women also exercise more choice in choosing their spouse and the timing of their marriage than in the past. Many of the women felt that when they were young they were expected to obey the decisions that their parents and, later, in-laws or husbands made. They were supposed to value marriage and family above all else. Conceptions of ideal female behaviour as dedicated daughters and wives were often reinforced in family relations. Many of the women discussed the pressures they experienced in trying to meet ideals as daughters, wives, and daughter-in-laws. Accommodating to meet these expectations became an important way in which they made homes for themselves both in their own families and the new ones they joined after marriage.

Family Relations in the Childhood and Marital Homes

As previously mentioned, most of the women described their homes as social spaces where at times social relationships were enjoyed and at other times they were suffered. Some families valued the images of women who served their husbands and families and subsequently, some women faced pressure to conform to such roles. Through their flexibility and tolerance, many of the women adapted their behaviour to meet the expectations of their parents or in-laws and in this manner attempted to reinvent homes or places of belonging within different social settings.

Many women remember that while living with their parents and in-laws, their behaviour was controlled more than men were. As young girls, they were not allowed to socialize outside of

the home unless accompanied by other family members. Common remarks by women included the following: *We [the girls] were not allowed much*; or *Back home, girls are always with family.* Madhu remembers that she and her sister were taken directly to school and, afterwards, brought immediately home by the family's driver. It was not acceptable to be out alone. Other women were always given the freedom to go out with friends and even encouraged to go on school trips. Jyostna went out more with her friends in India than do her children in Canada. Nisha traveled through India and Europe on organized tours her father used to arrange.

Those who felt that their behaviour was controlled have fond memories of their parental homes but also describe them as places where they prepared for married life. Hema says that her parents always wanted her to marry and prepared her for married life by making sure she learned to cook. They were not concerned with her desire for a career but insisted that she find a good husband. *If I stayed in India, all I [would have had] to look forward to [would have been] the kitchen.* It was for this reason that she was anxious to come to Canada. She felt that once living on her own she would be able to pursue her career and escape the role of housewife.

Madhu also felt that the parental home was essentially a training ground for daughters to learn to become wives and, in particular, daughters-in-law. As she approached marrying age, she found herself fearing the move into her in-law's place.

You are always admonished by saying, "Be careful... you won't get this in in-law's house; You will have to do this in in-law's house; In-laws won't do this; They won't tolerate this." You are always made to... remember that in-law's is not an easy place. In-laws are very demanding, "You will have to do this. You will have to do that. You have certain duties." So that place becomes a place of, I can't say horror, but ... something you always have to watch out for. You...can't be yourself.

For Hema and Madhu, the home was a place in which traditional behaviour for Hindu women as wives and nurturers was reinforced.

Madhu felt that her parents meant well, but were very traditional and arranged her marriage when she was not ready. The first time Madhu met her future in-laws and husband was when they came to discuss the exchange of dowry[30] and how they expected she should behave after marriage. In Madhu's case decisions were made over whether or not she would continue her

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[30] The dowry system is illegal in India but it still exists, often in less obvious forms. For example the bride may be expect to have a certain amount of gold jewelry, land or a house (personal communication,1997).

career as a teacher. Such negotiations over her behaviour reinforce ideas of how women's

identities are often imposed and constructed by others to meet Hindu ideals.

My father-in-law had told my mother that, "once married the first thing she will have to do is leave her job"... I was very happy doing what I was doing...So, right away I said, "OH NO", and my mom said, "you don't speak because we know what is best."...He said [to me] that, "you know, you don't understand, socially it looks very bad if our daughter-in-law works because [people will talk and] they [will] say that "Oh the family can't support her.' Our daughter-in-laws don't go out to work." It was like that, a matter of pride and principle for them.

  As soon as I came here [to Canada], they were so impatient for me to...work because here, there was no society to look at them. No society to tell them that, "Your daughter-in-law works!" and at the same time I was getting more money over here so they couldn't wait for me to start earning and give them some part of that money so that they would benefit. I found that it was very much double standard also.

Other women grew up in homes where their parents discouraged more traditional roles

and encouraged their daughters to make their own decisions. Maya was allowed to choose whom

she married. Her parents presented many suitors before she made her decision. She recalled,

The arranged marriage [was] suggested by mother and my father...but the references [were given to me]...I went through the family history of my husband, his background...just to see whether he was suitable. And before [my parents] would even approach me [for a decision], they would [also] approach the whole family, [and] find out their background. Then...official things were done and...they [would] ask me if I liked the boy [When] I said yes...[my husband and I] went out a couple of times and that's about it. Then we sort of decided to get engaged.

The women's experiences varied. Seventeen of the nineteen women had arranged

marriages. Some women were married within weeks of meeting their spouses and others had

longer engagements. Most of the women married men who were already abroad. After studying

or working for a few years, most Indian men returned home to have their marriages arranged.

Most of the women were engaged and married within the period in which their husbands were

home. Jayna was engaged when she was 16 and her future husband was leaving India. When

she was 22, he returned to marry her and bring her to Canada. Jagruti, during her engagement

period, spent the weekends in the home of her future in-laws, learning the ways in which the

household was run and how they prepared food so that she would be ready for married life. Often

meeting the expectations of the in-laws required the women to adjust their behaviour in the home.

For some this was a difficult experience and for others living with the in-laws was a place in which

women cultivated new friendships, especially with other women.

Social Relations in the Marital Home

  In most cultures, marriage marks a transition into a new home and a new stage of life. For

upper caste, middle class Hindu women, marriage often marks the physical entrance into a new

household and family. Moving from the home of the parents to the home of the in-laws is an important event, symbolizing the transfer of a daughter from one family and household to another. After marriage, the daughter is, *no longer the daughter of her parents but, becomes the daughter of her in-laws* (personal communication, 1997). From that point, a woman may visit her parents but she is expected to reside with her in-laws.

For most of the women in this study, migration to Canada was the second major change in their experience of home, marriage being the first[31]. For those women who migrated from Africa to India as children, coming to Canada marked the third major change in home life. Each change in geographical location has required a degree of social adjustment on the part of the woman that implicates both the form and meaning of home.

Relationships with the in-laws in the marital home varied. For most women, this relationship posed no problems. Gita, who moved from South Africa to India when she was a child, went back to South Africa for her marriage. There were no negotiations for dowry and, after her marriage, she found herself to be much closer to her husband's family than she ever was to her own family. Panna also cultivated strong friendships with her in-laws. The home was a place where many women often found support and friendship.

[Y]ou can enjoy because you have [company to go] shopping...Your friends will drop in for tea or something or the other. You don't have to worry about anything. You have more people staying at home in India than you do here, especially if you belong to that upper-middle, middle-middle class strata, you know. Not many women are working there so...you have company.

For others, it was difficult to meet the expectations of in-laws who wanted their daughters-in-law to follow very strict codes of behaviour. Jayna's in-laws expected that she practice a less extreme form of *purdah*, by lowering her eyes, or shielding her face in the presence of men who were her senior.

In Gujarat, after marriage, a woman must cover her head... with the sari, just pull it over the head, anytime an older male member of the family [older than the husband] walks by. Young girls [don't do this], only after marriage. Can you imagine every time father-in-law comes by you must cover your head. Every time you need to speak with him, you cover. If I am cooking in the kitchen and I have dough on my hands and he needs to pass [by the open doorway], he will just come to the door and [clear his throat] "ahem, ahem" and I'll have to pull my sari over my head with dirty hands.

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[31] Only two women of the nineteen lived alone with their husbands after marriage and before migration. All of the other women either moved to their in-laws home, or within a year after marriage, joined their husbands in Canada.

All of the women, and especially those who encountered difficulties in the marital home, learned to be flexible and adapt to some of the controls put on their behaviour. It was in this way the household remained free of tension or conflict. By taking this attitude the women were able to make a place for themselves in their new families and feel 'at home'. The relationship of the mother-in-law to the daughter-in-law is particularly important. Daily cooperation is necessary to ensure efficient running of the household. Hema describes how *as a housewife you had to get up earlier than your mother-in-law, cook something...before she gets up, seeing [that] things are done [as] she expects.* Through pleasing her mother-in-law, Hema ensured a peaceful co-existence with her and her husband's family.

Madhu said that she worked very hard to be the ideal daughter-in-law. She quit her job, cooked and cleaned, and did everything she could to please her in-laws. She felt that it was her duty to meet their expectations and, in the end, they were very satisfied with her. The women simply adjusted as much as they could to make a comfortable place for themselves in a new and often unfamiliar family. Nisha points to the tolerance and adaptability of Indian women and how it is this quality that enables them adjust to various social settings.

When I got married and I came [to my husband's place] I sort of assimilated with my husband's family...one,[of my husband's brothers] mentioned to me, knowing that I come from a wealthy family, so-to-speak, and that I'm the only daughter and might have been spoiled or whatever, that, "we're five brothers and we intend to stay that way, you know." And that just sort of sunk in my head and I thought, I shouldn't do anything to rock the boat so I sort of just adapted to the way his life was...Anyway, I think Indian women are very tolerant and adaptable...They have to be.

In short, discourse in Hindu society often portrays images of the ideal woman as self-sacrificing and dedicated to serving her husband and family. Often families expected their daughters and daughters-in-law to embrace such values. For some women, this meant that they had to adapt to the pressures of their parents or in-laws. Other women were encouraged by their parents to put their own interests before others. Many women found their experiences living with in-laws to be a place in which they found new friendships. They grew up understanding that they would eventually marry and move to another home and family. They have learned to be extremely flexible, tolerant and able to reinvent homes for themselves in new families where they may face expectations previously never encountered.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is important to understand how home, as a physical and social space, is constituted in Indian society. The use of space in India influences how the women shape their home in Canada. Rather than a place which reflects identity or status, the home was a social space where women confronted and accommodated to meet the expectations set for them by their families and in-laws which were sometimes rooted in Hindu notions of woman as wife and homemaker. Their descriptions of home also suggest how properties of caste, class, family and religion in India are rather fixed, permanent and sometimes inescapable. It is even more important to examine the home as a social space in order to understand the changing role of women in, and their relationship to, home in the Canadian context.

Although, similar views towards women and their relationship to home exist in North America, living in Canada provided the first opportunity for most of the women to begin to live in their own homes and run their own household away from parents and in-laws. As we will see, their roles and relationships to home have changed considerably and the meaning of home has become multiple. Patriarchal relations still exist in the home in Canada but the women's social positions in the family have changed. As adults running their very own households in Canada, they are given the opportunity to define their own identities in the home and break out of static roles constructed around ideals of the Hindu woman. It is perhaps a result of their courage and ability to adjust to extremely diverse situations that they can endure and risk the dramatic changes involved in the move to North America.

Chapter Four

The Arrival: From Mobility to Settlement in Dollard-des-Ormeaux

Leaving one's country and settling in a new one can be an arduous process and the lifestyle changes one faces as an immigrant may be dramatic. Immigrants are often depicted as having a difficult time settling into a new society, portrayed as living in segregated neighbourhoods, seldom developing a balanced map of the whole city, or as poor, ill-educated, living in low-cost housing, mainly in the inner city (Evenden and Walker 1993; Harney 1985; Olson and Kobayashi 1993). In short, immigrants are often portrayed as being unable to achieve ideals of financial security, integration, settlement and belonging in North American society.

Settlement processes for the women in this study have been difficult and have involved adjusting to a new society, culture and even household. For some women, it has also meant learning a new language, if not two, and for most it has signified joining the workforce for the first time. The women in this study, however, show another side of the immigrant experience.

The women have lived in Montréal for at least 19 years, are extremely mobile and have developed a good knowledge of the city. Although they live in areas where there are a substantial number of other South Asians, they are by no means segregated. They do not have the same budget contraints as recent immigrants, and have had the resources to achieve part of their ideal of settlement in this society, namely suburban homeownership, rather than renting high- or low- rise apartments in the inner city.

This chapter concentrates on the settlement processes for the 19 women especially with regards to mobility and housing experiences. Through increased mobility the women have learned about the residential areas that have best suited their needs and that have allowed them to reach their goals of homeownership. DDO has been one place that has responded to many of their needs and desires. This chapter argues that not only is DDO the antithesis of what is often considered an immigrant neighbourhood (Harney 1985), but the women in the study, and the South Asian population in general, are in many ways prototypical middle class suburbanites, living in nuclear families, and a single-detached house (Gans 1967; Jackson 1985). In some ways, they are more typical of suburban dwellers than the French/English Canadian born population. The presence of immigrants in the suburbs challenge our images of suburban neighbourhoods (see Chapter VI).

This chapter begins with a discussion of the general impressions and lifestyle changes that the women encountered when they first arrived. The next section addresses mobility and the factors motivating changes in residential locations and housing. The last section examines the present housing situation of the women in DDO. The special tabulation data outlined in Chapter II is used to show where the women in this study fit into the general socio-economic and housing profile of South Asians at both the Montréal metropolitan and neighbourhood levels. The population identifying themselves as French/ British-Canadian are used as a benchmark group for the purpose of comparison. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the importance of homeownership among this population and the importance of South Asian and other immigrants as significant components of suburban life.

Arriving in Montréal: The Settlement Process

Among the initial impressions of Montréal, the weather was, naturally, the most shocking. Many women commented on the cleanliness of the streets and the modern architecture and were overwhelmed by the sparse population. Some women felt uncomfortable seeing other women in revealing clothing or couples being physically affectionate in public, and accommodating food customs was especially difficult. As practicing vegetarians, many found it difficult to find what they needed as there were no Indian grocery stores until the mid-seventies. The women were therefore compelled to be particularly creative in their cooking and relied on trips to Toronto to stock up on Indian curries and spices.

The settlement process was easier for the women who had lived elsewhere in Canada or another country before coming to the city, who had acquaintances or family living here, or who stayed with another family upon arrival. Immigration to Canada was also often accompanied by drastic changes in the standard of living. In Indian society, the lifestyle of the middle class resembles that of elite segments of Canadian society. Most of the women had come from joint families so work loads were always shared among family members but their households also employed domestic workers and even drivers for their cars. In Canada, the women carried the burden of household chores on their own. Many of their husbands who had once occupied prestigious jobs in India, or had studied for professional degrees such as engineering, accepted jobs in Canada that placed them in lower income brackets. In some cases, they opened stores and auto shops.

Only two women had worked outside the home in paid employment in India but, after migration, seventeen of the nineteen women sought paid employment to support the household. Finding a job was a frustrating process. Most immigrant women, regardless of education, experience downward occupation mobility in relation to their education levels (Anderson and Lynman 1987, 67). Working class immigrant women are at a special disadvantage in Canadian society because of the institutional practices which channel them into low paying jobs and keep them there (*Ibid.*, 69). As mentioned earlier, most of the women arrived in Canada as assisted relatives, sponsored by their husbands. As sponsored immigrants, they were not awarded job training or social assistance because their sponsors were responsible for their support. If financial need arose, many women sought paid employment outside the home. Some women took unskilled work because their Indian education was not recognized in Canada. Other women, who had the time and financial resources, were able to continue with further studies or complete equivalency courses.

Three of the women had to teach themselves English before they could look for work. Most, however, had the opportunity to study English while in India. Education and language skills have enabled them to move around the city independent of their husbands and have increased their employment opportunities. While many of the women studied French soon after arriving, their lack of fluency remains a persistent obstacle in their settlement (see Chapter VI). Working outside the home and providing income to support the family and household, however, have given them a new sense of power with regard to defining household decisions (see Chapter V). Working has also made them more mobile in that many women take public transit or drive to work (all of the women have a driver's license).

While learning English and finding employment were important goals for the women to reach, finding suitable housing and residential neighbourhoods were also pressing concerns when the women first arrived. In the search for the ideal neighbourhood, the women moved frequently and learned about different areas of the city. Moves to different areas in the city and into different forms of housing culminated into all of the women becoming homeowners in DDO.

Mobility and the Spatial Distribution of South Asians in Montréal

Finding suitable housing and a neighbourhood to meet the needs of the family is an extremely important part of the settlement process. Given the displacement of immigrants, one

might expect that they seek rootedness and nest building by choosing to settle in one place and perhaps move less often. The 19 women and their families, on the contrary, changed homes frequently. While none of them sought specifically to live in an area with a large South Asian community, they eventually all settled in DDO, a municipality with a high South Asian population. This is quite typical of South Asians in Montréal who, although not segregated, tend to live in clusters.

Figure 4.1 shows the first neighbourhoods where the women lived when they first came to Montréal[32]. Nine of the women lived in the inner-city of Montréal when they first arrived. Two women moved to DDO when they first arrived but later relocated to other neighbourhoods in the city before returning. On average, most of the women have moved between three and four times. Only one woman changed neighbourhoods once and some women have moved as many as six times.

For most of the women, it was important to find a neighbourhood providing the right milieu for child rearing. Initially most of the women lived near their husband's place of work. Later, upon planning a family, it was decided that it would be better to buy a house, rather than continue to put hard-earned money into renting which showed no return. In terms of choosing a neighbourhood, most women were looking for places where housing was affordable, close to work, near convenient transportation and that was English-speaking (as the Figure 1.4 in Chapter I showed, very few South Asians live on the East Side of Montréal where more predominantly French speaking neighbourhoods are located). Most women also wanted to be near family and friends.

Mobility rates in North American society are higher than in other places. Technological advances, including improved transportation and communication, increase options for mobility in these societies (Dovey in Feldman 1990, 185). In part, the women and their families did not know Montréal when they first arrived and therefore did not necessarily know which areas best suited their needs; changing areas was often part of a process of learning which areas best met the needs of the family. It is more likely that mobility rates are high among immigrants because they are simply more psychologically prepared for later moves given the courage and ambition demonstrated by the first major move to Canada (Trovato and Halli,1983). It would be safe to say

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[32] Figure 4.1 shows the first neighbourhood in which the women lived for six months or more. Pseudonyms corresponding to numbers on map can be found on figure 2.2 in Chapter II.

Figure 4.1   **Location of First Neighbhourhoods in Montréal**
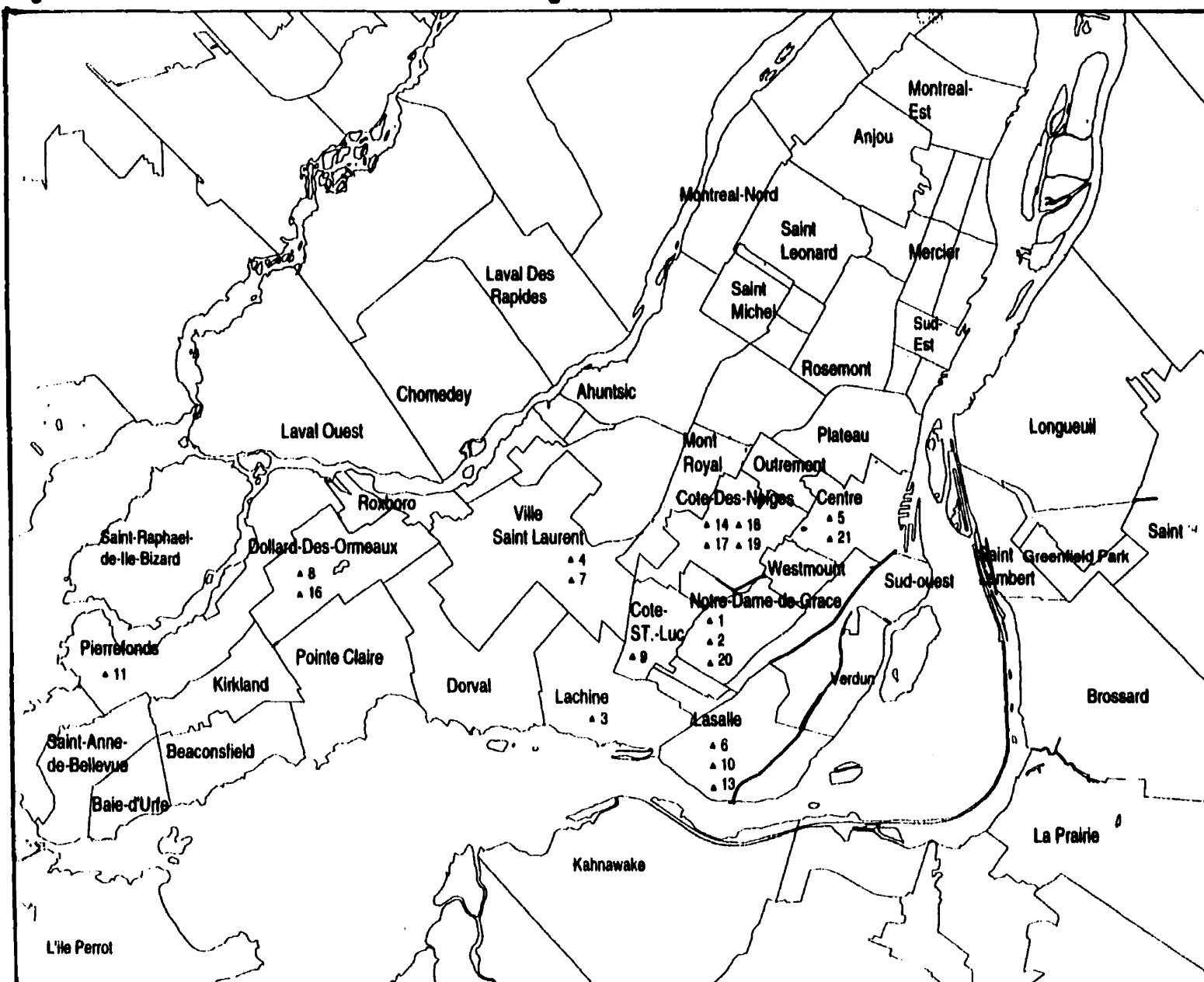
† locations indicated are not precise
‡ Discarded interviews 12 and 15 are not included

that although the transplanted person may yearn to set roots, s/he has also, through her/his experience, develops a willingness to risk, accept a challenge, and take control of her/his life and environment, and is therefore prepared to move again. Regardless of the reasons, the women have all gotten to know the city better. The women have formed bonds with different neighbourhoods but have all found that DDO best meet their needs.[33]

None of the women in this study sought specifically to live in a neighbourhood with high concentrations of South Asians, although DDO has a fairly significant South Asian population. An examination of data on the segregation of immigrant groups reveals that South Asians in Montréal tend to cluster or live in the same areas but are not as 'segregated' as other groups (Balakrishnan and Kralt 1987; Ray forthcoming). In other words, they may choose to settle in the residential neighbourhoods with higher concentrations of South Asians, but these neighbourhoods tend to be culturally heterogeneous and not segregated.

Table 4.1 shows the ethnic concentration of South Asian immigrants in Montréal by calculating the proportion of census tracts in which 50% and 90% of the community born in South Asia is found. Fifty percent of the population can be found in 5.2% of the census tracts and 90% can be found in 25% showing that they are much more concentrated than many other immigrant groups and, especially the French/British Canadians. The data suggest that there are areas with high concentrations of South Asians.

Table 4.1: Percentage of Census Tracts in which 50 and 90 Percent of Birthplace Populations are Concentrated, 1991		
Birthplace Groups	50%	90%
South Asia	5.2	25.0
Jamaica	4.6	16.6
Haiti	7.5	34.4
Vietnam	8.0	31.9
Central America	6.8	25.0
China	6.3	29.8
Europe/USA	17.5	62.9
Canada (Fr/Br)	24.6	69.0
# of Census Tracts	736	736
Source: Adapted from Ray, forthcoming		

.   Table 4.2, which shows the proportion of census tracts in the city that does not contain any particular ethnic group indicates similar findings. The higher this proportion is, the greater the chance that the remainder of the population will seldom come into contact, in a residential setting,

with the group in question. Data show the number of census tracts in which there are no or fewer than 30 members of the birthplace group. In more than half of the tracts in Montréal (where 50% of the population lives) there is not a single South Asian. In 174 of the tracts, there are 30 South Asian people or less. Again, the numbers suggest that South Asian immigrants are more concentrated.

Table 4.2: Number of Census Tracts in which there are No Members of a Birthplace Group or Thirty or Less Members of a Birthplace Group, Montréal, 1991

Birthplace Groups	None		30 or Less	
	# of Tracts	% of CMA Pop.	# of Tracts	% of CMA Pop.
South Asia	412	53.3	174	23.2
Jamaica	546	70.4	120	18.4
Haiti	255	28.1	232	32.5
Vietnam	361	48.8	197	26.3
Central America	439	59.1	176	23.8
China	377	51.0	203	26.9
Europe/USA	5	0.1	31	1.7
Canada (Fr/Br)	2	0.0	0	0.0
Source: Adapted from Ray, forthcoming				

The index of dissimilarity of South Asians from French/British Canadians only (Table 4.3), shows that South Asians tend to be segregated from the host communities with a dissimilarity index of .740. A dissimilarity index is the sum of either positive or negative differences between the proportional distributions of two ethnic populations. The index ranges from 0 to 1, indicating similarity or dissimilarity between the residential distributions of community and the benchmark groups. Jamaicans appear to be more segregated than South Asians.

Table 4.3: Index of Dissimilarity of Each Birthplace Group From French and British Canadians, Montréal, 1991

Birthplace Groups	CMA
South Asia	.740
Jamaica	.816
Haiti	.591
Vietnam	.661
Central America	.716
Caribbean (Other)	.741
China	.714
Europe/USA	.478
Canada (Not Fr/Br)	.378
Source: Adapted from Ray, forthcoming	

[33] For more on psychological bonds made with tangible surroundings and this functions transpatially in a mobile society see Feldman 1990, 1996; Relph in Feldman 1990, 185.

The data from the tables indicate that there is a high clustering among South Asian immigrants but they are by no means a segregated population. According to Balakrishnan and Kralt (1987), South Asians tend to live in areas with greater heterogeneity even if those areas tend to have few French/British Canadians than other areas of Montréal. Higher clustering may be due to the fact that many South Asians are not fluent in French and therefore tend to move to the areas in the city where English is predominant. Balakrishnan and Kralt also argued that that South Asians tend to spread out more than other communities such as the Italian, Jewish and other visible minority comunities because of the greater heterogeneity within their population. Other groups may be more homogenous in terms of linguistic and religious backgrounds, and this may be a strong motivating factor underlying the desire to live in areas with greater concentration levels of that particular group.

Mobility and Housing Changes

Chronologically, the first type of accommodation for the women and their husbands was either the husband's one-room apartment or temporary residence in the homes of friends or relatives. Then, most moved into rented apartments or duplexes. Those who had children or were planning for a family, moved into more spacious apartments or duplexes. Four women and their families lived, for sometime, in the apartment buildings their husbands had bought as investments. Two other women left Montréal in search of employment opportunities in other cities either in Canada or the US, although both returned, feeling that opportunities were no better elsewhere. Eventually, all of them moved into owned housing.

Figures 4.2 and 4.3 are examples of mobility and housing changes as experienced by two women in this study. Often changes in housing were precipitated by an event such as a birth or the arrival of a relative. Similarly, movements to different areas were often triggered by a change of job and so forth. Panna's husband moved to Canada in 1971 (Figure 4.2). In 1975, he returned to India, married, and sponsored Panna who immigrated in 1976. The couple stayed with Panna's brother-in-law in downtown Montréal for six months until the brother-in-law, along with his wife and children, decided to move to Ville-Saint-Laurent.[34] Planning a family of their own, Panna and her

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[34] To see locations of areas mentioned, please consult Figure 1.1 chapter one.
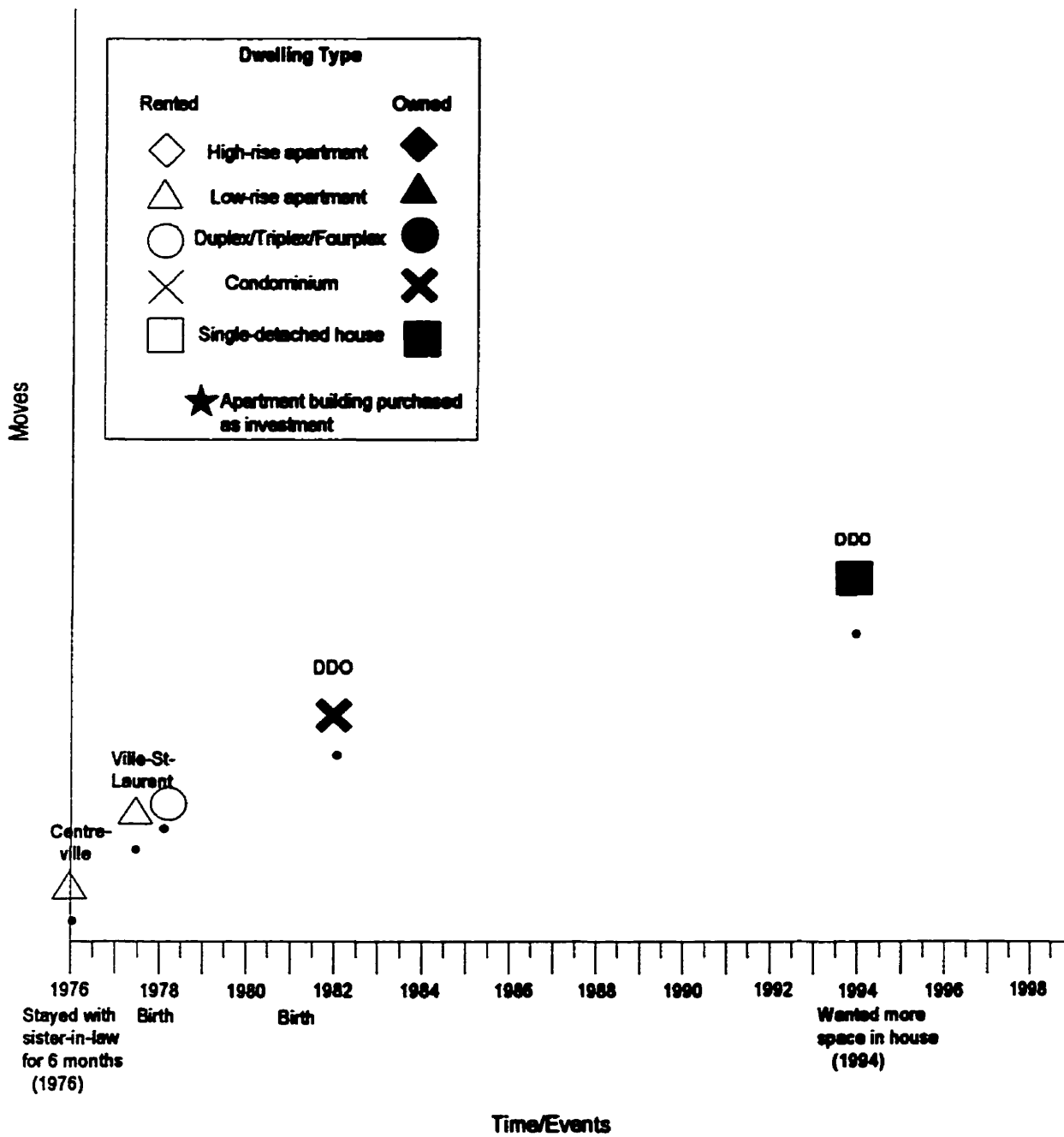
Figure 4.2 *Mobility and Housing Changes: Panna*

Dwelling Type

Rented		Owned
◇	High-rise apartment	◆
△	Low-rise apartment	▲
○	Duplex/Triplex/Fourplex	●
✕	Condominium	✖
□	Single-detached house	■

★ Apartment building purchased as investment

Moves

DDO ■

St-Basile-le-Grande ★

DDO △

Cote-St-Luc △

DDO ◇

Cote-St-Luc △ Pointe-Claire △

1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Husband gets new job (1974)	Sister-in-law and family arrive (1975)		Sister-in-law and family move out separately (1977)	Birth (1978)	Husband bought apartment building brother-in-law (1979)	Sold apartment building	Birth

Time/Events
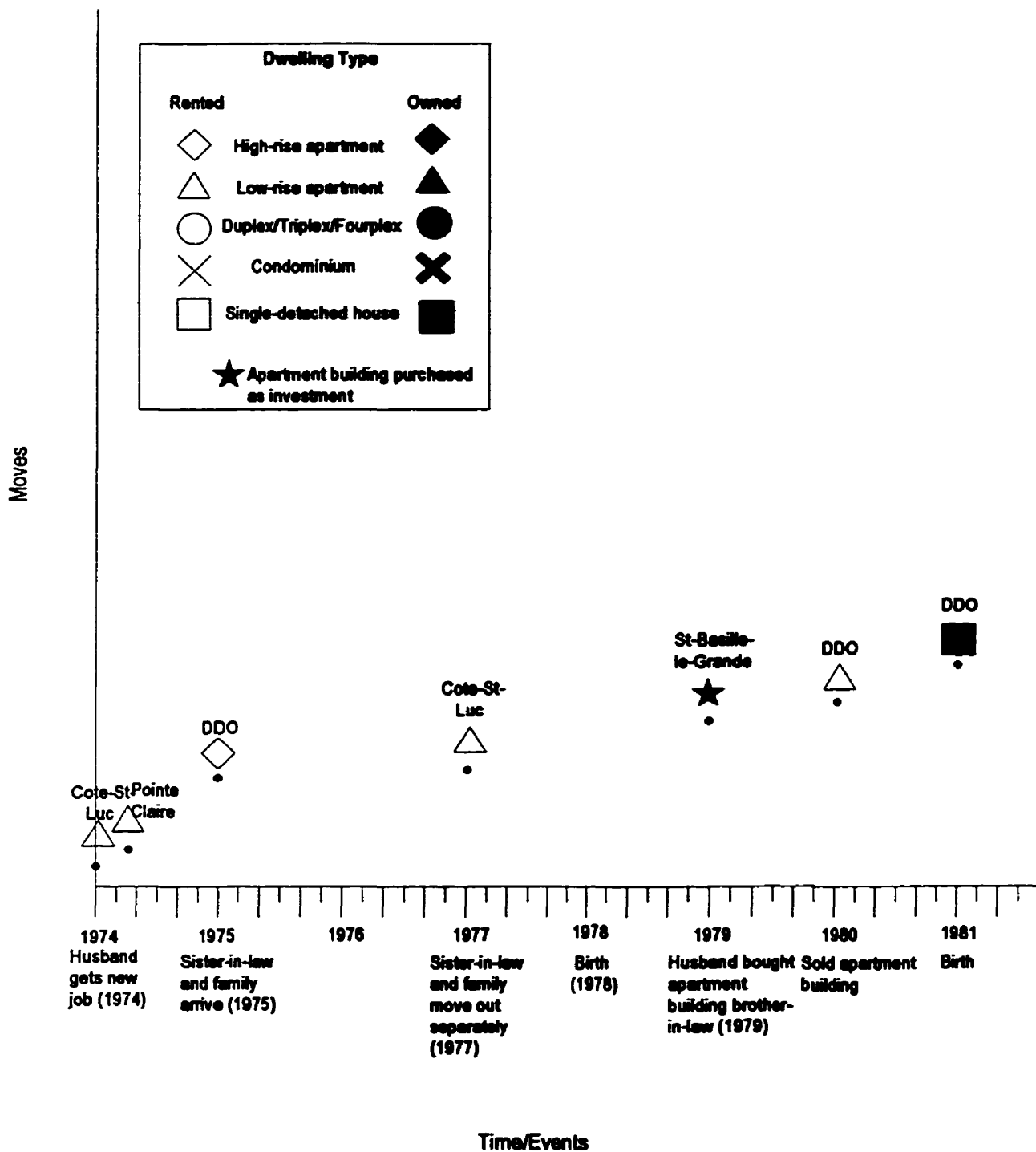
Figure 4.3 *Mobility and housing changes: Jagruti*

husband also took an apartment in the same neighbourhood as they wanted to be near family. After having a baby in 1978, they needed a more spacious apartment and this prompted a move to a rented duplex in the same area. Location of housing was no longer as much an issue since Panna's brother-in-law and family had moved to the USA earlier that year. In 1982, one year after her second child was born, the family moved to DDO. Again space was a motivating factor which prompted a change in housing. For a number of years they lived in a condominium but Panna had been looking for a house which was a little bigger. They recently bought and moved into a house in the same neighbourhood. They had wished to stay in DDO because most of their friends are living in the area.

Jagruti arrived in 1974 and stayed in her husband's one-room apartment for six months before moving to Pointe Claire to be near his place of work (Figure 4.3). In 1975, after sponsoring her husband's sister and family, they moved to a two-bedroom four-plex to have more room. DDO was chosen because it was affordable and still convenient for her husband to get to work. They lived with her sister-in-law and family for two years until her brother-in-law found a job and moved out. Tensions had been building between Jagruti and her sister-in-law after living in close quarters for two years so Jagruti and her husband decided to move back to Cote-St.-Luc where many of their friends were living. They lived there until 1978 when her first child was born, and then the family gave up the apartment and moved to India for six months to be with her mother. When they returned, in 1979, the two families reconciled and invested in an apartment building in St. Basille-Le Grand together. Jagruti, her husband and child lived and worked there as the superintendents for a year. They lost money with the investment, however, and eventually sold the building and moved back to DDO where her brother-in-law and family were living. They moved into an apartment for one year to save money and, after the birth of her second child in 1981, decided to buy a house. They have remained in DDO since and are only a two-minute drive from their relatives. Even her friends who were previously living in Cote-St-Luc are now in Dollard.

Buying a house was the most important goal to reach for all the women. Rented dwellings provided a space where they could freely express themselves in terms of language, cooking and dress but their freedom was limited. There was less opportunity to make physical changes to their rented homes and apartment buildings generally had less privacy. Most housing studies, and most North Americans in general, have treated home ownership as universally desirable (Choko and Harris 1990, 73), symbolic of personal achievement and social status (Harris and Pratt 1993; Perin

1977), and integral to the North American culture of possessive individualism (Choko and Harris 1990; Harris 1990). Montréal, however, has always been a slightly unsual case when it comes to tenure. Montréal is distinct from other North American cities in that its housing policies and social conditions have resulted in a larger proportion of rental units (particularly in low-rise buildings such as duplexes and triplexes) as compared to any other province in Canada (Hertzog and Lewis in Ray and Moore 1991). Therefore homeownership rates in Montréal tend to be lower than in other cities of comparable size[35].

In spite of low ownership rates, owning a home was an important goal for all the women and, as will be seen in the next section, South Asians in general. Single-detached housing, for those who could afford it, has also been the ideal. All of the women interviewed agreed that a single-detached home offered a greater degree of privacy and, especially in the case of owned housing, greater freedom of expression.

As for the three women living in condominiums, one of them, a divorced woman, chose such housing because it was financially expedient. The other two women suggested that, while they did not like sharing a driveway or not having a yard of their own, they enjoyed the convenience of not having to cope with shoveling snow or doing maintenance work. The next section examines the housing experiences of South Asians in general, at both the neighbourhood (DDO) and Montréal metropolitan area (CMA) levels, in order to situate the women in this study in a more general context of South Asians in the city.

Housing Experiences of South Asians in Suburban Neighbourhoods: Dollard-des-Ormeaux

There have been very few studies about the experience of immigrants in Montréal and even fewer have focused on their housing experiences (Bernèche 1990). Given that the organization of space and the built environment often reflect and reinforce women's particular, and often subordinate, roles in the home and society (Van Vliet 1985; Werkele 1985) and that the home is one of the principal places where social relations become naturalized (Peake and Kobayashi 1993), any discussion of immigrant women and the home as a physical space must necessarily address issues of housing. That this discussion focuses on South Asian housing experiences in suburban neighbourhoods is even more significant.

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[35] For more studies on housing in Montréal see Choko 1980, 1987; Harris 1986; Hertzog and Lewis 1986

Suburbs are often characterized by their peripheral location, low density development, easy access to ownership, consistent housing types and architectural styles, and, in North America, strong class, ethnic and racial homogeneity (Ray et. al. 1997; Evendon and Walker 1993; Jackson 1985; Perin 1977). While suburbs do communicate particular ideas of class, family, gender and community, recent studies have shown that there are more complex social processes at play (Ray et. al. 1997, Pratt 1982, Evendon and Walker 1993). Canadian suburbs are more ethnically heterogeneous and socially diverse than is generally assumed (Harris 1990; Ray 1994). Harris argues that the working class suburbs of Hamilton and the 'blue-collar' suburbs of Toronto illustrate that suburbs have never been exclusively for the middle-class.

With the exception of research on racial segregation, little research in either the US or Canada has examined immigrant groups as important components of the social diversity of contemporary suburbs (Ray et. al. 1997). Ray (1994) in his study of immigrant settlement and housing in metropolitan Toronto, argues that not only are immigrants today a more heterogeneous group in terms of birthplace origin, class, and culture, but their settlment processes are also more complex. Rather than the taken-for-granted notion of initial location in the inner-city and subsequent diffusion to the suburbs, suburbs themselves are important locales for initial immigrant settlement. Given the cultural norms and values about suburban homeownership held by middle-class, sububan-dwellers of European origin, the presence of immigrants in suburbs raises interesting questions about the role of territory and housing and the formation of ethnic identity and the social construction of ethnicity in the suburbs (Ibid.).

As new streams of immigrants become part of the cultural mix, Canadian cities become more visibly diverse and more distinct (Olson and Kobayashi 1993, 138). This diversity can be noticed in the city's landscape and can be felt in the changing culture of everyday city life. While immigrants may share space, they may express cultures that are incongruent to varying degrees (Evendon and Walker 1993, 250). Suburbs are important locales for cultural negotiation and home-making.

As previously mentioned, the 1,310 South Asian immigrants in DDO (2.8% of the total DDO population) constitute one of the largest immigrant groups in the municipality. Half of them arrived between 1968 and 1980, 10.1% earlier and over one-third in the 1980s. The high proportion of family reunification among South Asian migrants may explain why so many recent immigrants settle in this area. Like the Chinese in Richmond, British Columbia (Ray et.al, 1997)

and the Italian immigrants in metropolitan Toronto (Ray 1992), South Asians display characteristics typically associated with suburban households namely middle-class status, nuclear families, owned

housing, and single-detached dwellings. The women in this community, in general, fit more easily into stereotypical suburban images of middle-class suburbia than do their French/ British Canadian counterparts.

Among South Asian immigrants in DDO, 64.6% live in single detached housing compared to the slightly lower 62.1% for the British/French (Figure 4.4). Sixteen of the 19 women interviewed live in single-detached housing while three women live in row-housing. More striking is that 90% of South Asian immigrants live in owned housing. This is a much higher percentage than for the French/British Canadian born (72.5%) (Figure 4.5). Given the low-ownership rates overall it is particularly important to note the high percentage of homeowners among South Asians. The women suggest homeownership is an important goal because of the cultural values placed on home-owning in South Asian society and the need to feel settled in a new country.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the development of new suburban areas and government incentives in the form of provincial assitance to homeowners may also explain, in part, the high percentage of owners (Harris 1986, 304). Comments made by the women regarding the importance of ownership, however, suggest that socio-cultural imperatives are also important. In fact, according to Hinduism, becoming a householder is critical to acheiving Moksha or enlightenment (Embree 1988, 216). Madhu summed up the sentiments of many other women by describing the cultural importance of houses in India.

In India [the house] is...a necessity... they never think of...selling it out and making money out of it. In India, for generations you are there to stay, you are there, your son is there, the son's son is going to be there also. You don't change homes that easily in India or you don't buy an updated version every five years or something like that. It's there to stay. This is your life. This is your land from your grandfather or something. You won't easily sell it...That's what I have seen in India, you know...Homes here [in Canada] are more a decorative piece. Home is not something that envelops you like in India. It breathes and it lives and it carries on even after the people are gone. It carries on all the shadows and all the ghosts and all the sounds and smells and the culture and richness and whatever you call it. A home is a living thing there...Home here is something that passes and to pass on. I don't think [homes in Canada] have any warmth...They are not that lived in as such. Homes don't get roughed up because of the life children have lived there. They don't take a banging...They are so perishable here. There they are so very... sturdy made of brick and motto and cement and all that, they are so sturdy.

Nisha remarked on homeownership being important because it gives immigrants a sense of permanency, you sort of feel that, once the house is paid for, it gives you a sense of belonging.
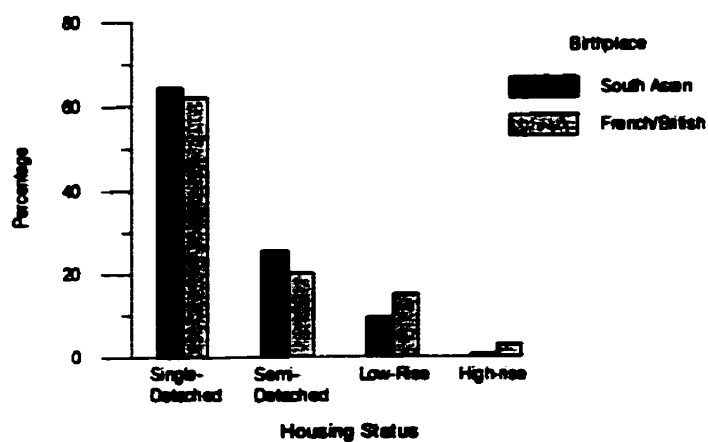
Figure 4.4 *Type of Housing Among South Asian Immigrants and French/British Canadian-Born, DDO, 1991 (Source: Statistics Canada, Special Tabulation, 1991)*

Figure 4.5 *Tenure among South Asian immigrants and French/British Canadian born, DDO and Montreal CMA, 1991 (Source: Statistics Canada, Special Tabulation, 1991)*

You sort of say okay now my roots are here, I'm not going to move. Homeownership and the relative preference for single-detached housing in the community, moreover, is also explained by social and cultural values in the South Asian community (Joy and Dholakia 1991). For those in multiple family households, it was especially important to buy a single-detached house. Usha, for example, lives with her husband, two children, parents and 3 adult brothers; other women have their parents come and live with them for up to eight months each year. For such large families, the space of a single-detached home is essential.

South Asian immigrants also resemble typical suburbanites in that they tend to live in middle income nuclear families. Eighty-one percent of South Asian immigrants in DDO live in nuclear family households, just like the French/British Canadian born residents (80.9%) (Figure 4.6). The proportions who live in lone-parent households is significantly lower (2.3% versus 7.7%), while the proportion in multiple family households is higher (14.9% versus 1.8%). The proportion of South Asian immigrants living in multiple family households in DDO represent an even higher percentage relative to the Montréal CMA (10.8%), and likely reflects the sponsorship of parents and other extended family as well as the availabiltity of suitable housing. In this study, 5 women live in multiple family households and 6 have their parents living with them for half the year.

Figure 4.6   Household type among South Asian immigrants and French/British Canadian-born, DDO and Montreal CMA, 1991 (Source: Statistics Canada, Special Tabulation, 1991)

DDO is a very affluent community, with 50% of its total population living in households earning over $60 000 per year. Fifty-four percent of French/British-born Canadians and 38.1% of South Asian immigrants live in such high-income households (Figure 4.7). The majority of South

Asian immigrants in DDO fall into the middle income category (50.4%) and only 11.6% are from low-income households. Compared to the Montréal CMA, a larger proportion of South Asian immigrants in DDO live in the high-income households (38.1% versus 26.2%), and a smaller proportion live in low-income households (11.6% versus 29.9%). The higher percentage of low-income housholds may be explained by recency of arrival (Figure 4.8). Recent immigrants tend to live in lower-income households because they need time to acquire more resources.

In short, South Asians live in mainly middle-class, nuclear families and single-detached dwellings. While conforming to suburban ideals on the one hand, their ethnocultural differences redefine the Canadian (sub)urban character (see Chapter VI). The following chapters will examine the relationship of the 19 South Asian women to their suburban neighbourhood and focus on how people of different cultures use and modify the Canadian urban landscape to reinvent and communicate their identities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Gujarati women left their homes in India and established new homes in Montréal. Settlement in Montréal and learning about the city presented initial difficulties, but the priority for all the women has been to find suitable housing and an area of the city where the family's needs could be easily met. Homeownership was an important goal for all of the women. It was found that, in spite of Montréal's historically low ownership rates and ample supply of low-rise housing, home ownership rates among South Asians are relatively high. Reasons for this community's high rate of ownership and its relative preference for single-detached housing as compared with other immigrant groups include government housing incentives which were in place when the majority of South Asians arrived, the financial position of many South Asians, and the cultural importance given to ownership and type of dwelling within the community.

Although suburbs are very heterogeneous, it does appear that the women and the larger South Asian community in DDO are fairly affluent. DDO can be seen as a desired or ideal community for those who can afford to purchase a home, especially a single-detached dwelling. While such familiies do not have as severe a budget constraint as recent newcomers or the larger South Asian community, they potentially furnish insight into the meaning of home for those who have achieved, at least to some measure, their housing objectives.

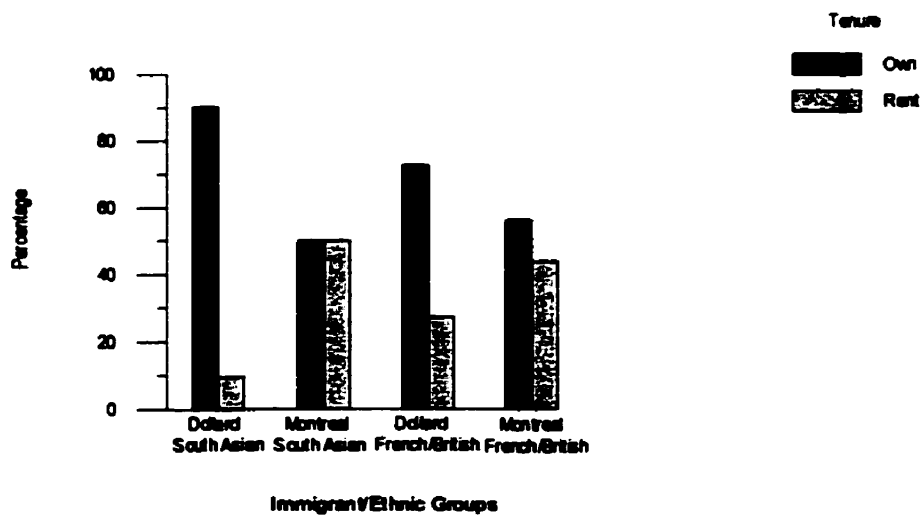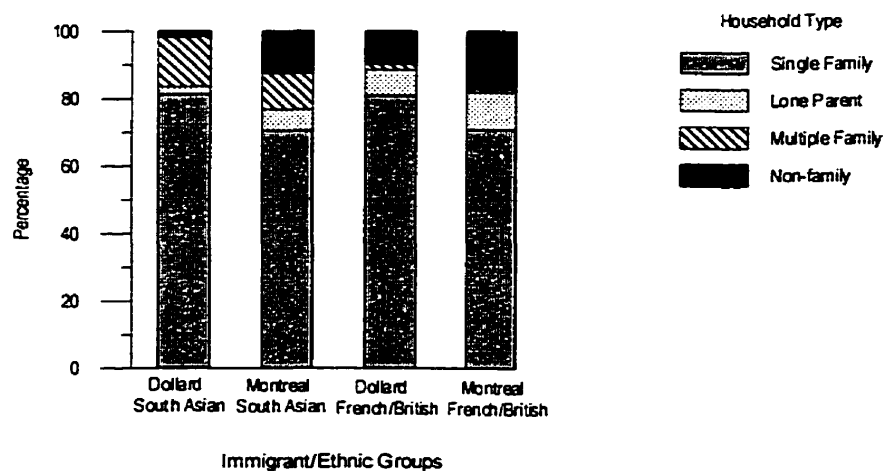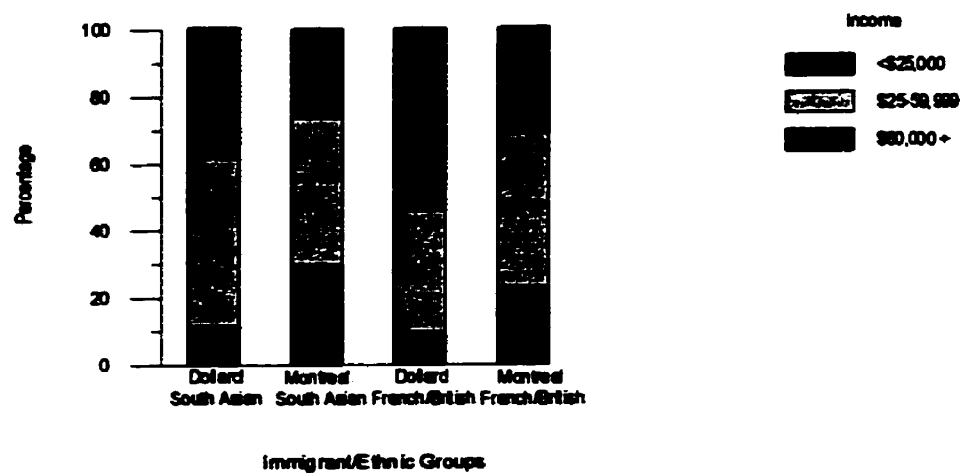**Figure 4.7** *Household incomes among South Asian immigrants and French/British Canadian-born, DDO and Montreal, 1991 (Source: Statistics Canada, Special Tabulation, 1991)*
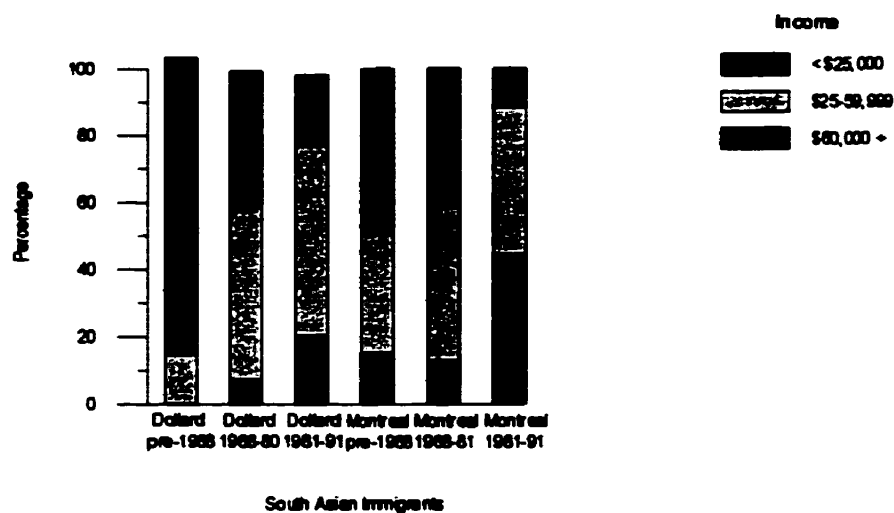
Figure 4.8 *Household income by period of immigration among South Asian immigrants, DDO and Montreal CMA, 1991 (Source: Statistics Canada, Special Tabulation, 1991)*

This chapter provides the background necessary to begin to understand the home as a meaningful place in the everyday lives of these Gujarati women . The women (re)create a sense of place and belonging in various physical and social spaces of their house, neighbourhood, city and cultural community. Keeping in mind their backgrounds in terms of class, period of migration and type of housing, we can now go forward and examine the social meaning of home in DDO, as well as the meanings of home that extend beyond the limits of four walls. The following chapter focuses on the present homes of the 19 women and the meanings they attach to their homes as physical and social spaces.

Chapter Five

Multiple Readings of the Post-migration Home as a Physical and Social Space

In Chapter III, the women described their childhood and marital homes in India as important social spaces where they cultivated family relationships and learned about the often static roles and corresponding behaviour that were expected of them as daughters, daughters-in-law and wives in upper-caste Hindu families. They remembered the home as a shared and gendered space but also as a space for the realization of family relations, Hindu religion and spirituality. Living mainly with the extended family, the women lived in households that reflected the tastes of their parents or in-laws more than it did their individual identities but the use of the space in their Indian homes has influenced the organization of space in their houses in Canada.

Since coming to Canada, the relationship the women have to their homes has changed significantly in that they, along with their husbands, are now homeowners making their own decisions about how to decorate and organize the space in the house and how to finance its maintenance. The acculturation process in Canada creates new conceptions of home and possessions. The lives of the women and their families are reflected in the fabric of the house, and in its furnishings. The use and design of space rely on the collective histories, memories, habits and desires of the members of the household.

This chapter focuses on the houses in DDO where the women are presently living and argues that, as immigrant women of colour, gender, ethnicity and class intersect and result in very complicated, multiple and sometimes paradoxical meanings being ascribed to the home. This chapter further argues that the house provides a forum where the women express the various voices of their multi-faceted identities as domestic workers, mothers, cultural inventors, and identity-creators. The objectives of this chapter are three-fold. First, this chapter argues that intersections of gender and ethnicity make the home a paradoxical space for the women. Their stories suggest that limited definitions of the home as a site of either domesticity and oppression or as a site of resistance are inadequate in explaining their experience of home in North American society. Paradoxically, the house may be both a constraining space of domestic labour and an enabling space for belonging and the creation of a positive Indian identity.

Secondly, the women do not simply accept this paradoxical meaning of home. In other words, the women's identities and experiences are not passively shaped by a home whose

meaning is constituted by patriarchal family relations and/or a hostile or indifferent larger society. Instead, they are creating new conceptions and meanings for home. Through their daily activities and use of home space, the women are reinventing their homes to subvert gendered meanings, keep Gujarati history and traditions alive and invent new, hybrid cultures.

Related to this, is the third objective which is to examine home-making activities as having an agenda that is political. The home is a place where the women play an important and seldom recognized role in mediating and redefining culture, and creatively using the home to shape, and also to communicate, a hybrid Indian identity for themselves and their children. The shaping of such an identity is essential for the women and their families who are living between cultures.

In short, the home is an important place where identity is communicated and shaped and where dualisms such as oppressive/non-oppressive, eastern/western, centre/margin and even public/private are blurred and contested. It is, moreover, a place where multiple axes of women's identities are expressed. First, I examine the home experiences of the women as they are, in part, shaped by gender, ethnicity and class. I show how these conflicting experiences of home constitute a paradoxical space. Secondly, I examine the women's responses to this paradoxical home and the important role they play in redefining gendered meanings of home, defending Indian culture, and inventing hybrid cultures. I draw on Homi Bhabha's ideas of 'third space' to illustrate the complexity of home in terms of how space is used to invent hybrid cultures and ethnicity. The third section examines how the arrangements of objects in the home are used to create particular environments that both shape and reflect the identities of the women and their families. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the significance of the home and home experiences for the women.

Home as Both a Place for the Maintenance of Patriarchal Relations and a Refuge from Racism: A Paradoxical Space

Many studies about women in India suggest that the persistence of 'traditional cultural values' maintains the institution of patriarchy, thus perpetuating gender inequality (Kapur 1976; Kurian and Miriam 1981; Conklin 1981). Still other studies emphasize how interpersonal relationships in Indian families are structured to ensure the development of male dominance. Such studies suggest that since family structures are rigidly set without alternate viable options, women

cannot do anything but conform and accept the secondary position accorded to them
(Dhruvarajan 1988, 277).

These studies have also often argued that South Asian society is pre-modern and that the institutions have not yet undergone the social transformation to 'modern' industrial forms. They suggest that it is only when South Asian women migrate to the West, where they have access to economic opportunities, are exposed to multiple ideologies including egalitarianism available through the media, and encounter egalitarian patterns of interpersonal relationships, that they are liberated (Dhruvarajan 1988, 284).

Such interpretations suggest that gender oppression is located in South Asian culture and neglect the significance of racism, classism and gender discrimination in Canadian society. I would argue that it is not because the women enter into Canadian society that such issues as gender oppression vanish. In some situations, the women describe the burden of work they face in the home to be greater in Canada than in India. What has changed, however, is their relationship to the home given their decision-making power, their economic contribution, the fact that they have come here as adults and now belong to nuclear families.

The women's stories do not negate home as a place where they are constantly working or where they face pressure to conform to more traditional roles, but home has taken on other and more significant meanings since migration. The women point more often to home as a place of belonging, where their Indian culture and identity is accepted without question. It is a complicated space and sometimes paradoxical, but it is a place where the women have agency and redefine the experiences of those living within it.

Home as a Site for the Maintenance of Gender Relations and Partriarchy

The house, in the Canadian context, remains a site of gender discrimination where house-keeping is often a burden that rests solely on the shoulders of women. For working women, the burden is doubled in that they must work outside of the home to sustain the household while working inside the home to maintain it. Sixteen of the nineteen women were responsible for doing most of the household chores and most of them felt that housework was more a woman's responsibility than a man's. As Mira says, You know...in India women take care of the house.

Like many of the other women, Ami feels that she is working harder in Canada than ever in India. In India, as an upper-caste woman with an extended family and a culture of having

domestic workers, the workload in the home is shared. In Canada, the same expectations regarding women's work persist but there is not the same assistance. The result is that Ami finds herself exhausted and overworked. While her co-workers seem to relax during the weekend, she spends the time doing housework neglected during the week.

[It is] especially [difficult] for Indians. When I used to work, on Mondays everybody was so fresh [from the weekend] and...me, when I went to work Monday morning I was so tired. So people would ask, "What are you doing on the weekend? Why are you so tired?" I'd say, "I had to clean. I was doing this and I am so tired on the weekend." Until Friday I would feel more relaxed because even [if] I worked overtime...I [wouldn't] feel as tired as [I do] on the weekend...When you have young children, [and] your husband is also working..[the] responsibility is on the woman...It's her responsibility... if I get away from my house then who's going to do [the work]? My husband has his own burden.

The house is also a place where the women may face considerable pressure to conform to the same idealized roles of wife and daughter-in-law as they did in India. This makes the home a very constraining space where they are unable to behave as they like. Falguni, for example, lives for part of the year in an extended family. When her in-laws stay, she feels displaced because she must change her behaviour to please her in-laws. This means that she does not even cook or go out when she pleases. It is only when her in-laws are away that she feels 'at home'.

Madhu, now divorced, never felt settled in her home after marriage. Her in-laws had insisted that their son lived abroad but he had never desired to leave India and, therefore, took no interest in furnishing their apartment completely. She was so busy trying to be a good wife and accept all of his decisions that she did not think of her own suffering for years.

You'd be surprised, we went for about four and a half, five years and we didn't have a coffee table in our house... He had bought two pieces of carpet, one for the bedroom and one for the living room and after my coming we went and bought, the first week, a new dining table with two chairs. So the two chairs we could use in the living room to sit - one for him and one for me...It was a bare four- wall room. Then...second week or so we went and bought a TV...and I could watch TV sitting either on the carpet or on that...dining room table or chair... He always wanted to save money, save money, save money and send [it] home, save money and send [it] home. That's why he never had a car also...[but a] car is a must, considered as a must by everybody, especially when we had a little baby...[Instead] I always carried my son, his diaper bag, his stroller, and my purse and I went everywhere by bus. It was very hard but I did it...Sometimes I think I was stupid...I wonder... I don't know, maybe I was concentrating so much being a good wife and everything that I never thought too much about it. I think a part of my mind was also taken up by the constant friction that we had.

Friction in Madhu's marriage escalated over the expectations her husband had of her behaviour. His parents had wanted him to marry an educated woman who spoke English but he wanted her to be more traditional, to speak Gujarati, sit and cook with the other wives in the community. The home became a very oppressive space filled with tension as her husband would grow increasingly

angry if she spoke English. She eventually asked her parents if they would understand if she separated from her husband. With their support, she had the courage to divorce her husband who has since returned to India and has never communicated with her or their son.

Expectations regarding the behaviour of women in the home extend to the daughters who, in some families, are expected to remain more traditional than their brothers. In certain families sons are not obliged to do any work around the house. Daughters, on the other hand, must help with cooking and cleaning. Jagruti commented about the division of chores in her household that consists of her husband and two sons: *It's me, it's me...[My husband] he just [sometimes cooks] and that's about it. He likes to eat good food, that's all...When you have boys you cannot expect them to do [anything].*

Daughters of two women interviewed told of how they were not encouraged to go to university but, instead, had to get a job and help the family. Their brothers, on the other hand, were encouraged to study. These two young women feel that sons in the community are also given more freedom. Not only are they allowed to live in apartments on their own, they are also allowed to have girlfriends (at least Indian ones). Daughters, even when older, live at home and many are expected to have arranged marriages (personal communication, 1997).

All of the women expressed the sentiment that the home was a place in which they shared a large proportion of work, although the degree to which this presented a great problem depended on how helpful their spouses and children were. As housekeepers, the women's relationship to the home is described as exhausting, tiring, and the home is regarded often as a place where women serve their families. The home, moreover, can be an oppressive space where women are expected to remain traditional. In spite of the continuing saliency of traditional gender relations, the women often emphasize the home as a place of comfort and a refuge from a racist society.

Home as a Refuge from Racism

Since migration, the women have viewed the house as an important space where they and their families can live comfortably as Indians. Ami, for example, may feel that she is constantly working inside of the house but she also finds it to be the only place where she is comfortable using her own language and wearing traditional clothing. Outside of the house, she is made to feel different and 'exotic' when she dresses in Indian clothing. People stare or even make comments.

You are living in somebody's country...you have to change...whatever country you live in you have to change yourself in certain ways to mix with them.... like when I was in India I used to wear only a sari. But if I go out here wearing a sari to go to work, I look so different, like in a show case. People will come and look like you are somebody in a showcase. You don't want to put yourself in [that] position...In my house, I do what I like.

In India, the culture and society inside and outside of the home was familiar to the women. The women were aware of differences in language, class, caste and religion among the people around them but everyone shared a common history. In Canada, differences between cultures and values inside and outside of the home may be extremely different and conflicting. The women's experiences outside of the house are discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, but it is necessary to say that encounters with racism have made most women think twice before freely expressing their Indian culture. The home is a refuge not only for them, but is also a place of safety for their children who, while in the home, can be protected from racism. Gita describes the extent to which this has become an issue for her daughter.

When they were younger they had some problem with some [other] kids, [especially] my younger daughter in grade two. She came home and she told me, 'Could you paint my skin?' I had that with my second daughter and I said 'Why?' 'Could you make my skin white?' [she asked] and I said 'We cannot paint your skin,' and I said 'why?' and she said, 'Because some kids...because my skin is a dark, they were making fun of me so could you paint my skin, I don't want to go to school here.'

Many women (17 of 19) feel that their difference, as Indians, is not openly accepted outside of the home and this makes the home an important place where the family can find comfort and unquestionable belonging. It is also a place where they can teach their children the values of Indian culture and attempt to arm them with a positive ethnic identity to resist the discrimination they may face in the larger society. The fact that the home may be simultaneously a space for the maintenance of gender relations and even oppression, while also being a refuge from discrimination outside of the home, makes it a paradoxical space.

The Home as a Paradoxical Space

'Paradoxical space', as defined by Gillian Rose (1993), refers to:

Any position is imagined not only as being located in multiple social spaces, but also as at both poles of each dimension. It is this tension which can articulate a sense of an elsewhere beyond the territories of the master subject (Rose 1993, 151).

Women simultaneously occupy opposing positions within the social space of the home in that they may view home both as oppressive and as a refuge. The multiple and contradictory experiences of home that may be lived concurrently or the sense that an individual may have two very different perceptions and relationships to the same space make it paradoxical.

Most of the women (16 of 19) concur that home provides multiple and often conflicting experiences. That the home should have one meaning for the Gujarati women because of their gender and a different meaning based on their experiences as people of colour is not surprising given the reality of multiple identities. Being a man, woman, person of colour, member of a family, class, ethnic group, and country are all identities that many of us embody simultaneously. The experiences of South Asian women, like those of other women of colour, are very different from those of both working class and middle class, white, Canadian women because, gender, race, and class operate simultaneously and are experienced cumulatively (Ghosh 1981).

Both racism and sexism have created feelings of anxiety, vulnerability and alienation for some of the women. While sexism in the home exists, it is generally the experiences with racism that more strongly influence the women to value the home as a cultural refuge than a place of oppression (only Madhu feels her experiences of gender oppression are as great). Experiences of discrimination often work to isolate them and reinforce ties with men and women of their own ethnic group which are, at times, based on a shared sense of victimization. As immigrants, they may often be less likely to identify men within the family as their enemy rather than the society that oppresses them on the basis of race (Agnew, in Ralston 1991).

In spite of patriarchal relations and a racist society influencing the social experience of the women both inside and outside of the home, the home becomes a place where the women take some measure of control. The women control and define the space of the home and are able to use that space to create a site of resistance that works to subvert gendered meanings of home and to create an identity politics to counter racism. In other words, the home becomes a place where culture is invented and also embraced as, and used in, resistance.

Creative Responses to Gender Oppression and Racism

The women use the power they have in the home to shape its spaces and to redefine its meaning. All of the women said that decisions regarding how to decorate the home are made predominantly by them or jointly with their husbands. The women, working for paid employment,

also contribute to purchasing items for the home and paying for any renovations or upkeep. South Asian immigrant women in Canada make more decisions about spending than do their mothers-in-law who come to visit or live with their sons and daughters (Leonard 1990, 170) and many of the families reject the more traditional gender-prescribed roles of Hindu society (Dhruvarajan 1988, 283). While many women still feel that they must change their behaviour and obey the wishes of their in-laws who come to visit, the terms of the relationship have changed because they are in their own homes. The women may not have completely broken free of patriarchal, gender-prescribed roles of woman as wife or housekeeper, but they have shaped the home to undermine its gendered meaning. Through both their paid employment contributions and decision-making, the women work to use spaces of the home differently than in India.

At the same time that they try to make the home a less gender-oppressive space, they also maintain Indian culture and invent hybrid cultural practices within the walls of the dwelling. In the literature review, the notion of boundaries (both physical and social), created to maintain the identity of an individual or group, was discussed. Boundaries are also a means of organising social space and the drawing of boundaries is an exercise of power (Massey 1995, 68). The home is one such boundary in which women exercise power in controlling cultural influences, especially 'western' influences that enter the home.

The door acts as a border separating the Gujarati culture inside the home from what the women refer to as 'Canadian' culture outside. While home may be considered a border, it is a border that is permeable in that the Indian culture preserved inside the home does not remain uninfluenced by the dominant Judeo-Christian culture outside. Rather, cultural influences from the outside society are mediated by the women who, through their everyday activities, invent new and hybrid cultures.

Shaping Spaces: Redefining the Gendered Home

Growing up in multiple family households in India, privacy and a space of one's own was seldom a memory that any of the women had. Rather the spaces of home were communal and gendered, the kitchen, in particular, being the domain of women. Many of the women have changed the use of rooms in the house and in doing so have challenged traditional gender readings of the home. Important changes include renovating kitchen spaces and creating a space

of their own. Whereas in India, kitchens are functional and places where usually only women enter, many of the women have created multifunctional kitchens in their Canadian homes.

When Priti and her husband bought their condominium, it had a kitchen that was separate from the living room. At the time when her condominium was built, the architectural trend was such that the kitchen was separated from the other living areas by placing an entrance away from other rooms. Priti renovated by having that entrance filled and another made so that the kitchen now opens up onto the living room. There is now more interaction between people in the kitchen and the rest of the house. Nisha, similarly, made sure her kitchen was designed to function as a room for the whole family. She and her husband work and cook there and the children do their homework there.

We just like the kitchen...When we designed the kitchen we designed it in such away that the kids could do their homework here. We could have an island here so if I had to help them out or do anything...and we made it an open concept and I like the patio. There's a lot of sun coming in so it's really nice. My mother comes here every summer, every second summer she comes here to visit me and...she sort of ends up praying here actually.

Many women (14 of 19) have created personal spaces in the house that they consider their own. This is very different from India where personal space, especially for women, is not commonly included in housing plans. Mira had an office built in her home where she can go and work alone on the computer or sit and read. Sonal renovated her basement and made a second living room with a fireplace, television and sofa. This is her refuge after a busy day. *I come down to sit and read here because it is quiet. I relax here. I tell my kids and husband to stay up stairs, "Don't bother me." I keep the fire, I lay on the couch and read.*

Shifali's living room is completely unfurnished except for a wide variety of plants that fill the room. While she says that this is a room for the whole family to enjoy, her daughter stated that it is a place that her mother created to enjoy her plants in solitude. Shifali confesses that she is protective of the room and likes it because of the Indian plants she grows. *Sometimes I like to sit there...I tell both of them [the children] to go outside, I want to sit inside...There is a lot of sun there and my plants are there. The kids will mess it up...I have curry plants and jasmine flowers like in India. That's why I like that place.*

Usha finds peace and solitude in front of her temple where she can meditate and pray. In the centre of the temple is a brass lamp with a wick that has been burning for six years continuously (See Figure 5.6). Her mother made the decision to light it as an offering to Hindu

gods. She and her mother make sure that it is always lit and changes the wick when they see that it is getting too short. All 19 women created rooms or spaces for small temples or altars. The creation of a *puja* room or prayer area has been a significant alteration that the women have made to Indianize their Canadian homes and is always a space where they may pray, meditate, and relax.

Their use of space in the house subverts masculinist meanings previously attached to the home. The kitchen has become a place where everyone works and interacts, minimizing its traditionally gendered reading as a female space. By also claiming a space of their own, the women are exercising power to define the spaces of home as well as creating positive meanings of relaxation and refuge in their dwelling. In addition to redefining the gendered nature of home, all of the women also point to its importance as a place where culture can be freely expressed and negotiated.

Inventing Culture and Ethnicity in the Hybrid Home

All of the women consider the home to be an important place for preserving Indian culture. This, in part, is done for the women who feel nostalgia for their homes in India, but it is especially done to socialize their children into Indian culture. All of the women make distinctions between their culture which they label 'Indian', 'Gujarati' or 'Hindu' and the culture of the outside, host society, which they refer to as 'Western' or 'Canadian'. For them, Canadian culture refers to mainly English, Judeo-Christian customs, traditions, values, belief systems, ways of communication, and even food, clothing and religion. Given their general lack of experience and infrequent interaction with the Francophone community in Montréal, they never refer to a distinct Québec culture but instead to an all-encompassing, and generally Anglophone, Canadian culture. The home is viewed as a key locale where Indian identity can be shaped and Gujarati traditions can be shared and expressed in private. Jayna shares the thoughts of most of the women when she says: *Canadian culture the children can learn about outside the home. Indian culture is in the home.*

What the women fear most is the influence of 'Western' society on their children. Many of them feel threatened by what they perceive to be a lack of family values, commenting on how 'Canadian' children move out of the house when they are 18 years old and are encouraged to become financially independent. Others comment on children who do not respect their elders. This is very contrary, they believe, to Indian families where daughters, especially, are obliged to

obey all elders and where economic independence is less important than values of family and marriage. Without an affinity to Indian culture, the women fear losing their children to a 'Canadian' culture where going to dance clubs and dating are normal aspects of teenage life. Again, the fears are most pronounced among women who have daughters (only two women were open to their children marrying non-Indians,and all of the other women objected).

Although the women make a distinction between Indian and Canadian culture, they identify themselves as being a part of both. They have maintained customs, traditions and values that are specifically Gujarati such as food, language, religious beliefs and views on marriage and family. At the same time, however, they have incorporated aspects of a new culture since their arrival in Canada. They may distinguish one cultural practice as Indian and another as Canadian but their identity, particularly their ethnic identity is a mediated and hybrid invention that comes out of their experiences, as Indian immigrant women in Montréal, living between cultures.

In spite of the desire some women express to maintain Indian culture in the home, culture from the outside does invade and provides cues for behaviour even within the domestic space. Earlier in the chapter, we discussed how children may wish to 'paint their skin' to find comfort in this society. Their mothers, on the other hand, have adopted more subtle forms of ensuring that their children fit into 'Canadian' society.

The women often appropriate aspects of the outside culture which are mixed with Indian traditions to form new and hybrid cultural practices. These hybrid cultural practices allow the women to defend Indian culture while exposing their children to the culture and traditions of the outside society. It is an important way in which women shape positive Indian identities for their children while ensuring that they are able to fit into very different social worlds inside and outside of the Gujarati community.

This invention of hybrid culture in the home is what Homi Bhabha has called 'third space'. Out of the interface between eastern and western cultures, a new and hybrid culture emerges. Food, clothing, and language inside and around the home are interesting examples of the manner in which ethnicity and culture are negotiated. As well, the celebrations of both Indian and Canadian holidays, the use of space in holiday celebrations as well as religious ritual, illustrate the hybrid nature of cultural practice in the home.

Food has an ambiguous character in that it is both sustenance and symbol. It provides nutrition and is a necessary part of life but it is also an important expression of identity (L'Orange

Furst 1997, 441). When the women first arrived, many felt considerable pressure to compromise aspects of their culture such as dietary restrictions. Even today many women compromise running a strictly vegetarian household, as they may have in India, to ensure that their children feel more comfortable socializing in the homes of non-Indian children or at school. Mira, for example, allows her children to eat meat. When they were younger she used to tell her children not to eat meat in the homes of other people or she would ask the parents of her children's friends not to serve meat to her children. As a result, her children often felt excluded when they were not allowed to eat with their friends. Now she remains vegetarian but allows her children to eat as they like. *I [usually cook] Indian but I give them [a] choice with breakfast and lunch. On holidays they can make whichever they want... I would not cook meat as such, myself. But if they want to go out and eat, or if they want to buy something and stick it in the oven they can do so...I cook vegetarian.* Some women have been successful in having their children follow their religious practices. Jayna's eldest daughter does not even eat eggs or any milk products[36].

Preparing 'Canadian' meals and Indianizing them makes for creative dinners. Falguni, for example, prepares a meal for her children of spaghetti with tomato chili sauce. Such hybrid combinations of food are ways in which the women maintain the distinctive Indian flavours while adapting new forms of cuisine (none of the women cooked only Indian food). Another woman commented that she never formally learned how to cook 'Canadian' food. She invents a new meal each time she cooks. This is similar to Karen Leonard's discussion of the first Punjabi male immigrants who arrived in California and inter-married with Mexican women (Leonard 1990). Their Mexican wives learned to cook Indian food, which came to be central to their hybrid 'Hindu' identity. Two restaurants, run by Punjabi-Mexican men in California, are called 'El Ranchero' and 'Pancho's' and feature chicken curry and *rotis* in addition to Mexican food (Leonard 1990, 170). Just like the Punjabi-Mexican's, the women in this study are creating new food preparations that are a product of their bi-cultural identities.

Language is another way in which a hybrid culture is created in the home. Most of the women speak to their children in Gujarati. The children respond to their parents in either Gujarati or English in the home, but communicate in French at school. Combinations of and switches

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[36] A belief in Hinduism, but more often followed in Jainism, is strict vegetarianism which omits all meat as well as eggs and milk products from the diet.

between English, Gujarati and sometimes French create a new language often understood only in a family or the Gujarati community.

The women also invent new cultural traditions through the celebration of both Gujarati and Canadian holidays. During the months from October to December, the juxtaposition of Hindu, Gujarati and Canadian holidays celebrated in the home creates another opportunity for the creation of hybrid culture. In most homes, *Diwali*[37] is celebrated followed by Thanksgiving, *Navarathri*[38] and then Christmas. For each holiday, the house is decorated and alternates between affirming Indian or 'Canadian' culture. Mira describes *Diwali* at her house. *We do the Diwali puja, we decorate the home. We do the rangoli*[39] *and...I prefer to put it on the plate so you can take it from one place to the other and it doesn't ruin your floor...and we light the candles...in every room.* Mira also decorates the outside of the house by drawing swastikas[40] and rangoli. A blurring of traditions occurs through using Canadian items for Indian holidays and Indian influences for Canadian celebrations. During *Diwali*, for example, the brass lamps are sometimes substituted with wax candles. Instead of putting rangoli on the floor where it may ruin Canadian linoleum, it is done on plates that may be carried from one room to the next.

The incorporation of Christian and North American holidays such as Thanksgiving and Christmas also illustrates the ways in which women attempt to acculturate their children into Canadian society. Even though the women may know very little about the traditions associated with each holiday, they do not want to feel completely alienated from North American culture. Madhu discusses how she cannot even say, after all these years, that she knows how North American holidays are typically celebrated in Canada.

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[37] *Diwali* is a celebration of Rama's victory over the demon king Ravana in Hindu mythology. It is also known as the festival of lights. Small lamps with oil and a wick are lit to welcome Rama back after his victory over evil (personal communication).

[38] *Navarathri* means 'nine nights' and is a puja celebrating the goddess Durga (Kali). Worship of Durga lasts for nine nights. For Gujaratis, *Navarathri* is celebrated through nine nights of *Garba*, a traditional Gujarati folk dance.

[39] *Rangoli* is an artistic design made on the floor using colourful powders. It is usually done on special occasions (personal communication).

[40] In Hinduism, the swastika is a symbol of the sun-god Surya and his generosity (Knappeart 1991, 240).

'Til today I cannot say anything about Canadian society. Canadian society as such has never given me the opportunity to know them. Maybe it was my fault...I've not gone out to court them or something but they never gave me the opportunity. I have worked in a company for 16 years and not once, maybe once or twice, was I invited to a co-worker's house. I never know, in fact, I mentioned it to one of my friends...she was from Chile...I said, "Would you believe I still do not know how people celebrate...Christmas"... She had a friend who was throwing a New Year party and I was invited to go so I just went there on New year's Eve and I saw how they sat in a house and but [I have] never been to a traditional..festival... I've seen so many movies and I've read it in so many books, the Thanksgiving dinner in America and Thanksgiving this and Thanksgiving that and having food with friends but I wasn't invited to any of them.

Most of the women share Madhu's sentiments but due to the ever-pervasive power of print and electronic media, the women and their families see images of Canadian culture and adopt symbols of this more commercialized culture. A prime example of adopting a more commercialized symbol is the Christmas tree. Celebrating Christmas has no religious meaning for the women, but it allows them, and especially their children, to feel included in the celebrations of other people[41]. The Christmas tree with gifts around it is representative of 'Canadianness' and a dominant Judeo-Christian culture in North America. To celebrate, gifts are given to the children but instead of a traditional turkey dinner, an Indian meal is served.

Thus the home is an important place where the women can comfortably express their Indian identity while shaping that of their children. The women accomplish this not only by speaking Gujarati in the home, playing Gujarati music, watching Gujarati/Indian movies, and cooking Indian food but also by observing such traditions as fasting on particular days, celebrating religious holidays, and even through entertaining mainly Gujarati friends in home. At the same time, the women incorporate Canadian traditions into their everyday life. Through using the home to preserve Indian culture and mediate Canadian culture, the women shape hybrid and transcultural identities for their children who, grow up learning simultaneously of very different social worlds and cutlural practices.

Even physical spaces in the home take on hybrid qualities in that their everyday meaning and functions may at once be sites of familial interaction and domesticity as well as being spaces of spirituality and prayer. Sonal, for example, has a room in her home that doubles as a dining room and prayer room. When the room is being used for religious purposes, its use as a regular living area of the home is suspended and it becomes a holy room. Her mother, who is extremely

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[41] Those women with older children feel that it was important to celebrate the holidays when the children were younger so that they would not feel left out of the celebrations in which other children in their schools participated. Now that there children are older, it is no longer a priority.

religious, mainly observes this practice of treating the room as a temple. She follows all the rituals involved with preparing for prayer as though she were going to a temple in India. As Sonal explains, *My mother, she is more religious than us and so she [prays] every morning [for] two hours...She takes the bath [before] praying. She doesn't touch anybody... She has separate clothes for [prayer] and she puts [them] on [to pray]...So she is keeping [traditions] just like India.*

All of the women incorporate prayer into their personal daily routine. Five women take part in prayer groups where they meet weekly and sing *bhajans* or devotional songs. When Usha holds prayer meetings at her house, the house becomes a place of worship. People enter the house, bow before the deity, sing, pray and then leave without speaking. *It is not a time for socializing, it is a time for prayer.* In such a moment, the continuous flow of counter-culture from the exterior society is muted and the home as a place for keeping Hindu culture alive is central.

It is important for the women to create a space where they can comfortably perform rituals and celebrate Hindu festivals because it is not always possible outside of the home. When Shifali first moved to Canada, some of her friends celebrated *Holi*, a North Indian Hindu festival, in the yard of a friend's home. During this festival, people are given brightly coloured powder that they throw at each other. A bonfire is also lit in the backyard symbolic of when the Hindu mythological princess Holika went up in flames. After neighbours complained of the fire, it was never held outside again. Instead, many will simply have a dinner with friends as a means of celebration. *Yugna*[42] similarly was held by members of the South Asian community. One of the rituals involved in the *yugna* included throwing various powders and herbs into the embers of a fire, the smell and smoke of which is considered to be medicinal and good for one's spiritual well-being (personal communication, 1997). It was held in a park but people living nearby complained about smells produced by a fire. As such, many women are fearful of celebrating holidays that might offend the neighbours next door. The home thus becomes a place where many public rituals become privatized.

It is also within the context of religious worship that the women's traditional roles in the home change. The women participate in preparing for prayer meetings and even occasionally in conducting rituals. These are roles that they would never take on if such ceremonies were to take

place in public temples in India simply because such tasks are usually the responsibility of Brahman male priests. The women's participation in the ceremonies is greater within the walls of the home. It is as though ritual in itself becomes domesticated and becomes women's work [43]. On the other hand, such organization, creative use and control of space is empowering for many of the women especially as it relates to shaping the identity of their children.

There is an inversion of cultural hegemony within the home through which hybrid and transcultural identities are formed. Inside and outside the home behaviour changes completely and even language, food, and the physical environment are different. This is especially true for women working outside the home. They are living in a society in which they participate in the economy, communicate in English, and adapt to a culture that is foreign. If they are expected to follow more traditional family roles, as caregivers and preservers of culture and traditions in the house, then their identities as workers and 'western' are altered.

Children encounter a similar situation. Many of the children enter an entirely different social world the moment they pass through the front door. They go to school, play sports, and interact with non-Indians, but come home, speak Gujarati, eat Indian food and pray in front of a pantheon of Hindu gods. Women encourage their children to pray and participate in daily rituals such as prayer or *arthi* [44]. Shifali's children pray every day, following the example she and her husband set.

I made it a habit for [the kids] too. They [worship] their way but they do it. As soon as I make them [get] ready... I give them [a] bath [and] I say "Go to the prayer [room]." As soon as they get out of the bathroom, they see it. They can't miss it so they do it and automatically they go straight there...we do arthi. I do arthi in the morning. In the night my husband does it...Then those five, six days that [women] can't go [during menstruation], then he does it...My husband and myself, also, since I was pregnant with my daughter so it's going to be eight years, that I started reading, our Bible, Gita, Bhagavad Gita so everyday we read one path. There is 18 paths in it so it's repeatable...We both have a separate book...until you finish 18 and then again you repeat...It takes about five or ten minutes and I also do, a rosary, in the evening...It takes three to five minutes so. On weekends I do it more. I spend more time. I do it [and in a] relaxed [manner] you know...The kids also open the book because they see us doing it so they do it in themselves. That's the reason I wanted my daughter and my son to learn our language. Is it written in Gujarati.

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[42] Yugna is a large scale puja following rituals proscribed in the Vedic scriptures. It is a form of worship that is done to please God and that will influence the elements to be favourable to the community.

[43] In India, similarly, women take a role in performing ritual in the home. For more on the feminization of ritual see Anderson 1996.

[44] *Arthi* is a form of worship in which a lamp is lit and offered to a picture or idol of God, symbolizing the removal of ignorance by the grace of God. *Arthi* is performed as a part of the *puja* or prayer ceremony.

For such religious celebrations such as the *Lakshmi puja*[45], the idol of the goddess Lakshmi is bathed in milk and given offerings of coconut, flowers and other items. For the children who participate in these rituals, the symbols of culture in the home are very different from outside where dominant imagery comes out of a Judeo-Christian, monotheistic tradition. Gujarati language and culture dominate the private while Western culture dominates the public. The women and their families must oscillate between social worlds where they may put forth entirely different social identities. It is through the hybrid cultural practices inside and around the home that bi-cultural identities are formed. Jayna, like most of the women, is concerned for the children. *The kids feel in-between...Like when they go to school they are in a completely different atmosphere, when they come home it's a different atmosphere...They try to belong in both cultures and they have to struggle.*

In short, the women are mediating and producing new cultures. Through the creation of new and hybrid cultural practices, they are also, in turn, inventing ethnicity on an individual level and shaping their ethnic identity as well as those of their children. Ethnicity is subject to the particularity of sociospatial relationships in that individuals interact with particular 'outside' signals and incorporate them (Sollars 1991). The women incorporate aspects of the outside culture but there is a blurring of traditions. Home becomes 'third space' where the beginning and ending of the boundaries of Indian or Canadian identities are unclear.

Most women feel divided between two cultures and feel it is important to bring the two together. In the house, they are able to recreate the homeland and define which culture takes a more central role in their lives. The use of the physical space in the house and the placement of special objects not only aid in the shaping of identity but also communicate aspects of their identity and their position within and between social worlds.

The Symbolic Meaning of Home: The House and the Communication of Identity

While above I argued the home is a place that is used to create experiences that shape identity, here I examine how the home is also a very personal space where identity is expressed through the acquisition and location of special objects in the house. Through the placement of these objects, the women create a material environment that embodies not only what she

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[45] Prayer done in the honour of Lakshmi, the Hindu Goddess of fortune, wealth, and prosperity.

considers to be significant but that also represents the person's personality and history. These objects provide the women with a sense of familiarity, belonging, or place-identity. In Chapter I, the strong association between our homes and the experiences we have in them was discussed. The house communicates the aspects of our identity which are most important. Changes in self-perception or identity and experiences are reflected in the physical use of the house.

Dawson and Bamossy (1991) examine the impact of moving on attachment to material possessions, including the home as an extension of the self. They argue that, "moving is a life event with the potential for causing significant reconstruction of the extended self" (Dawson and Bamossy 1991, 362). Moving instigates a process of letting go of an attachment to certain possessions from the extended self. The process of reforming these attachments to and acquiring other objects begins again once the person is resettled in a new location (*Ibid.*, 306).

Levels of materialism may change over time and may not follow the progression Dawson and Bamossy have suggested. As self-image changes a person is able to dispose of objects which no longer reflect who they are (Cooper Marcus 1996, 52). The meaningful objects the women have displayed in their houses have changed over time as the women, themselves have changed. Ami, for example, said that she was much more materialistic when she first arrived in Canada. She used to decorate her house with Indian and Gujarati art so that she could be reminded of her home in India. Since 1982, however, she has found a guru whose teachings, have taught her to not become attached to material things, especially from the past, but rather to concentrate on her soul. Since then she has stopped putting art up on the walls. The only pictures she keeps are of her guru. A life size photo stands in the doorway of her home and more are in the living room. These, along with the books of his religious teachings, are displayed because they are her most treasured possessions and reflect his importance in her life.

Madhu, after the death of her sister and brother (who had been living with her), lost interest in her home. Cooper Marcus (1996) suggests that place-identity is often disrupted after a traumatic experience which causes the home to no longer reflect the self. Madhu feels similarly:

I would like to have a big garden all done and ready with flowers growing in it....I would like a swing...The first or so two years I had some Dahlias and all but I have gone through some very hard times in the last, four, five years, sister's death and all. Psychologically I am just not ready to do anything so I have neglected a lot my house and basically I am a very lazy person...I would rather, you know, put my feet up...and have a book and read or watch a movie again and again [rather] than...go out and do things.

She often discusses moving but, until she finds a job, she will continue to stay in her present house. She uses her home to remember her lost relatives and takes special care to celebrate their death anniversaries by hanging garlands of flowers around photos of her brother and sister.

Sonal's home also reflects a sense of displacement she has been feeling for the past year. She did many renovations in her house and decorated it with pictures of deities, but has stopped making further changes. She feels that it is important to invest in your home if you plan to stay, but given political uncertainty in Québec, she is thinking about moving. Her home displays her sense of impermanence. The living room remains only partially furnished. There are pictures leaning against the walls that need to be framed and hanged. *I don't want to spend any more money. I [have] spent enough, especially with how the market is going right now...Québec separation, it's like a hanging sword.*

Most of the women use the house to express those aspects of the self that they value through the placement and display of material objects that have shaped their personalities and identities. Priti, for example, has chosen to place items in her house that are of sentimental value. Usually there is a story attached to each item she keeps in her home and often they are reminders of either her childhood in Africa where she lived until she was 12 or of a family member. Two of her most treasured possessions are a wooden elephant she bought on a trip to England and a painting done by her cousin (Figures 5.1 and 5.2).

I have this elephant...I saw it when in England, we were just walking around and I said...I like that...not so much because of India but because... I was brought up in Africa, you know like jungles... and I like all sorts of animals... that's why I keep that elephant. (laughs) I keep it with me. I won't let it go at any price. People ask me "Do you want to sell it? I say no, "I don't want to sell. I like it..I would like to keep it"...My cousin... gave me that [painting he did]... I said this is a nice painting I would like to have it framed and keep it...He gave me it...it's hand painted so he gave it from India when I got here.

Although she has only childhood memories of Africa, she would like to go back and visit one day. Both the elephant and the painting remind her of important places which have influenced her identity.
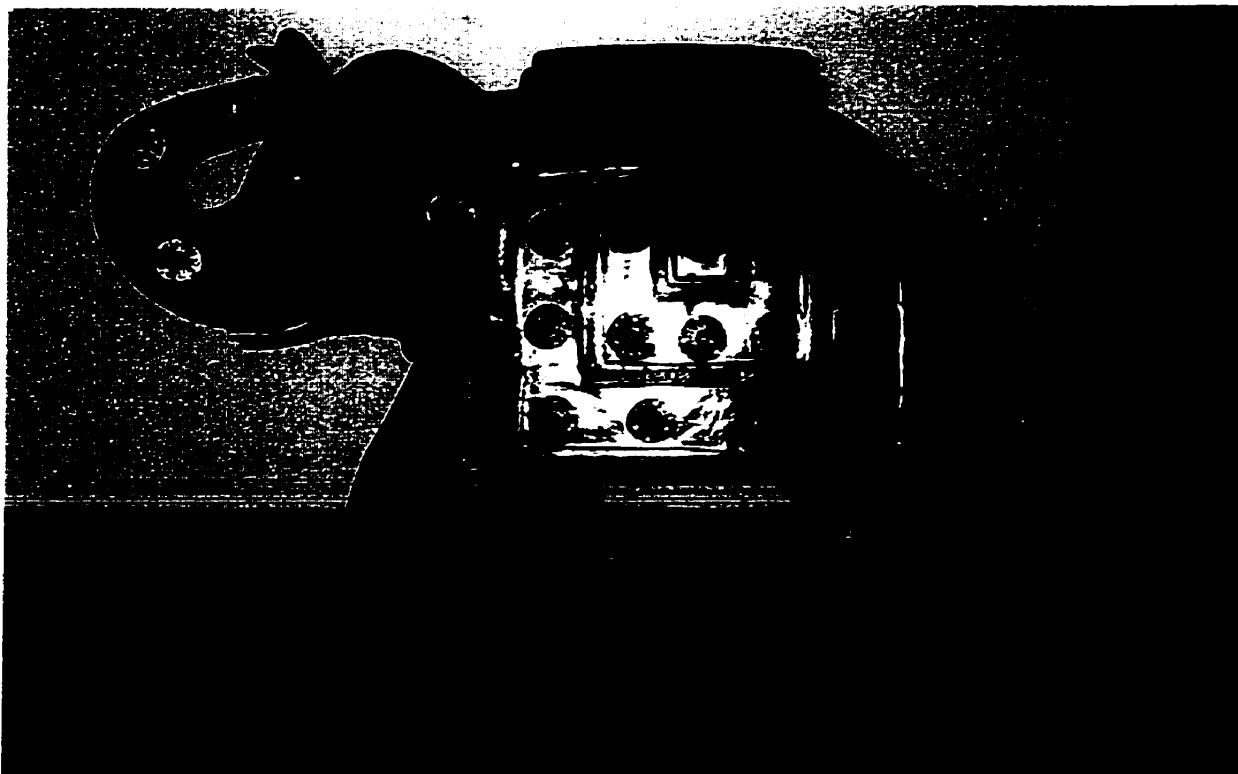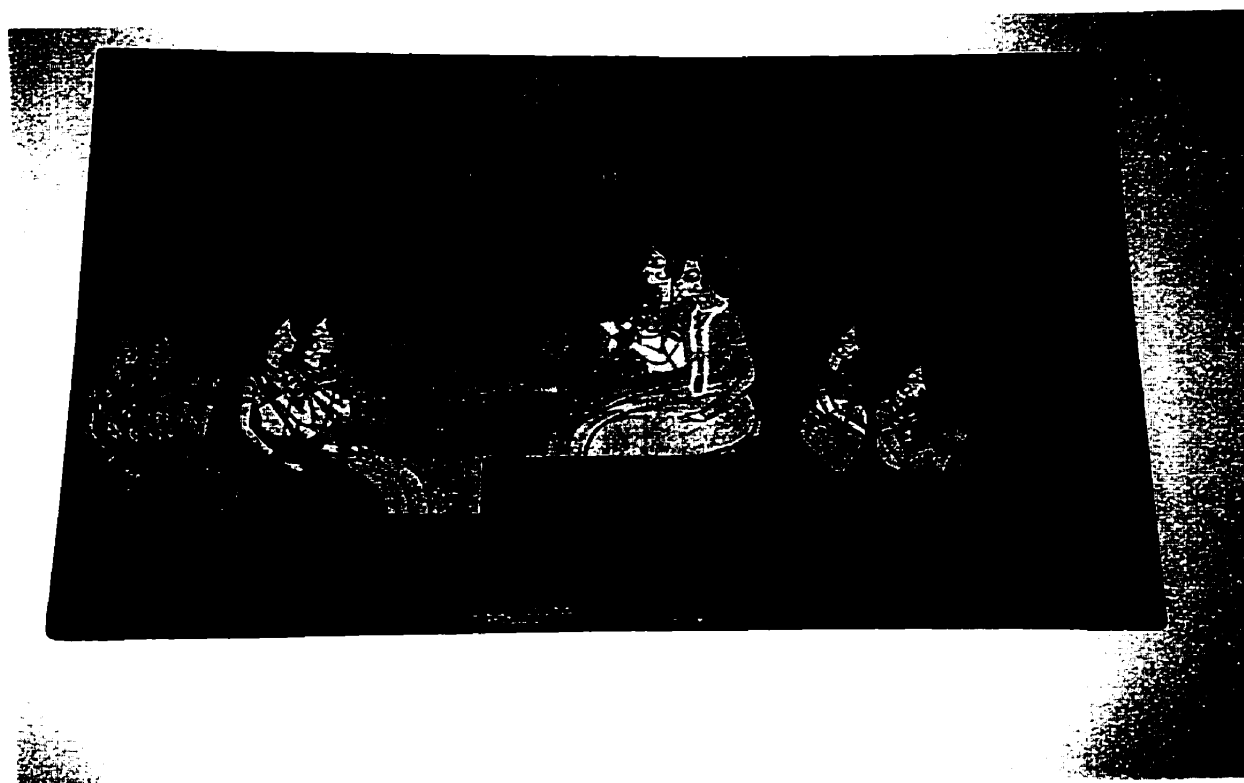
Figure 5.1: *Priti's wooden elephant*

Figure 5.2: *Panting done by Priti's brother*

Use of the objects often keeps history alive and allows the homeland to be reinvented in Canada. Jayna recreates her childhood home and family temple through rituals, burning incense and statues of gods.

In the morning I go down and make my prayers...I have pictures, statues, and scriptures from India... for the temple. When I go [to India] I [also] buy...those scented sticks...Early in the morning I like to light it up and it smells so nice. It gives me the feeling that I am in India, in my temple... There's a temple close to my parent's house. When I go [to India], I go there. When I light up I feel like I am sitting right there. And that gives me a good feeling...My father in...in his temple he has a special God. And I always wanted to bring him [the statue of that god] here... He always said no...I still want that God to bring to my house...When I was young, very young, I always... took a bath and went to say prayer... and I always felt so close to him. If I had any problem I could go and pray and just talk and that would help me...Now I keep other statues of him, but it's not that same one.

Incorporating rituals in daily life allows the children to understand the importance of religion and it is hoped that the children will form attachments to the same cultural objects. Nisha's house is decorated like her childhood home in India. Her father collected art that he displayed throughout the apartment. She displays similar art that she has either bought in India or that her father has sent. Many of the pieces are statues are of Hindu gods.

We have a small temple... just brought little statues, idols, deities, and we have one Durga. My father has given us things that we have grown to love...A few things that I grew up with and I relate to and I say [to my children] "You know I had this when I was 11 years old. This is what my dad gave me, some of his antique pieces in ivory or some of his books [on the history and culture of India] that I have." We pray a lot to Durga... only because I know that wherever I go, I'll be safe. I can start all over again with anything else but I'll need this...We also begin all of our pujas with Ganesh[46]....[We have] six to seven Ganesh, around the house, in all different forms...Every piece that we have in the house has some sort of a meaning. It was not just acquired because it was a material object or it was valuable or it had a monetary value to it. It is only because it has meaning to it... The way I grew up, my background, the love I have for home or my parents because all of these objects I relate to them and with that I am just sharing it with the kids so... they cherish everything...for that reason and because they are reminders of my parents.

The presence of a prayer room or temple in the home is also an important reminder of the home in India, an expression of Indian identity and the importance of religion in the home. As well, it exposes the children to the importance of prayer. Figures 5.3 and 5.4 show two examples of temples. The temple in Vina's house was brought from India soon after she immigrated to Canada. In it stands an altar of different deities. A statue of the Hindu god Krishna stands to the left of the

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[46] Ganesh is a Hindu god with the body of a human and the head of an elephant. He is known as the god of wisdom and the "remover of obstacles."
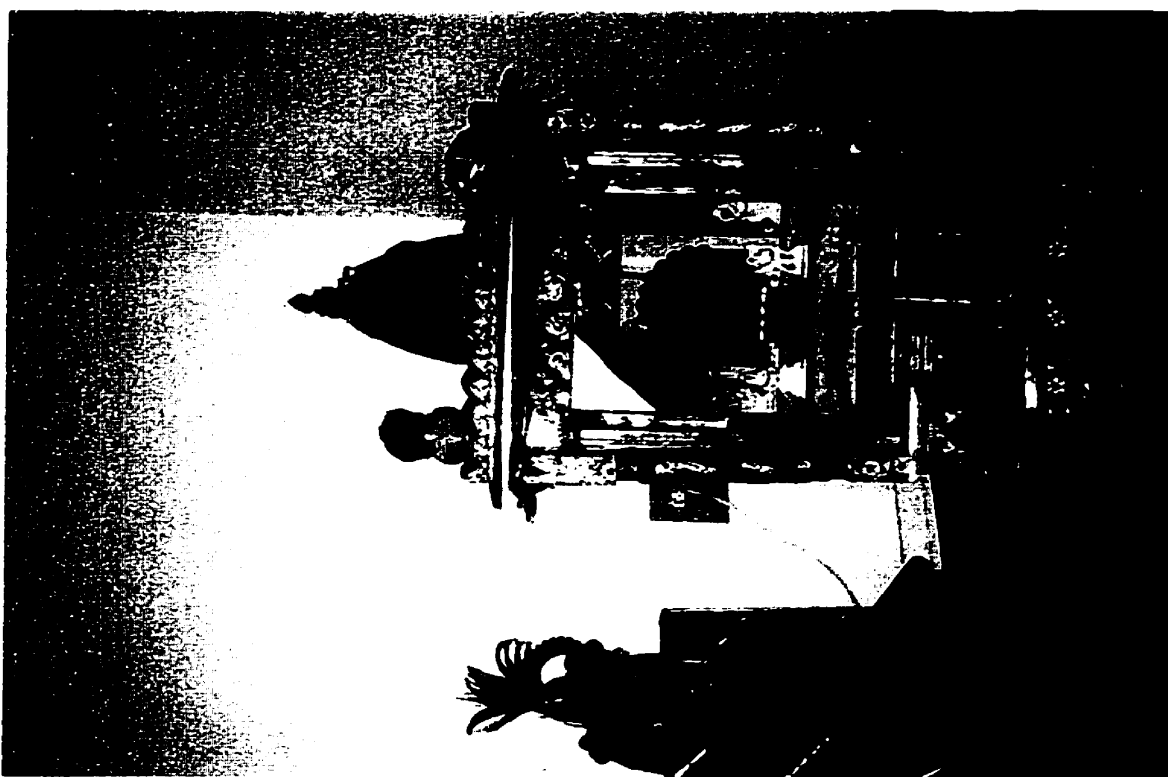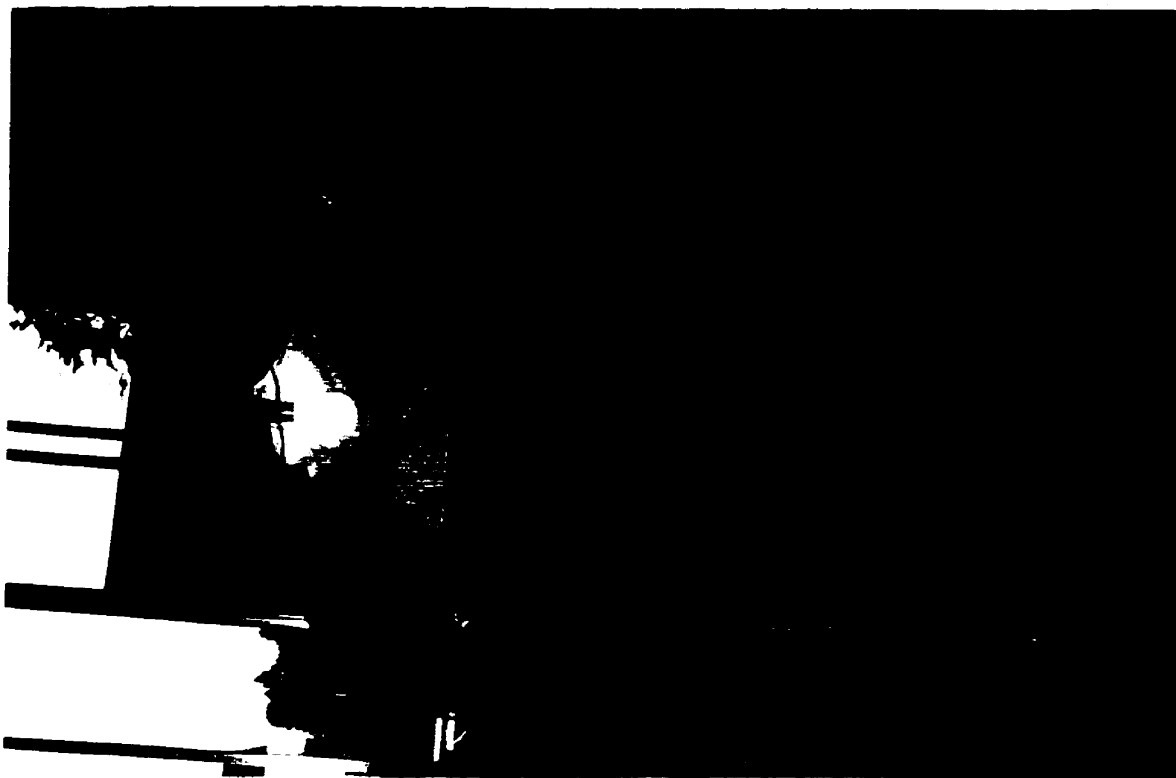
temple. To the right of the temple, is a coconut that, during *puja*, is broken and given as an offering to the gods.

Usha's temple has two levels (Figures 5.5 and 5.6). Pictures and statues of dieties are placed on the altar as well as photos of gurus and their disciples whose teachings she and her family follow. The bottom level is where a light has been continuously burning as an offering. In the corner of the prayer room, she has kept a statue of Krishna (Figure 5.7). One can see that unlike the Krishna in Vina's room, this statue is wearing clothes. These clothes are changed on a regular basis. Many Hindus believe that gods occupy the home and, as any other family member of the home his/her clothes must be changed regularly, and the deity must be fed in the form of food offerings. Usha uses the performance of these rituals to socialize her children into Indian culture.

While Vina and Usha make sure religion is part of daily life and an expression of their Indian identity, they, like many women, feel internally divided. After having been here for a number of years, they have incorporated aspects of Canadian culture into their homes. They are both Canadian and Indian and their homes express this division. Certain spaces and rooms in the home especially demonstrate this hybridity. Even the garden becomes a hybrid space. Usha likes to keep a garden where she can grow vegetables and plants that remind her of her home in India. *In the summer time, it reminds me of home... in the summer time we grow vegetables outside and it reminds of us of India...going to pick vegetables, that reminds us of India.* Ami similarly, keeps a rose garden like many of her neighbours but interspersed are the plants and vegetables of the homeland. Priti has a 'welcome' sign on her front door with the English word 'welcome' written below the figure of an Indian woman gesturing *'namaste,'* a typical Indian greeting (Figure 5.8). She wants her Indian identity to be known outside and inside but wants both Indians and non-Indians to feel welcome.

Vina's home and its decorations communicate a divided and hybrid identity. Most of her relatives are in India and in that sense she will always feel that her home is there. Yet, she has been in Canada for more than 25 years so this country is also home. She describes herself as both Indian and Canadian and expresses this in how she decorates her home by having both a 'Canadian' and an 'Indian' living room in her home (Figures 5.9 and 5.10).

Usha, who came to Canada as a child, feels that she is a product of a mixed culture. She has also made a 'Canadian' and 'Indian' living room. She argues that the home is not just used to

Figure 5.5: *A closer view of Usha's temple, top level*

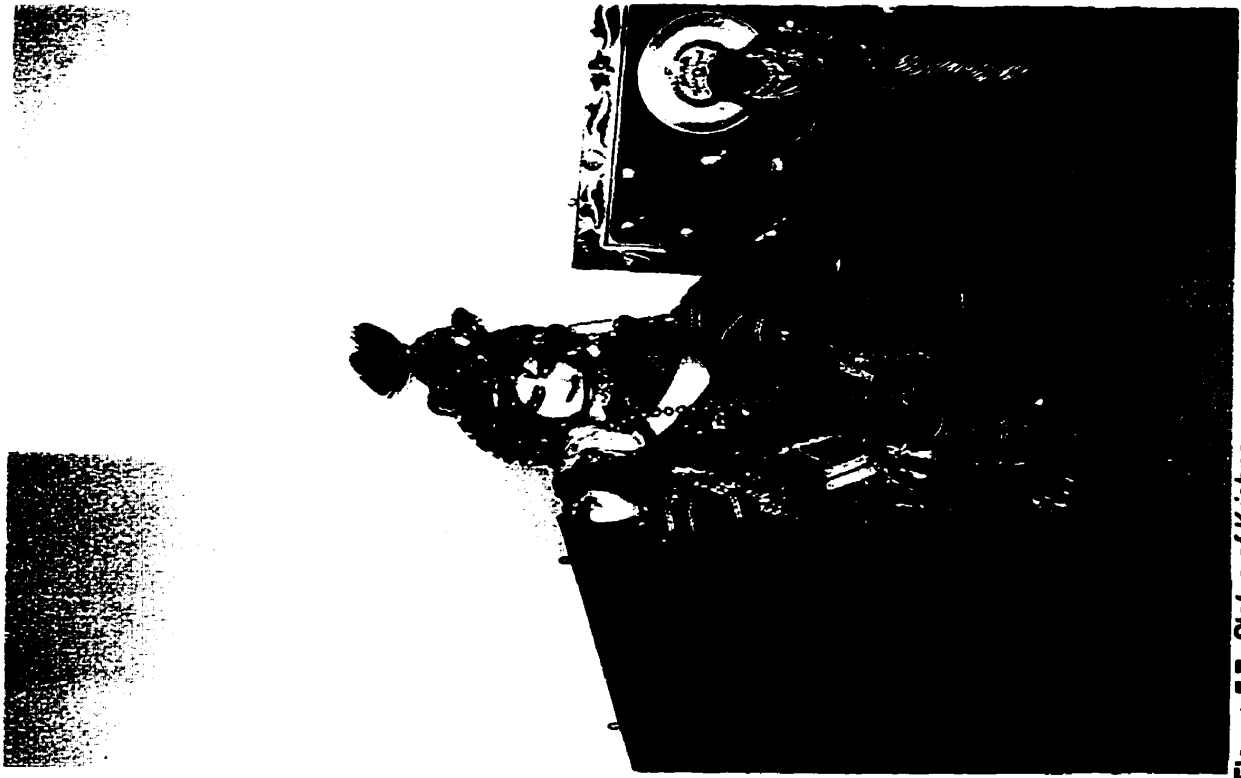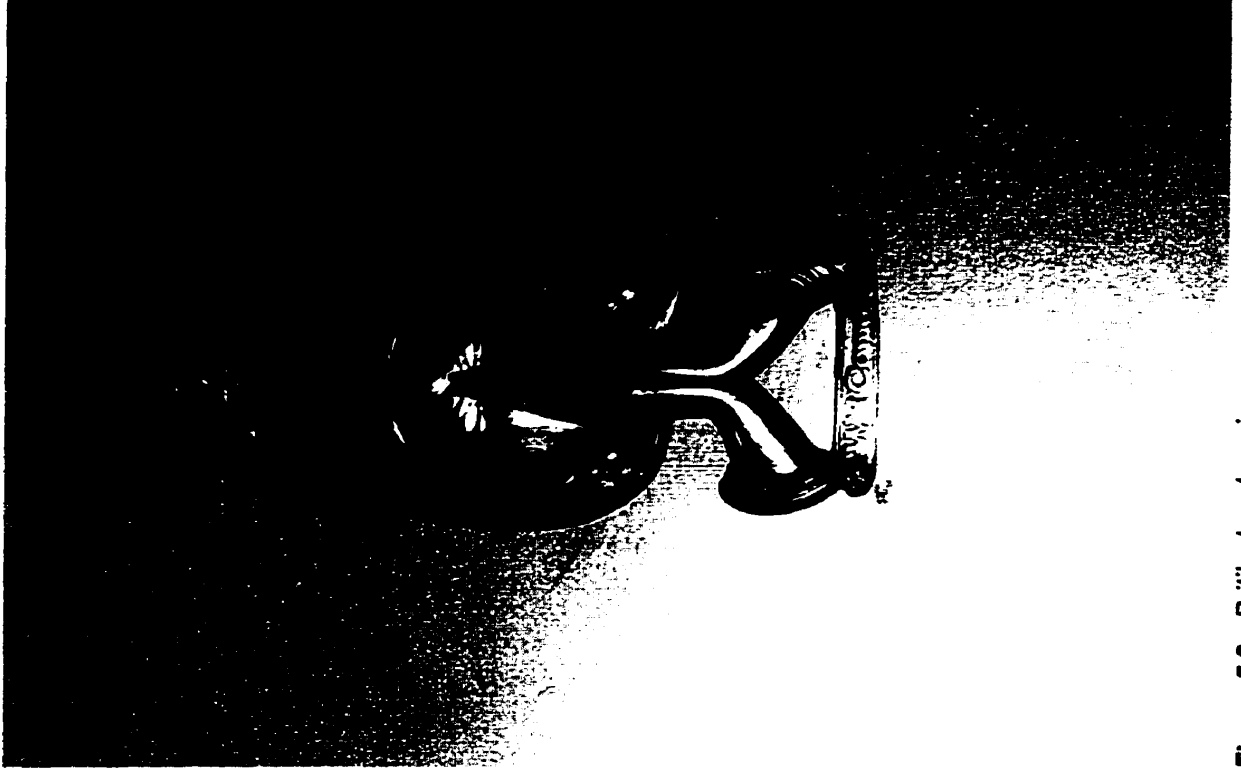Figure 5.6: *A closer view of Usha's temple, bottom level*

Figure 5.8: *Priti's door-hanging*

Figure 5.7: *Statue of Krishna*

Figure 5.9: *Vina's "Canadian" living room*

Figure 5.10: *Vina's "Indian" living room*

create a feeling of belonging for those who inhabit it. It should also welcome the guests who enter it. Given that she has both Indian and non-Indian friends, she wants to make sure that anyone who comes into the home feels comfortable.

I used to put a lot of Indian pictures and stuff like that but then I decided not too much... I have so many friends Canadians also, it's not only Indian friends, so I wanted both [a Canadian living room and an Indian living room]....so I said okay if a Canadian friend comes I could bring them there [into the Canadian living room] (laughs).

The above quote brings up an important point. Homes communicate identity and are used to shape identity, but homes are also decorated for others. In this sense when deciding on how to decorate the living space, the question of taste and to whom it appeals becomes extremely important. Geraldine Pratt (1982) argues that the house is an expression of a social world and the kinds of interactions we have with friends, kin and acquaintances in the home. Responding to Clare Cooper's (1974) earlier work on the house as a symbol of self, Pratt argues that:

> The self is largely the product of the opinions and actions of others with whom the developing self interacts. The self is a dynamic construction - one adjusts one's self-image to the opinions of others and changes one's presentation of self in order to modify the attitudes of others. The individual experiences him/herself as such, not directly, but only indirectly, from the particular standpoints of other individual members of the same social group or from the generalized standpoint of the social group as a whole to which s/he belongs (Pratt 1982, 139).

Taste is a product of the social world. Decorating reflects one's self but it is also done to appeal to others. Usha decorated her home in both Indian and Canadian styles, perhaps to appeal to her membership in two separate social worlds - one of friends from school and work, most of whom are Canadians of other ethnicities, and the other made up of friendships in the Gujarati community. Similarly, many of the women who follow the same guru, such as Ami and Jagruti, decorate their homes with pictures of the guru. On the one hand it reflects their beliefs but also perhaps demonstrates their devotion to their friends.

The houses and the objects placed in them communicate identity and reveal aspects of a negotiation, if not an inner-conflict, that the study participants often feel living in this society. Many women identify statues of gods and goddess, as well as other religious items such as books and devotional music, as being the most meaningful possessions in their homes. Other women place objects in the home which are reminders of their childhood. The house becomes an important place that communicates Indianness to people both inside and, to a lesser extent, outside of the home. Often the inside of the home is a place for only Indians who understand religious practices. The outside of the home is decorated only on special occasions but otherwise remains relatively

conservative and similar to other houses in the neighbourhood. While the home is clearly a place for the expression and defense of an Indian identity, it is also a place where women express their reinvented, transcultural identities through a blending of decorative styles from both the East and West.

Discussion

The house has multiple meanings for the immigrant women in this study. Unlike their homes in India, the women have invested a great deal into their Canadian homes, and as a consequence, the home takes on a more complicated meaning. It remains a place where women share a disproportionate burden of work but yet it is a treasured space of solace in a society where difference is not always tolerated. In this sense, it is a paradoxical space but still one in which the women exercise greater power than they have had in the past. Through the home, they challenge their marginalization. The home provides a place to break out of fixed and imposed identities created through caste and class and to put forth aspects of identity they feel are important. By making the kitchen a room that is less explicitly gendered as female only, and by making rooms for themselves in the house the women are redefining the home as a space where they belong rather than a place where they provide maintenance work only for others.

The home is a place in which the women can create a space that is Gujarati, Hindu, Indian, or hybrid through the placing of particular objects in rooms, through cooking, books and language. Culture and ethnicity are dynamic, not static, and this is brilliantly illustrated by both material and symbolic culture in the home. It is in this context that the women's roles as cultural mediators are particularly meaningful. For all of the women, maintaining Indian culture is a priority in the home. This is done through religious practice, language, and even entertaining mainly Gujarati friends. This is often done to 'protect' their children from what they perceive to be a society devoid of morals and values. More often, however, the women create a culture that is a mixture because they and their children must feel comfortable in two societies. This invented culture is often hybrid in nature, combining elements of both Indian and Canadian culture.

Homi Bhabha's writings on *The Location of Culture* (1994) also emphasize the sense of displacement or metaphoric homelessness felt by displaced, diasporic or exiled persons as being a state if 'in-between'.

> Each 'unhomely' house marks a deeper historical displacement. And that is the condition of being 'coloured' in South Africa, or...half-way between...not being defined   and it was this lack of definition in itself that was never to be questioned, but observed like a taboo, something which no one, while following, could never admit to.
>
> This half way house of racial and cultural origins bridges the 'in-between' diasporic origins of coloured South Africans and turns it into the symbol for the disjuncture, displaced everyday life of the liberation struggle: like so many others of this kind, whose families are fragmented in the diaspora of exile, code names, underground activity, people for whom a real home and attachments are something for others who will come after...(Bhabha 1994, 13).

Homi Bhabha refers to the coloured South Africans as undefined. They are neither black nor white but yet are coloured. Similarly, the Gujarati women create culture and identity in the home that is no longer clearly defined. After 20 years of living in Canada, their culture is neither wholly Indian nor Canadian. Rather, it is hybrid – in-between – not defined as either, but not simply both. It is a new culture. Bhabha describes "the recesses of the domestic space" as being a site for a radical blurring of distinctions between home and the outside world, or public and private (Bhabha 1994, 9). It is as a result of this state of in-betweenness, betwixt empowerment and oppression, Eastern and Western traditions, feeling homed and unhomed and so-forth that home becomes a multiple and hybrid space.

The making of a home as a space in which to mediate between ethnicity and culture is analogous to a patchwork quilt. From old materials such as items that have sentimental values and bits of family history along with new items that are symbolic of life as it is presently being lived, the maker produces an entirely new pattern. A good example of this is Sonal's description of her mother who bathes and changes clothes in a fully modern, western bathroom with chrome, tiles, thick towels, and scented soaps and shampoos from the Body Shop. From the western bathroom, her mother then enters a space where incense burns and idols adoring garlands stand upon an prayer altar. This movement is from one space to another, but that it is experienced in the single context of the home is a telling example of hybridity in modern immigrant life.

The women's home-making activities include the more traditional roles of cooking, cleaning and nurturing. Home-making also includes the important tasks of mediating and inventing culture, preserving history and shaping and communicating identity. This is crucial in the formation of an identity politics which the women and their families can use outside of the home to contest externally imposed identities and challenge any sense of marginalization.

The next chapter demonstrates further how the creation of a hybrid identity and oscillation between identities is a strategy used to create a place of belonging within Canadian society and how there are particular spaces in the city where the women are truly able to feel 'at home'. In turn, they are able to appropriate particular spaces and apply a definite ethnic quality to these city places. Particular attention is paid to the cultural community and the neighbourhood as important home spaces.

Chapter Six
Locating Home Beyond the House: Neighbourhood and Community as Meaningful Home Spaces

The concept of home for the women in this study has become very complex since their migration to Canada. Before migration, India was the only place the women considered home. Even today, India is remembered as the homeland where they were raised and from where their extended family, culture and history come. After 20 years living in Canada, however, their concept of home has expanded to incorporate a number of other physical and social spaces. Home refers not only to India but also to Canada, their house and, as we shall see, to the neighbourhoods, cultural community and an abstract sense of belonging.

To this point, I have mainly discussed how Gujarati women perceive and use the home in terms of the physical dwelling. The women reinvent their Canadian homes to keep the memories of their Indian culture alive and to pass them on to their children. It is also a place that inspires the invention of hybrid cultures and where transcultural identities are expressed and shaped. I have also argued throughout the study that home-making is a continuous social process that refers not only to domestic work performed in the house but to the making of identities and making oneself 'at home.'

The house, the women remarked, is a place where they are 'at home', where they can freely practice their religion, speak Gujarati and follow their cultural rituals, norms and values. Feeling 'at home' within the larger society and city, however, has not been so easy. Outside of the house, the women often experience discrimination and feel socially displaced. They are often socially excluded by their co-workers in the workforce, because of their inability to speak French or due to experiences of racism.

In this chapter, I argue that while the women may experience social exclusion in the larger society, they are able to feel comfortable and 'at home' in the local spaces – in the neighbourhood and the local Gujarati community – where most of their everyday home-making activities occur. The neighbourhoods of DDO and the Gujarati cultural community living there are social and physical spaces of belonging and, as such, can be viewed as extensions of home. A number of factors make these particular local spaces meaningful home spaces in the everyday lives of the women. Factors such as language, multi-ethnic neighbourhoods and the presence of a large,

local, Gujarati social network and South Asian community, make the neighbourhoods of DDO spaces where the women are comfortable and able to participate in local neighbourhood activities and interact with the communities around them.

Just as the house is a place where the women could socialize formally with members of prayer groups and informally through parties or holiday celebrations with family and friends, so too is DDO, as an extension of home, a place for both formal and informal socializing. The Gujarati community, similarly, provides the women with a kind of surrogate family. With the support of a large and visibly present Gujarati community, the women feel able to express and communicate their Indian identities in public.

It is in the local and everyday spaces that the women are able to articulate and reinvent their social identities as they choose. More significantly, the women, through their organization with and participation in the larger South Asian community, challenge a hegemonic cultural construction of space in the city by attaching a distinctly Indian quality to their local neighbourhoods. Not only are they resisting exclusion through the creation of inclusive home spaces, they are also choosing to make themselves at home in suburban neighbourhoods and, in turn, create new ideas and images of immigrant neighbourhoods.

In essence, this chapter examines the complex relationship between home-making as a social process of making oneself 'at home' and the fluidity of social identity. In the introduction, I discussed social identity as a mediated relation that is negotiated through a dialogue with others and formed by social relations, place and time. In the negotiation and reinvention of social identity, however, lies a constant tension between voluntarism and choicelessness given that constructions of ethnic social identity mediate between self-ascription and outside definition.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section examines some of the ways in which the women feel displaced or excluded from mainstream society and the pressures they face in order to fit in. The second section discusses the local neighbourhood and Gujarati community as important home spaces where the women are able to develop a sense of belonging. Included is a discussion of factors that make these places extensions of home and, subsequently, enabling spaces for the articulation of multiple and transcultural identities. The third section examines the implications of home as it extends beyond the walls of the house for the women and for the nature of social life in DDO.

Cultural identity and language guide the formation of social networks both inside and outside of the Gujarati community and, in turn, influence the women's struggles to make themselves at home in the larger society. Stories of language problems and racism infuse their discussions of experiences in Montréal (only 2 of the 19 women have not experienced any form of discrimination). Much of the discrimination they have experienced has revolved around intersections between language, 'race' and cultural practices.

Buchingnani found that, in general, many South Asians in Canada feel they have been accorded the formal rights and privileges of other Canadians but still do not enjoy complete access to these rights. Neither are South Asians yet totally accepted by other Canadians (Buchignani 1979, 48). The women in this study, similarly, have been forced to question their 'place' in Canadian society in spite of having lived here for several years. Although the women speak several languages and come from India, where linguistic diversity is a part of everyday life, they all find it difficult to adjust to 2 host societies in the Montréal context. As mainly English speaking immigrants, it has been particularly difficult to fit into francophone society. Sonal shares the belief of many when she says, *[As an Indian immigrant] this is not your home...You are belonging nowhere right now (laughs)...You feel [like an] outsider...Even [if] you have Canadian citizenship...still you feel [like an] outsider... [Montréal] is nice but because of the [French] language...you will be left out.*

Some women have lived in French neighbourhoods but, in general, they all find living in dominantly French-speaking neighbourhoods to be problematic. Vina, for example, lived in Saint. Hubert for ten years before moving to DDO and said that during her stay there, she seldom spoke to her francophone neighbours. One family living next door would at least exchange greetings with her but other neighbours would not speak to her and her family. Unable to communicate in French, she felt unwelcome and unable to form any social ties. Without interactions and involvement in the local community, it is difficult to develop any attachment to the neighbourhood (Cuba and Hummon 1993, 123). Similarly, Mira, who also lived in Saint Hubert before moving to DDO, believes that English neighbourhoods are more desirable to live in. *Basically, [the] location [of St. Hubert] was very convenient. It was close to the bridge and shopping centre...What I didn't like [was that] my children didn't have much exposure to English activities...They didn't have exposure to English.*

More unsettling are the stories of discrimination on the basis of cultural habits or skin colour which continually remind the women of their difference and perpetuate a sense of placelessness in this society. Common remarks include "What is that dot on your head?" or " You smell like spices; your clothes smell." Berry, in a study of French and English Canadian perceptions towards various immigrants, found that South Asian immigrants are subject to external categorizations in the form of stereotypes that perpetuate negative images of them. South Asians are perceived as poor, culturally different, not trustworthy, socially distant and not committed to a 'Canadian' way of life (Berry 1977, 96). Fourteen of the nineteen women feel that images of South Asians are negative and believe that others are often uncomfortable around South Asians, look at them suspiciously or do not want to get too close to them because they are not white. Panna, for example, feels uncomfortable even walking into certain stores because the clerks watch her as if she is a thief who is intent on stealing.

Jayna feels that people are afraid of South Asians. This was especially the case when she first arrived and there were not many South Asians living in Montréal. *In the beginning...[at] that time, there weren't many immigrants here so the people... felt scared. You couldn't even find different... food at that time... So...at that time, they were afraid...They didn't know Indian culture.* When Jayna lived in LaSalle, she found it very difficult to feel at home in her neighbourhood because of her encounters with racism. Most of her neighbours were French or English Canadian and, although language was a problem, she felt that racism was a greater issue. She described how she would take her children to the swimming pool in the summer months and everyone at the pool would get up and leave, not wanting to swim with her and her family. In 1976, she moved into a fourplex in the same neighbourhood and again experienced both rejection and acceptance. An elderly English couple occupied one of the fourplex apartments and treated her as if she were their own daughter. But a young couple and their daughter occupied another. Jayna feels that their daughter was not allowed to play with her because she was not white. These negative experiences made her feel unwelcome but, at this local scale, she also recognized that good neighbours make a difference in her attachment to home and neighbourhood. It has also made her value living in neighbourhoods with other immigrants, especially South Asians.

This social process of being stereotyped, externally categorized, discriminated against, and feared not only affects the ability of the women to make themselves at home in Montréal, but also influences their perceptions of job security, advancement and social mobility. Many feel that

they are often overlooked when job promotions are available (16 of the 19 women felt Indian immigrants faced discrimination in the workplace). This lack of opportunity for advancement is perceived to be, in part, caused by their inability to speak French and racism. As Maya argues, colour can hold you back.

There is a little bit of prejudice here. We have to suffer their language prejudices and that's one kind of prejudice...The second is our skin colour. This is there too...Your kids will suffer it too... In jobs...you can see another [white] person who goes so far ahead even when you are doing most of the work.

Ami even took her previous employer to court because she felt she was continuously being overlooked for job promotions because of her skin colour. Madhu lost her job at a computer manufacturing company and has not been able to find a job since. Now that she is getting older and no longer feels comfortable dressing in short skirts and Western clothes, she feels that no one is going to hire an older Indian woman in a sari. In other words, her cultural practices will hold her back because others, she feels, are afraid of her. She refers to how the boundaries of identity, especially ethnic identity, if held fixed and impermeable, will prevent immigrants and other visible minorities from being accepted in Canadian society. Only a small minority of the host population would ever fully accept an Indian in terms of her traits and qualities of culture. She argues that immigrants have to give up their culture in order to be accepted.

People don't accept you, unfortunately...You are accepted only, very rarely...What is the big fear about, about this black guy or Jew... this racial thing? What is it based upon? I think the fear of not knowing them properly. If you know them you are not afraid of them...If you stand very clearly, with very clear boundaries, if you are different from others, the more different you are, the more harsher the boundaries are, it doesn't allow you to mix in, blend in easily. Another person has to be very learned or very willing to be ready to accept you with such...profoundly marked demarcations...which differentiate you...Otherwise they would not accept you and you find very few people [will be willing to do that].

Most of the women (17 of 19) feel that they must compromise their culture in order to fit into the larger society. Being immigrants, the women face the challenge of selecting effective integration strategies while being the potential targets of discrimination (Ghosh 1984 in Moghaddam *et. al.* 1987, 162). On the one hand, they need to act one way in order to placate fears conjured up by stereotypes of South Asian immigrants in which they are depicted as poor, not trustworthy, not committed to Canadian life, and socially distant. On the other hand, they must continue to cultivate an Indian identity for their children. These negative experiences have encouraged some women to cultivate an identity that allows them to 'fit in.' It is through the

articulation and negotiation of a hybrid and multiple identity that the women try to gain acceptance and make themselves at home.

At the larger societal level, the women express a great sense of choicelessness and feel tremendous pressure to make compromises or to reinvent themselves as 'Western' women. Adapting different behaviour becomes almost natural and unconscious but it is a way of being accepted[47]. Many women describe feeling socially different from others at work because they are not comfortable or used to socializing and joking around in the same manner as others. They are compelled to change their ways of dressing, talking and even behaving in order to fit in. Falguni says that it is a question of adapting to the ways of the 'Canadian' people. *If you act as they like, then you will have not problems. If you are good, if you behave okay, if you adjust okay, if you treat them fair, I don't think...any Canadian or any other person has a problem.*

Ami describes how she tries to fit in so that they others will interact with her even when she is uncomfortable with some of their conversations. *'Canadians' talk very openly. They talk about sex very openly... I will never talk about that. But I will not act like, "oh you stupid guy, why talk like this?"... I don't want them to feel uncomfortable because I am there.* At work, Sonal finds that Indians are addressed only on a professional basis and seldom are included in the wider social life of the workplace unless they make the effort.

I find that... they [members of the host society] just don't want to mix... just not interested...Unless you have the same likings and interests, they are not interested...You have to be able to go out with them every Friday to the pub and drink with them or dance with them in order to...make them interested in you. If you can't do that, they walk away. You are there, you work with them, you say hi...you are there, you are sick or you are happy or you did something good or bad and that's all they know. They don't want any detail about how you think, what you are thinking... I have seen the prejudices. I have seen the way they treat you. I have seen that when you are in a meeting, even if you are in a position where you are quite ahead of somebody else...the rest of the managers will laugh and smile and cut jokes with the rest of the other staff and you are in one corner. They refer to you [only] when they need data, information or work done...things like that.

Many feminists of colour agree with the views presented here. Puerto Rican feminist Rosario Morales, argues that, in essence, what one is doing is playing-down differences or 'acting white' in an attempt to be accepted in spite of skin colour or strange accents.

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[47] Nancy Duncan's examination of queer spaces and safe places among the gay community provides a striking illustration of the manner in which other marginalized groups in society are excluded from fully participating in public spaces. The concept of a "safe place" is important for gay men who are at risk of prejudice, discrimination, and physical violence and verbal abuse throughout their daily lives. Often for gay men, feeling safe means acting straight in that many feel they are tolerated only so long as their gay identity remains hidden. Adapting their behaviour becomes natural and unconscious (Duncan 1996, 5-6).

[w]hat I do remember is to walk in straight and white into the store and say good morning in my see how white how upper class how refined and kind voice all crisp with consonants bristling with syllables protective coloring in racist fields looks white and crisp like cabbage looks tidy like laid out gardens like white aprons on black dresses like please and thank you and you're welcome like neat and clean and see I swept and scrubbed and polished ain't I nice que hay de criticar will I do will I pass will you let me thru will they let me be not see me here beneath my skin behind my voice crouched and quiet and so still not see not hear me there where I crouch hiding my eyes my indian bones my spanish sounds muttering (Morales 1983 in Rose 1993, 145).

In short, when speaking of their general experiences and encounters with other communities of the larger society, most of the women have spoken of a sense of displacement or exclusion in social space. In order to be accepted, many women have adopted strategies of behaviour, in public spaces outside of the home, which minimize their differences and emphasize their similarities with others. While they may feel socially excluded in the larger society, there are spaces in the city where they belong and are comfortable in expressing all aspects of their plural, hybrid identities without feeling a need to compromise. It is in the everyday social spaces of DDO and the Gujarati and South Asian communities living there, that the women make themselves at home.

DDO and the Gujarati Samaj Community: Spaces of Home and Belonging

The women live very local lives, spending most of their time outside of work in their DDO neighbourhoods and socializing with their friends and family, particularly in the Gujarati Samaj community, many of whom also live in DDO. I do not claim that DDO is some sort of anti-racist refuge or that the Gujarati Samaj community is free from social tension. The DDO neighbourhoods and the Gujarati Samaj community are, however, extensions of home in that they are enabling social and physical spaces where the women are able to define and reinvent hybrid social identities as they choose, as opposed to feeling pressured to do so. The women make choices with regard to socializing both formally and informally with people inside and outside of their own ethnic communities. The choices they make in terms of who they socialize with and what organizations they join, communicate aspects of their hybrid identities to others.

In their DDO neighbourhoods, the women are able to learn about and feel at home with people from outside of their cultural community and are comfortable communicating their Indian identities in public. Acting as part of a larger South Asian community, they also have the

opportunity to share an Indian and also specifically Gujarati culture with each other and the communities around them. This is important not only for the sake of educating their children who will feel more empowered to put forth an Indian identity outside the house, but it is also important in terms of shaping the ethnic character of DDO.

DDO: A Meaningful Home Space

In addition to having lived in DDO for at least ten years, a number of factors make the community a place where the women have a sense of belonging. Most importantly, it is a predominantly English-speaking area, culturally heterogeneous, with large South Asian and, especially, Gujarati populations. When most of the women came to Canada in the late 1960s and early 1970s, there were very few South Asians in Montréal and even fewer living in suburban areas. At that time, DDO was just developing into a residential and commercial area, was inconvenient in terms of transportation and access to services and was therefore not a primary receiving area for new immigrants. That being the case, the first women who moved to DDO came mainly because they had relatives living there or because of its proximity to their or their husbands' places of work. For the women who moved to DDO in the 1980s, when more Indians had settled there, an added incentive was to live near friends, relatives and/or other South Asians, as well as to businesses and religious centres catering to the community.

Since coming to DDO, the women have been able to realize their goals of becoming homeowners, develop a sense of permanency in their neighbourhoods and to form stronger ties with their neighbours and neighbourhoods. Obviously, the fact that the women have now lived in Canada for many years, and that they have had more experiences in dealing with people outside of their communities makes it easier for them to feel settled in their present neighbourhoods. The fact that DDO is primarily English-speaking for example, also gives the women greater opportunities to participate in activities and interact with the non-Gujarati neighbours around them.

Another factor that the women all appreciate is the heterogeneity of the DDO neighbourhoods. The plural nationalities and ethnicities of Montréal, and the fact that people from diverse cultural backgrounds often inhabit the same neighbourhoods, is generally a new experience for immigrants when they first arrive (Germain and Archambault 1995). Although India is a culturally diverse country, the women found the diversity to be shocking and they were not comfortable with it at first. After having confronted experiences with racism, however, the women

have come to prefer heterogeneous areas. Most feel that it is difficult to feel any sense of displacement when on every corner a family of a different ethnicity can be seen. Madhu gives a good description of the heterogeneity she enjoys in her neighbourhood.

Economically, [DDO] is more well-to-do, financially, but at the same time [this particular neighbourhood] is poorer than the rest of Dollard...This is a condominium housing society where [many] first-time homeowners are [living]. They will move on to their second home later on, when they manage to get more money... There are all kinds of people here so it is a mixed community... In this area, Indians, Chinese, Palestinians or Arabs...blacks...Filipinos...a whole lot of [immigrants] are here. You walk on a summer day, mid-evening, and you will find them in droves and droves and droves, Indians – Sikhs with Gujaratis and Punjabis and all kinds of people. Then you see all these... Hijab-wearing women driving by, walking by. Then you see Chinese people. These three are very prominently seen because you can identify. You see Europeans [but] you can't identify them, whether they are from Czechoslovakia, Romania, Russia... They all look white so you don't know....Indians are also increasing... The more international the better. I like to know about other people. I like to be that way. I...never liked a concentration of one people.

Generally, the women feel a sense of solidarity among immigrants who understand the difficulties involved with leaving one's country to live in a foreign land. Immigrants share the experience of displacement and understand what it feels like not to belong or be unwelcome. Maya notices the greater openness of immigrants:

[Immigrants are] approachable...because all of us have left our country and come here to live. It is like we are same kind of people...same intentions we have in our hearts. We have left [our countries] for a better life or maybe a different one...I think... two immigrants will become friends more easily than a Canadian and an immigrant will become friends...I guess it's because of the loneliness [that may be a shared experience among immigrants]. We don't ever belong here. We just came from our countries so we might as well make the most of it.

DDO is an area where all of the women have also cultivated good relationships with their neighbours. All of the women in this study are privileged, speak English, if not English and some French, and are more able to interact with people in the neighbourhoods. Unlike when the women speak of more general experiences, where they feel a sense of choicelessness and are judged on the basis of their skin colour, in DDO, there is a greater sense of comfort and security. As homeowners, English-speaking immigrants, and South Asians, the women fit into the social fabric of their multi-ethnic neighbourhoods. There is no threat of losing their homes as there is of losing their jobs so they are able to feel 'at home' without compromising their culture. Through the articulation of hybrid identities, the women are able to feel 'at home' between very different social worlds. In the house, the women are able to control culture and shape ethnicity through food, language and by choosing who they entertain. In DDO the women also exercise choice in defining their relationships with the neighbours living around them.

Seventeen of the nineteen women, for example, feel comfortable socializing with their non-Indian neighbours, although to varying degrees. Many of the women have cultivated relationships

in which they will speak to their neighbours if they are outside or take in each other's mail if one family is away on holiday. Other women have learned practical information about maintaining their homes, or have exchanged recipes. Eighteen of the nineteen women know many of their neighbours by first name and would be open to socializing with the non-Indian neighbours outside of the house, for example by participating in barbeques or chatting out of doors. Only four women, however, invite non-Indians into their homes for coffee or meals and one woman does not socialize at all outside of the Gujarati community, nor does she know any of her non-Gujarati neighbours. On the whole, however, through this socializing they learn about the other communities living around them and, in particular, come to understand differences and similarities between themselves and others.

Gita has gotten so close to her Eastern European neighbours that they have helped her and her husband to renovate their home and have supplied them with books, tools and advice. Nisha's neighbour helps her with gardening and she teaches him to cook Indian food. They have become friends and have even taken the opportunity to stay in their neighbour's vacation home in Florida.

My neighbours are absolutely out of this world...The very first time I met him...he said, "If you guys need any tools or anything, just give me a shout ."...It's just perfect with him. It's so beautiful. He has taught me, completely how to landscape my garden... I don't have to buy any plants. I don't have to do anything. He sort of transplants them for me. He grows them for me and then comes and he'll leave them in a little place and he'll put the pot there which means this is where I am supposed to plant it. This is the ideal location to plant it. He will come with me to the nursery to buy my soil to do everything. They are snowbirds now so [for] three, four, five months of the year they go to Florida. For taking care of his house in the winter, [he has invited us to] go to Florida anytime we want and stay in his house [there]. We did that last year... Beautiful neighbours, beautiful neighbours.

Interacting with non-Indian neighbours allows the women to express a more 'Western' side of their plural identities and feel accepted. Kanta, for example, has become the godmother of her neighbour's daughter who is English Canadian. She discusses aspects of Hinduism and human values with them and provides advice to her godchild who, now an adult, is currently experiencing marital troubles. Having god-parents is not a part of Indian culture, but being able to participate in the lives of her neighbours makes Kanta feel more a part of the larger society.

Together with the other neighbours, Mira often participates in backyard barbecues. During such functions, she and her family speak in English, wear Western clothing and feel comfortable and 'at home' doing so. Oscillating between multiple identities is completely natural and the women do not express feeling uncomfortable doing so in their neighbourhoods. Mira thinks

nothing of attending a barbecue wearing shorts and a T-shirt, socializing in English one afternoon and then, the next evening, within her own home, holding a prayer group meeting, dressing in Indian clothes, and speaking Gujarati. There is a continuous reinvention of a fluid identity that allows them to feel at home in either scenario.

It is also in DDO, through these social relations, that women can share their culture and learn about other communities. Jyostna, for example, remained in her first house in DDO because of the good relationship she had with her neighbours. She and her family had in fact hoped to move into a bigger house but did not want to leave the neighbourhood as long as the other family remained. It was only when that family moved to Alberta that they decided to sell their house, but they still remain in touch with one another.

These neighbours were Ukrainian immigrants and through their daily interactions the two families learned a great deal about the similarities between their cultures. Jyostna emphasized the importance of family in both cultures which was mutually demonstrated to one another by the fact that both women had their mothers-in-law living with them. Neither mother-in-law spoke English or French but would communicate with each other through non-verbal means. They would spend summer mornings together, sitting on the back porch, watching the grandchildren. The Indian mother-in-law used to feed the Ukrainian mother-in-law mangoes and roti[48]. Sharing culture in daily life has made Jyostna and her family appreciate and value both the similarities and differences of the other ethnic communities around her.

Jyostna still refers to them as exceptional neighbours in that they were so close to one another despite cultural differences. They would even enter one another's home without knocking because they were so comfortable with each other. She is quick to point out, however, that they would avoid interacting at a level where cultural differences could cause problems. For example, the two families would never have meals together. That way she would never have to explain her dietary restrictions. She feels that it is often too complicated to explain to others why her religion forbids the consumption of meat and eggs. Nonetheless, relating in this manner made her feel that tolerance, acceptance and belonging are possible.

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[48] Roti is a flat baked bread made of wheat. It takes the place of rice as the main carbohydrate source for people in the wheat belt of India (personal communication).

Madhu feels she has learned about herself by noticing how other ethnic communities integrate into Canadian society. She has had an opportunity to learn about the Chinese community through her interactions with neighbours. She has noticed their similarities to both Indians and 'Canadians'. She finds herself feeling irrationally threatened by the growing number of Chinese immigrants. In her eyes, the Chinese neighbours appear similar to white people in skin colour, food habits, ways of dressing, socializing and, often, even religion. Yet, like Indians, they are also hard-workers but assimilate easily. For this reason she feels threatened.

Somehow...I sometimes find I am very prejudice against Chinese... I don't know why. I can't explain. I was telling one day to my sister. I said, " Why do I feel so bad about Chinese coming in?"...Because...I feel threatened by them...They are the only immigrants who are equally smart and equally hard working and with the same basic, very strong cultural values...[O]thers, I know, won't stand up to our own diligence or hard work...but Chinese...they have that strong discipline and sense of morality, sense of religion...same concepts we have. We study because we want to compete with other people. They study,[as Indians do], because they want to come above their poverty and they know that they can't survive without studying. So these basic values are so close to ours that I am afraid and in some cases...I know that they are better than us and that is threatening me...One thing is their white skin and their samskar[49] which allows them eat [meat] and mingle easily with the white people...That's what I feel that we are not able to do... and also...we [Hindus] are...pure vegetarian, so...we can't be easily mixed into it. [we] don't drink [often]; the [Chinese] drink. They dance. They wear...[Western] dresses easily and all that. For them it's easy, easy, easy... so they are already that much advanced or it is easier for them to mingle... I know I am being...irrational...but it is there and I am reacting...I do feel that.

The ethnic diversity of DDO neighbourhoods make the women feel more comfortable in the local community. Certainly, ethnic diversity does not eliminate intercultural tensions, but it does tend to depolarize them. While DDO's English reputation and multiethnic neighbourhoods may not facilitate their social integration into francophone society or the adoption of the French language, it does allow the women develop a sense of belonging. This sense of neighbourhood belonging, however, is intimately woven with the presence of a larger Gujarati community and South Asian communities in DDO and surrounding municipalities.

Gujarati Community: A Meaningful Home Space:

Spatially, not only is DDO a central place where the women socialize with people outside of the Gujarati community, and where all basic amenities such as health care services, grocery stores, and banks are found, it is also an important place for South Asians in general. Some feel that if there is a potential for an Indian 'ghetto' to be formed in Montréal, it will be in DDO (Sweet 1997, A6). The increasing concentration of South Asian businesses along the north end of

Sources Boulevard highlights the significance of South Asians in DDO. Twenty businesses, including grocery stores, restaurants, video, jewelry, fabric, and sari shops cater to this community. There are also three Hindu temples in the neighbourhood and the Springarden Elementary School offers Hindi language courses for students during lunch hour. Almost all community events take place in the West Island, if not in DDO itself. In many ways, DDO and surrounding West Island municipalities are a cultural refuge for the South Asian community. As Madhu explains:

> [The] West Island has a concentration of Indian people...A lot of the activities happen here [in DDO]... at certain theatres, in church, wedding halls, CEGEPs or amphitheatres, things are happening on a day to day basis...classes for dancing for the daughters or Gujarati language classes for the children, something cultural, religious gatherings for the temple, classes [are offered].

Even though the women may not use the temples regularly (only two women go to the temple on a regular basis), such buildings, shops and restaurants serving the community are visible reminders of their belonging to Montréal. Mohini, for example, as others have expressed, feels that having Indian businesses and people around have made her feel more comfortable and at home.

> We have Indian stores here, Indian restaurants, there are so many Indian restaurants here in Dollard...and there is Gujarati Samaj, it makes a difference like if you feel lonely, even if you see someone [Indian]... it's not a close friend or family [member] but...it's like [seeing] a close friend or family [member].

The Gujarati community is a social space, if not always a physical space, where the women feel free to dress and act as they please. Through both informal socializing, with close friends in the Gujarati community, as well as through more formal socializing, at Gujarati Samaj or Indo-Canadian Association events, the women cultivate a place of belonging. In these social spaces, they are able to put forth an Indian and even Gujarati identity that they feel more inhibited to do in other physical and social spaces in the city. Not only do they feel comfortable expressing their Indian identities in public but, acting as part of a larger South Asian community, they are able to communicate and share their Indian culture with the larger DDO community.

All of the women have close friends with whom they socialize on weekends in DDO and/or who are members of the same prayer groups. A few have some close friends on the South Shore of Montréal in Brossard but most of their time, outside of work, is spent in DDO. At times, the women find living around a large South Asian community to be a two-edged sword, although for

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[49] Samskar refers to an innate nature that dictates culture or habits.

most it furnishes a space and sense of home. Some of the complaints the women express revolve around issues of not having enough privacy, having too many social obligations and not wanting to appear segregated. Jayna, as mentioned previously, values having Indian and other immigrant neighbours in that it gives her a greater sense of belonging, however, she views any sort of segregation negatively.

I don't like too many Indians in the same place...The...neighbourhood value goes down... I went to New York and there are some areas, only Indians are living. You feel that the value is down for that area. Even the house price is down if there are so many Indians....These 'Canadian' people don't like if some area is completely [segregated] one way.

Socializing is also a large part of South Asian culture and there is a great deal of pressure to keep up social relations by entertaining guests regularly. Between working inside and outside the home, and fulfilling social obligations within the Gujarati community, most of the women have very little time to socialize with other Indians, South Asians or people from other communities. In spite of the *vehvar* or social obligations, however, the Gujarati community provides an opportunity for socializing and interacting with people of the same ethnic, religious and linguistic background.

The presence of a community where the women feel a sense of home and belonging is worth having to endure the hardship of less privacy in that, to some degree, the community substitutes for an extended family. Before coming to Canada, family members made up most of the women's social networks. In Canada, friends in the community have become surrogate kin. They become the people with whom the women celebrate holidays and other special occasions and with whom they exchange information about Montréal society. As Agnew (1997) suggests, interaction and social networks within South Asian ethno-cultural groups are necessary for survival in an alien and sometimes hostile Canadian environment. The immigrant subculture promises "comfort and security" in a situation "fraught with emotional and psychological tension" (Agnew in Ralston 1988, 79).

The women also socialize within the community through more formal associations such as the Gujarati Samaj most of whose members reside in DDO. The presence of Samaj members makes the neighbourhood a place where the women find support. Most of the women, when they first came to Canada, joined the Indo-Canadian Association. Initially, there were very few Gujaratis in Montréal and the Indo-Canadian organization provided an opportunity to get together with other

Indians for social events. As Maya pointed out, Indian community organizations offer a place
to belong that other French or English community organizations do not.

[People] know that we are not French, that we are not one of them. It's been like this...it is always there. I think that any Canadian organization [will not] take you for one of them... I suppose because we don't speak the language so we feel left out...if you go to an Indian community, cultural community [organization], right away you will feel that you are welcome. You won't feel so bad.

Presently, none of the women are active members of the Indo-Canadian Association.
Instead, the women and their families belong to the Gujarati Samaj. Part of what creates a feeling
of home for many of the women is the possibility of being able to speak in their mother tongue.
Associating with the Indo-Canadian Association or with any other community organization means
socializing mostly in English. As members of the Samaj, the women can speak in their own
language, eat their own food, listen to their own music and celebrate festivals typical of Gujarat.

Being part of a large Gujarati community is important for the children who are more readily
exposed to the language and culture of Canada in daily life outside the home. Everyone in the
Gujarati Samaj of Montréal participates in *Garba*, a Gujarati folkdance performed to celebrate
Navarathri (Mandata Mandir, the other Gujarati organization, holds a separate *Garba*). Women are
mainly in charge of decorating and organising for the event and fully participate in the festivities.
They also involve their children by assigning them to various organising and decorating
committees.

A local version of Garba has evolved in Montréal. First, it is spread over weekends to
accommodate the Canadian work week instead of being held for nine consecutive nights as it is in
Gujarat. In India, traditionally, men and women would not dance Garba together. Instead, there
would be two circles dancing, one of men and one of women. In Montréal, couples will dance
together (personal communication 1996). In recent years, other non-Gujarati Indians, as well as
people from other ethnic communities, have also participated. This has prompted varied
responses among the women interviewed in this study.

Three of the women feel that the Samaj should have an agenda that concentrates on
sharing culture with other communities. Madhu highlights important cleavages in the Samaj and
emphasizes that is too easy for people to lose sight of the important role a cultural organization can
play in sharing Gujarati culture with the larger society.

So much [community] politics and everything is going on... I am so tired of all these things. People [are only concerned with] trying to take over, trying to have their names out in print [in the community bulletin]... trying to put their children where everybody can see [how] well- dressed [they are].. Nobody's interested in reciting a prayer... It is more for eating and having a good time.... than any cultural thing...Instead of just focusing inside they should go out and portray themselves...to the rest of the world. That is where I feel we are missing out a lot...why shouldn't we make our community more known to the Western world here.

Most of the women, however, would like to keep some traditions strictly for the community. Garba, and other community functions, are often the only opportunities the women have to realize and (re)imagine the specific Gujarati culture of their homeland. If Samaj activities become open to all, they argue, there will be no space for the articulation of a purely Gujarati identity through food, language and dress. Another major concern is for the children. Gita argues that by having children participate in Samaj activities, they are exposed to Gujarati culture, language and children from the same background. Outside the community programs, the children may still socialize with Indians but they are often Punjabis or Indians from other communities. If events such as Garba are open to all people, she reasons, then it becomes a space where parents must fear and protect their children from outside influences. Gujarati Samaj is a social space that they would like to see remain entirely Gujarati.

The women are proud to express their Gujarati identity but it is seldom openly shared with people outside of the community. On occasion, however, the women have held community events in their homes that have given neighbours a chance to catch a glimpse of Gujarati culture. When Ami, for example, hosted a Gujarati, Hindu, spiritual leader in her house, she arranged a weekend full of religious functions for his followers. All the festivities took place on her property and many of the events were held in a tent erected on the front lawn that was open to those who passed by. Only people within the community participated in the prayer and rituals, but neighbours came by and had a look at the event inside. Many later asked questions and complimented the host on the organization, decorations and music. Thus while it remained a purely Gujarati social space, it was also an event that allowed a specifically Gujarati identity to be openly and freely communicated.

Through their activities within the Gujarati and South Asian communities, the women again utilize opportunities to articulate multiple social identities. Depending on the situation, the women often assert identities that are more Indian or more Gujarati. "Ethnic or other characteristics of social plurality can expand or collapse like a sectional telescope to fill the situation. This appeals in a commonsense manner. It is a simple notion of scale, "I am Welsh in England, British in

Germany, European in Bangkok" (Peach 1984, 214 in Western 1992, 235). For people outside of the South Asian community, the women are simply Indian and it is that identity, imposed from outside, that the women encounter, and to some degree articulate and contest at the same time. Reflecting Canadian ignorance of India and its rich cultural diversity, it is virtually impossible for the women to communicate a Gujarati identity that is not interpreted as generically 'Indian' even if they desire to do so. As a consequence, their Gujarati identity often assumes a more 'private' status and is communicated and understood only among close friends and family.

Acting as part of a larger South Asian community, however, the women still share their Indianness with others. The women, along with the larger South Asian population in DDO, are local consumers whose demands for Indian items have encouraged a growth of Indian businesses serving their needs. Non-South Asians are exposed to Indian food and groceries, clothing, jewelry, as well as cooking vessels and Indian videos. Ami, along with her husband, owns a convenience store where, in addition to standard items such as milk, bread and toothpaste, she sells *samosas* and Indian pastries. By selling Indian food products not only is she catering to the Indian community but she is sharing aspects of Indian culture with a larger array of store patrons. Leonard has labeled such women 'cultural consultants' in that they are responsible for communicating what is Indian to their non-Indian clientele who may be looking to purchase Indian food or learn about the culture. In a sense they are influencing cultural tastes on a daily basis, helping diverse customers to formulate ideas about what is Indian (Leonard 1993, 170).

Even through their participation with community organizations, the women can ensure that their children participate and learn to feel 'at home' in the diasporic culture while sharing their culture with others. Many of the women interviewed in this study have encouraged their children, especially their daughters, to dance and to play music. The women play a crucial role sponsoring the performances, in training and costuming the performers. This was the case at a performance in August 1997 celebrating 50 years of independence in India and Pakistan.

Although the event was organized by the Indo-Canadian Association, many members of the Gujarati Samaj participated. Eight of the women interviewed had daughters who participated in the show. The women were all involved in raising and donating money for the performance. Some taught folkdances to their children and others helped sew costumes and dress the girls for the event. For the performance, some girls danced very traditional Indian pieces. Others dressed in Gujarati folk dresses and performed traditional folk dances, but reinterpreted them by incorporating

dance steps and popular music from current Indian films. The women's daughters and other participants, were able to use this event to share Indian culture and express their Indian identities to anyone interested in attending.

The women are also very interested in sharing aspects of their material culture (arts and crafts) even with local clubs in DDO, such as Le Cercle de Femmes to which 7 of the 19 women belong. They gather with women from various backgrounds to hear guest speakers, learn crafts, and cook. Madhu describes it as a ladies club that meets at least once a month.

It's [a club where we learn crafts] and creative things...Like [if someone] knows [how to] crochet, cook...some special recipe that is very rare, [then they will teach the others]...At Diwali time, we do demonstrations of rangoli... or diva lighting... and [we] have contests [to see whose rangoli design is the best]...In summer we [go on] picnics...We [mostly] talk, eat our food, have a lot of fun.

By freely sharing culture and ethnicity with others around them, they are also expressing active and positive identities for their children who are all too aware of their difference vis-à-vis the larger society. Madhu sums up the sentiments of all the women when she describes the discussions she has with the young students who come to her private Gujarati classes.

That's what I tell the children, no matter what you do, no matter which type of soap [you use], you cannot wash out your colour so accept it. Some of my students...are having problems with the parents because they don't like their parents to be what they are or to dress [in Indian clothes]. Or they are ashamed sometimes of their family. I say you can't wash it out...Look at yourself in the mirror. Look at yourself, sometimes you are closing your eyes when you are looking at yourself. You'd like to be [white]. Yes I agree, because it's easier to assimilate and all that but you can't wash out your colour and as long as you do not accept that, you are going to be very, very miserable in your life. You will be a very split personality or messed up totally...like a lost soul. So try to accept first what you are and like what you see in yourself. And why should you like it, if you don't understand your roots and Gujarati background and culture or Indian background and culture? There are so many things to be proud of. There is nothing to be ashamed of. If you know that, it will give you some backbone to say yes I can stand on my own. Yes I have something to boast about. I happen to have something to offer to the world. If not, you are not accepting yourself. Then only you can step outside and be accepted by other people.

Thus the women, through the cultural organizations, are also able to feel 'at home' in that they are freely able to put forth Indian facets of their hybrid identity through which they can defend Indian culture. Participating in these organizations is part of the women's home-making activities in that not only are they allowed to remember the homeland but they are also able to include their children in larger community activities which help in the shaping of their hybrid identities. Through both formal and informal socializing in the neighbourhoods of DDO, the women also allow for Indian culture to be shared and communicated with others.

Discussion/Conclusion

The women in this study have often questioned their place in Montréal society because of the social exclusion and discrimination they have faced over the years. Many have commented on the need to modify their behaviour, ways of dressing, and ways of speaking in order to fit in with others around them. Their stories of displacement demonstrate the manner in which the larger society outside the home is often constraining and forces them to compromise their culture. The women, however, do not live or frame their lives at such grand societal scales. Rather they live locally, and it is at the local spaces of the neighbourhood and within their cultural community that the women create 'home spaces' and are able to feel 'at home.'

At the larger levels of society, the women have been subjected to external processes of categorization whereby they have been perceived, by others, as socially distant and different. Yet, it is because of these negative experiences that the women felt the need to construct Western identities. The women have used their fluid identities to make themselves at home. They have reinvented their identities according to place and social context. At the neighbourhood level, different social processes have made DDO and the cultural community enabling social spaces through which the women have gained power to self-ascribe a hybrid ethnicity that defends their Indian identity while challenging dominant mythologies and stereotypes constructed of them in the larger society.

In the local spaces, the women have been able to cultivate formal and non-formal social ties with people inside and outside the Gujarati community. Their identities are continually reinvented as 'western' or 'eastern' across shifting social contexts. Through this oscillation between multiple identities, and as a result of the creation of hybrid ethnicities, the women are able to be 'at home' between social worlds. They, along with the larger South Asian community, also feel more empowered to redefine the social fabric of their neighbourhoods.

In Chapter IV, I discussed the suburbs as places commonly associated with middle-class lifestyles, familialism, cultural homogeneity, and not generally as immigrant spaces. However, many of the suburbs of Montréal are important places for immigrant settlement and home-making and express elements of distinct cultures as well as the hybridity created by several different cultures in close social and physical contact. By choosing to live in suburban neighbourhoods and in owned housing, participating in neighbourhood barbecues and other such social functions, and simply through the activities of neighbouring, the women articulate identities that stand in

opposition to the stereotypes that are often used to categorize them. For example, they are not poor, nor are they socially distant, living in crowded segregated housing in the inner city. While most of the women are not so close to other non-Indians as to invite them into their homes, there exists a peaceful cohabitation and a sense of respect and acceptance.

Gujarati women are creating homes in DDO and are demanding the right to belong while retaining and realizing their own cultural norms, values and histories. In their daily lives and practices, they challenge the very notion of a centre as their culture of the 'periphery' moves to the core of Western social space. The study concludes with a discussion of the meaning of home for the Gujarati immigrant women in this study and the need to reconceptualize home as plurilocal and multiple.

Chapter Seven

There's No Place Like Home:
Summary and Conclusions

The home and the trees around home are...like witnesses to the life that I have lived. They were there before and they will be there after. They are my elders...like a grandfather, grandmother... They have got their own identities... And the [open] windows... all the air comes in and goes out...it's open to the world...Fresh air, even dirty air, it goes in and goes out... Nothing is closed. Nothing is stagnant. It comes and goes... I feel every time a wind or something blows through, it leaves this indelible mark on the walls or on the house...[and] the house gains that much character. (Madhu)

The life experiences of 19 Gujarati immigrant women have provided multiple lenses through which to examine the home and identity as complicated and multiple concepts. I have argued for the need to reconceptualize home and recognize that it no longer refers to an abstract ideal of a house, household and family with fixed and singular meanings. Rather, home is fluid and dynamic, multiple and subjective, and meaningful on both physical and abstract levels. Home can be a place, a community or an abstract feeling of belonging and is also located across changing social settings.

For the women in this study, home originally was a very simple concept referring to their homeland, India. The physical house was not an important place for the expression of the women's individual identities given that many of them grew up in multiple family households and/or lived in the homes of their parents or in-laws after marriage. Instead, homes were seen as social spaces where the women learned about family, and more importantly, their role in the family. Family, along with religion, caste and class were important influences on the formation of women's identity and behaviour in the home. As upper-caste and middle class women, many were expected to follow very traditional female roles that were often idealized through literature, art and media. The women learned to be tolerant and flexible and were able to reinvent themselves in order to feel comfortable and belong in their new families.

It has only been since the women moved into homes of their own that they have been in control of defining the use of home space. As it turns out, for most of the women their first experience of living in a home of their own was in Canada. This is because most of the women left India to join their husbands who were already living here on their own. Many women feel that had they remained in India, at least in the short to medium term, they may have never had homes of their own as they were expected to live with their in-laws or other members of the extended family.

When the women moved to Montréal, their lives changed dramatically. Settling in Montréal involved adjusting to a new culture and learning new languages, finding jobs and, especially, a suitable place to live. As a group, they have been very mobile, living in a variety of different areas in the city over the years and, as a consequence, are well aware of the complexities of Montréal's social, cultural and linguistic geographies. In general, the women are fairly typical of other South Asian immigrants living in Montréal in that they have chosen to live in an area with large South Asian and immigrant populations.

All of the women presently live in owned housing. Homeownership was one of the primary goals the couples had hoped to achieve when they first arrived in Montréal. While socio-cultural imperatives explain the importance of homeownership and residence in single-detached housing, it is their use of the house, their conceptualizations of home and their choice of a suburban neighbourhood that are particularly interesting.

On all levels and in all places 'home,' in the traditional sense of the word (whether taken as 'family', 'community' or 'homeland/nation'), is being radically redefined in relation to material circumstances. For the women, 'home' is no longer just their hometowns in India. Home is India, the house in DDO, the neighbourhood, the Gujarati community and an abstract sense of belonging. In other words, the concept of home has expanded to incorporate not only physical but also metaphorical and abstract meanings. Not only have the women's stories challenged us to reconceptualize home but also have forced us to consider multiple and simultaneous locations of home, the relationship between home and identity and how we define home-making activities.

The Physical Home

The women's experiences highlight the paradoxical nature of the physical home. On one level, the house is a space of labour, as well as a place where traditional gender relationships are maintained. To call the house a place of oppression, however, is inadequate in that it is also a sanctuary, a linguistic, cultural, and social refuge where Gujarati culture is central. Its paradoxical meaning is a result of the complex intersections between class, gender and ethnicity which influence the women's relationship to home. The women simultaneously occupy a social space that may be both oppressive and empowering, but out of this paradoxical position come new conceptions of home as a place where meanings are contested and new cultures are produced. The house is a hybrid space or 'third space' where a radical blurring of dualisms such as

oppressive/non-oppressive, public/private, eastern/western and even centre/margin occurs and where meaning and experiences which exist beyond such dichotomies can be lived and imagined.

As we have seen, the house can be concurrently a constraining and enabling space. Similarly, the women's stories point to a home where there is an inversion of cultural hegemony and a blurring of cultural practices. Inside the house, centre and margin are occupied simultaneously in that Gujarati culture, which is marginalized in the larger society, is the central cultural influence guiding the use of the physical and social spaces in the house. The way the women use the spaces of their houses, place special objects, and perform daily activities allow them to preserve and memorialize Indian traditions. At the same time, however, the women also incorporate other traditions into their home life, for example food preparations and rituals, which they have learned since coming to Canada and thereby create hybrid cultural practices. Cultural practices in the home, as well as the physical use and decoration of the home space communicate this state of 'in-betweenness' and hybridity.

Through producing a home culture that is no longer clearly Canadian or Indian, the women reinvent their hybrid identities and shape the identities of their children. A prime example of the blending of cultural traditions is the perpetual reinvention of the house for the celebrations of Hindu or Judeo-Christian holidays. Hybrid identities are created when individuals oscillate and change their behaviour from 'eastern' to 'western' to communicate their belonging to different social worlds that exist both inside and outside of the house.

The house is an important place of transition into a new society because it is a space where culture is mediated and negotiated. It is also a place where the culture and language of the homeland, largely marginalized in the outside society, often takes on a 'private' status only being fully enjoyed and expressed in the comfort of home. For some immigrants, the home is a place for the privatization of certain rituals and practices. For example, often prayer groups that would meet in public temples in India, meet in the members' homes. Given that Hindu temples in Montréal cater generally to Hindi-speaking populations, the home is the only place to conduct prayers in Gujarati. Similarly, festivals that would take place in the streets in India, are celebrated inside the home. For immigrants, the division between activities that take place in the public and private spheres are unclear. The home is sometimes the only place where such cultural activities may take place.

In short, the home has very complicated meanings for immigrant women. The home is a critical locale where the women negotiate culture, shape identity and innovatively use space to provide a forum for the uninhibited expression of Gujarati culture and ritual. The women's experiences challenge some feminist studies which have called for a rejection of home as a place of women's oppression or for the rejection of an essentialist discourse of home used to create a notion of sisterhood among women. Unlike those studies, the women's stories remind us that the home and belonging have different meanings for women of different classes and ethnicities and that positive meanings of home must not be forgotten.

For immigrants and other displaced populations, often marginalized in larger society, the home is an important place of belonging and, contrary to images of South Asian women as victims of oppressive cultural and religious systems, the women actively challenge any marginalization they may face both in and out of the home. They redefine uses of space in the home to counter its assignation as a space of women's domestic labour. The space is also used to subvert and resist the racism they experience outside of the house.

The women are involved in the preservation of history and tradition around which an important identity politics is constructed. They are emphasizing a positive Indian/Gujarati culture for their children and others while simultaneously adopting the necessary elements of 'Canadian' culture to survive in this society. By emphasizing a positive Indian identity, they are able to contest and challenge stereotypical images of Indians and counter racism.

Perhaps it is not surprising that the women should have a sense of belonging within their own homes. After all, it is a space where they are in control and where their culture is given a privileged position over others. Out of the home, the women have often felt socially displaced because of their experiences of racism and other forms of discrimination. They have used the local spaces of their cultural community and their DDO neighbourhoods, however, as extensions of home through which they are able to cultivate a sense of belonging and challenge the displacement they may feel at larger societal levels. Their efforts to create a 'place' for themselves and their families in this society, and the importance they give to particular places in the city point to the existence of multiple homes for the women and their families.

Multiple Homes

The women in this study force us to reconsider how, on all levels and in all places, 'home' in the traditional sense of the word is being radically redefined. Singular and fixed meanings of home have dissolved in favour of a definition of home which is relational in terms of the place(s) we inhabit with others in a shifting geography of social relations. The borders of home are fluid and the meaning of home can be attached to multiple places and social contexts. The house, of course, is traditionally what one thinks of when the word 'home' is used, but for immigrants home naturally takes on broader meanings.

The women, for example, consider both Canada and India to be home in that India is the mythic homeland of their parents and ancestors while Canada is their adopted home where they are raising their children. In addition to the house, homeland and adopted country of residence, home incorporates other local spaces like the neighbourhoods of DDO and the Gujarati Samaj community which, as social spaces, embody home qualities.

The Gujarati Samaj and the local neighbourhood are extensions of home into which various domestic activities, which take place in the house, spillover. The house, for example, is an important locale where the women preserve culture, and shape and communicate hybrid identities for themselves and their children. These activities continue in the home spaces. Through their participation in the Gujarati Samaj, the women attain a sense of belonging through socializing with others of similar linguistic and religious backgrounds, expose their children to Gujarati culture and shape the Indian facet of their identities. They also mediate Canadian identities through their choices of socializing or interacting with the local DDO community. While at the level of larger society, many express a sense of having to compromise their identities in favour of fitting in with the rest of society, within their neighbourhoods and cultural community, accommodation is really much more based on a negotiation of identities that they feel express their realities.

By choosing to make their homes in suburban neighbourhoods and by becoming homeowners, the women contest dominant images of not only immigrants, but also immigrant spaces. They join DDO clubs, go to the civic centre for sports, hold barbeques with their neighbours and communicate identities that are quintessentially suburban and Western. In many ways, with their middle class backgrounds, nuclear family households and single-detached dwellings, the women fit the stereotypic profile of suburban dwellers even more than the French and English Canadians living in the same area. At the same time, however, the women participate

in Hindu prayer ceremonies and rituals and help organize festivals with the Gujarati and larger Indian community. Therefore, they challenge our notions of suburbs by fitting into the social fabric of suburban neighbourhoods that, traditionally, has been considered 'white' and homogeneous and by giving their suburban areas an Indian qualitity. In short, they are claiming, as their home, social space in the suburbs, a region of the North American city that has generally been considered the antithesis of the 'immigrant neighbourhood.'

When examining the home and home spaces, one cannot help but think of the old adage, 'there's no place like home.' This saying is particularly true for the immigrant women in this study for whom there is no *one* place like home, rather there are places of home. In addition to places of home, home also refers to an abstract feeling of belonging that comes about through the women's home-making efforts.

Home-making Reconceptualized

The stories of the women bring forth the need to reconsider home-making activities and how they are conceptualized and valued in Western society. If the idea of home is expanded to incorporate more complex meanings which have significance beyond the physical dwelling, then a logical extension of the argument is to reevaluate and reconceptualize the notion of home-making as well. Home-making activities can be viewed in two senses. In one sense, home-making refers to more traditional meanings of housekeeping such as domestic chores and child-rearing which generally take place in the house.

In another sense, home-making among immigrants can be viewed as part of a social process that begins with the search for and settlement in new housing. The next part of the home-making process involves making oneself 'at home' or cultivating a feeling of belonging. Making oneself 'at home' is a part of the social process of home-making that may be continuous and is deeply rooted in and connected to issues of social identity and place.

Home-making, in both senses, must be reevaluated. Women's home-making activities such as cooking and nurturing must not be underestimated and viewed solely as banal and insignificant. Instead, as Iris Marion Young suggests, through their domestic work, women are taking part in preservation (Young unpublished). That is to say, they are keeping history, tradition and culture alive. The food they cook, the values they teach, the language they speak and even the clothes that they wear are living testimony of the history of their lives. Through these activities,

they are, in fact, making identities and molding positive Indian identities for their children who must take pride in their culture if they are to withstand the discrimination they may face in society at large.

As bell hooks argues, when discussing African American women, the failure to recognize conscious home-making efforts obscures the potential commitment of black women to racial uplift and the eradication of racism (hooks 1990). Similarly, South Asian women's work in the house must be recognized as a conscious effort to create social beings able to live in the South Asian diaspora of Canadian society. The women, moreover, attempt to empower themselves and their families to ensure that their children will take pride in their Indian heritage.

Home-making, with reference to making oneself 'at home', is a continuous social process that takes place both inside and outside of the house. As women in Indian families, making oneself at home has involved reinventing themselves to fit into their husbands' homes and families. As immigrant women of colour, making oneself at home has also meant 'fitting' into a society where they are visibly different and often face discrimination and social exclusion. As May Yee points out in her study of Chinese immigrants and their children, feeling 'at home' means feeling "at home in one's skin" (Yee 1993). For the women in this study, feeling "at home in one's skin" implies feeling comfortable with their hybrid identities as both Indians in the diaspora and as 'Canadians' in the larger society. The house and home spaces have been enabling places where they feel "at home in their skin" and able to express freely their plurality.

Reconstructing a home and making oneself at home is a very intricate and personal process. It involves personalizing the space of the house so that it reflects one's identity and where one may cultivate a sense of attachment and feel 'at home.' It also involves forming ties both within the cultural community and with others outside. Factors such as language, homeownership, multiethnic neighbourhoods and a large Gujarati community have helped the women feel at home in DDO. Finally home-making has involved the creation of flexible and hybrid identities through which women reinvent themselves in order to create a sense of belonging while maneuvering within diverse social settings .

The women provide a striking illustration of home as it is presently evolving in today's increasingly mobile and global society. International migration flows are growing. The number of non-traditional families is increasing. Couples divorce and remarry. The number of single parents and gay and lesbian families are increasing. The home is continuously being fragmented and

reconstructed. 'Home' for these migrants has become a moveable, plurilocal concept - a single community spread across a variety of sites (Bammer 1992, vii). In reality we live in conditions of hybridity. Home is neither here nor there, rather, itself a hybrid, it is both here and there (*Ibid.*).

This study brings forth a number of important implications for research on the home, the South Asian community and human geography. First, it is important that studies about home take into consideration its multiple meanings and its physical and metaphoric significance. The home-making efforts of the women must be valued in that through their daily activities they are shaping identities and are mediating and inventing culture. Home-making, moreover, for displaced populations involves learning to reinvent oneself continuosly in order to feel 'at home' in new social settings.

For geographers, interested in understanding how place constitutes identity, the home deserves serious consideration. Most people have a home, whether it be an actual physical dwelling or a community of people. Home spaces are important places where social identity as an expression of culture is first formed and it is a space whose importance in reflecting, communicating and shaping identity cannot be underestimated.

In geography, studies focusing on the 'everyday' and its links to general processes, allow one to understand the women's experiences and their roles in contesting and constructing social identities across various times, places and social settings. Examining the everyday lives of immigrant women sheds light on the agency of immigrant women in challenging their marginalization, in making homes for themselves and their families and in shaping their identities to ensure that they fit into Montréal society.

It has been through the use of a qualitative methodology and a focus on the local lives of Gujarati immigrant women that an understanding of these women and the ways they interact with their socio-spatial surroundings has emerged. In-depth discussions reveal that the women are very well aware of the influence of time and place in transforming their social identities. Space is not a neutral background against which their daily lives unfold. Instead, the women interact with their surroundings, and use and define spaces of the home, neighbourhoods and their cultural communities to negotiate hybrid identities and to make places of belonging for themselves and their families.

It is clear that, while able to become citizens, immigrants are seldom granted the accompanying social rights that enable them to participate fully and belong in society. At the beginning of this study we discussed the role of discourse in the workplace, as well as in other Canadian institutions, which forces immigrants to question their 'place' in this society. The resulting increase in cross-cultural interaction as caused by immigration necessarily requires us to reevaluate our own institutions and procedures so as to develop a political and social space in which everyone can participate in social life and make themselves 'at home.'

In spite of the obstacles, however, we must acknowledge and value the efforts of the women who, through their everyday activities, create places and strategies for belonging. There is a Gujarati expression, "the end of the world is home." In essence, it points to the fact that one may go anywhere in the world but where they find themselves they will find home. This is certainly the case among the women in this study.

Appendix

Interview Schedule[50]

Interview Number:

Date of Interview:

Personal Background:
First I'm going to ask you a little bit about your background in India, where you are from, your family, your schooling.

1a.   Where were you born in India?
  b.   Did you always live there? If no, where else did you live?

2.   Within these age categories, could you tell me your age?
    25-34
    35-44
    45-54
    55+
    DK/NA

3.   What is the highest standard or degree you completed in India?
    ____ standard
    pre-degree (+2)
    degree (specify)
    M.A./M.Sc
    M.Phil.
    Ph.d.
    other(specify)

4.   Did you pursue further studies after leaving India, if so in what and where did you study?

5a.   Tell me a little about your family in India:
5b.   Who lived in your household?
5c.   What did your father do?
5d.   What did your mother do?

6a.   How did you meet your husband?
6b.   Where is he from in India?

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[50] The interviews were largely open-ended without a rigid question-answer format. This interview schedule was prepared and used, however, as a guide to ensure that particular themes and issues were addressed during the course of the interview.

7a.   When did you get married?
7b   How old were you?
7c.   Where were you married?
7d.   Was it an arranged marriage?

8.   What is the highest level of education that your husband has attained?

9.   What is his occupation?

10a.   What did his father do?
10b.   What did his mother do?

11a.   What is your religion?
11b.   What is your husband's religion?

Leaving India:

12a.   What year did you leave India?
12b.   How old were you when you left?

13.   Why did you leave India?

14.   Did you come to Canada via some other country? Which country?

15.   Whose decision was it to leave India?

16.   Did you and your husband come together?

17.   How did you feel about leaving?

18.   Did you have any family, friends or acquaintances who had previously left India?

19.   Why did you choose Canada? (relatives, friends here?)

20.   How did you come to Canada? That is, what was your immigration status?
      refugee
      independent
      sponsored by family member or some other sponsor (specify)
      other_____
      DK

21.   When you first came to Canada, did you see yourself settling permanently here?
      If answer is no ask: Now that you have been here for a number of years, do you still feel
      the same way?

22. What was the first city you lived in when you came to Canada? How long were you there? If Montreal, go to 26.

23. Why did you move?

24. When did you come to Montreal?

25. Why did you decide to come to Montreal? (relatives, job opportunity, etc.)

26. What were your first impressions of Montreal?

27. When you first came here, how did you feel Montréal was different from the town/city where you grew up in India? If it was different, how was it different?

Changing Housing and Neighbourhoods:
The next series of questions are about the homes and neighbourhoods where you have lived since coming to Montreal.

28a. Where did you live?
28b. How long did you live there?
28c. What type of dwelling was this?
   i. duplex
   ii. triplex
   iii. apartment
28d. Did you own or rent?
28e. How many rooms/floors?
28f. Who was in your household including immediate family, extended family, boarders, friends, others (specify)?
28g. Why did you live there? (probe-influencing factors - location, relatives)

29. Can you tell me a little bit about the neighbourhood where you lived (when you first came to Montreal)? (probe -noisy, roads, tree-lined, apartment building, stores, neighbours, etc.)

30. What factors influenced your decision to move to this neighbourhood? (probe - family, other South Asians, Indians from same region, temples, proximity to work/school, etc.)

31. What did you like about your neighbourhood? Why? (probe- convenient location, proximity to work, shopping, temple, parks, close to friends, family, other South Asians, quiet, entertainment)

32. What did you dislike about the neighbourhood? Why?

33. Who did you know on the street in the houses immediately around you?

34. Were these people anglophone, francophone, Indian or immigrants like yourself?

35. Did you speak with these people? In what language? Was language a problem? If so, how did you overcome this problem?

36a. How often did you see your neighbours in a day/week/month?
36b. What was the nature of your relationship? (exchange of greetings, borrow things from one another, invite them over, go out together)

37a. What about your children?
37b. Did they play with other children in the neighbourhood?
37c. Did you know the parents of these children?
37d. Were they friends? Why/why not?

38a. Did this house/apartment feel like home to you?
38b. Were you able to make it a home? What did you do? Did you feel more or less at home in this house/apartment than in your previous homes? Why/why not?

39. How about this neighbourhood, did you feel at home here? Did you feel more or less at home in this neighbourhood than the other? Why/why not?

40. Why did you move?

41. Then where did you live?[51]

Present Home and Neighbourhood:
Now we are going to talk about your present neighbourhood and home. I am also going to ask you about the physical structure of your home and some of the activities that take place in your home. We'll begin with some questions about your present neighbourhood.

42. Can you tell me a little bit about this neighbourhood where you live (probe- noisy, roads, tree-lined, etc.)?

43. What factors influenced your decision to choose this neighbourhood?

44. What streets and spaces do you use in the neighbourhood? (probe - parks, stores, homes of friends, family)

45. What do you like about your neighbourhood? Why? (probe - convenient location, proximity to work, shopping, temple, parks, close to friends, family, other South Asians, quiet, entertainment)

46. What do you dislike about the neighbourhood? Why?

47. Who do you know on the street in the houses immediately around you?

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[51] Questions 28a to 41 were repeated for each change of housing or neighbourhood up until the present home.

48.   Are these people anglophone, francophone, Indian or immigrants like yourself?

49.   Do you speak with these people? In what language? Was language a problem? If so, how did you overcome this problem?

50a.   How often do you see your neighbours in a day/week/month?
50b.   What is the nature of your relationship? (exchange of greetings, borrow things from one another, invite them over, go out together)

51a.   What about your children?
51b.   Do they play with other children in the neighbourhood?
51c.   Do you know the parents of these children?
51d.   Are they friends? Why/why not?

52.   Do you have any relatives living in this area? How about within an hour drive? Would you prefer to have family nearby? why/why not?

53a.   Are there places that you go to outside of your neighbourhood? Where and for what reasons? (probe - ethnic shopping centres, temples/churches, parks)
53b.   Do you go alone or with someone else?
53c.   Are there places you don't go to alone?
53d.   Are there places that you only go with other people? Where? With whom?

54.   Has your neighbourhood changed over time, how?

55.   What changes would you like to see made to your neighbourhood?

56.   Do you feel at home here? Do you feel more or less at home in this neighbourhood than the other neighbourhoods in which you have lived? Why/why not?

Now we'll move on and talk a bit more about your present house.

57.   Why did you choose this house? What factors influenced your choice? (probe – size, location)

58a.   Are there particular rooms in this house that you like more than others? Why?
58b.   Is there a room that you consider to be your own i.e. where children are not supposed to go?

59.   Where is your ideal place to relax and get away from problems and stress? If response is home, probe for places other than home. If response is not home, ask what about the home.

60.   Are you trying to create a certain style or atmosphere in your living room or in other rooms of your home? Describe.

61a.   Who made the decisions as to how to decorate the house?
61b.   Who made decisions regarding how much money to spend?
61c.   Who decided what colour the furniture should be, what sort of art to put where?

62a.   What are the things in your home that are special to you? Could you name the rooms these things are in and tell me why they are special.
62b.   When did you acquire these things? (ask for each object)

63.   Are there objects that have been special in your life, but that you no longer possess?

64.   What do you think are your spouse's most special objects? Your children's most special objects? How about your parents?

65.   What special objects might you consider giving your children sometime in the future? Why those objects?

66.   What do all of your special objects, taken together as a whole, mean to you?

67a.   What type of house/home did you dream of when you were young?
67b.   How does your present home compare with the one you once dreamed of?

68.   What changes have you made to your house since you moved in?

69a.   What do you like most about your house?
69b.   What do you like least about your house?

70a.   What would you like to change about the house?
70b.   Do you have plans to make changes in the future?

71.   When you use the word "home", what are you thinking about? Explore responses.

Activities in and Around the Home:
Now that we have discussed the physical home, I would like to ask you about how you and your family use the home and some of the activities that take place here.

72a.   How is your housework done?
72b.   Who performs which chores?

73a.   What are your husband's expectations regarding housework?
73b.   What are your expectations regarding housework?
73c.   Do you have any expectation of your husband about housework?

74.   Are there any differences between the way your housework is done now and the way it used to be done when you were in India? Describe. (servants)

75a.   What languages do you speak?
75b.   What language(s) do you speak in the home?
75c.   Do you speak French?
75d.   Is it important for you to learn French? Why/why not?
75e.   Is it important that your children learn French? Why/why not?

76a.   What kind of food do you prefer for your main meals, Canadian or Indian food?
76b.   How did/do your children feel about this?

77a.   Do you wear Indian and/or Western clothing at home? What about outside the home?
77b.   In which do you feel more comfortable, why?

78a.   What special occasions do you celebrate in the home?
78b.   Who participates?

79a.   How is your home prepared to celebrate these events (inside and outside)?
79b.   Are only certain rooms used?
79c.   Is your home decorated? How?
79d.   Which rooms are used for preparation and which are used for entertaining?

80.   Do you celebrate Canadian or Indian festivals?

81.   What activities do you do with your family in the home? Outside of the home in the neighbourhood? Outside of the neighbourhood?

82a.   Do you attend religious services? How often? Where?
82b.   Do you perform any religious ceremonies in the home ? Describe.
82c.   How is the *puja* room used?

83.   What do you do on a "typical" weekend? (If having problems ask what she did last weekend and ask if that weekend was in anyway exceptional) Is this different from how you spent your weekends and weekdays in India? How?

Culture, Identity and a Sense of Home:
84a.   What do you consider to be the important things for your children to learn about Indian culture? Sons? Daughters?
84b.   How are your children exposed to Indian culture?
84c.   What about for your children who no longer live at home?

85a.   What do you consider to be the important things for your children to learn about Canadian culture? What is important for your sons to know? What is important for your daughters to know?
85b.   How are your children exposed to Canadian culture?

86.   Should your children be more Canadian or more Indian? Why/why not

87. Do you want your children to marry Indians, Canadians, or does it matter?

88. Do you see yourself moving in the near future? Yes No
   a. if yes, why?
   b. when?
   c. to where and to what type of housing?

89a. Reflecting on all the neighbourhoods and homes where you have lived, what would be the ideal move? That is, if you could go anywhere and live as you like, where would you go?

89b. What would the neighbourhood or area be like? (do you prefer a neighbourhood where people just drop in on each other, where they visit only when they are invited, where they just chat outside of their homes, or where people pretty much just go on their way)

90a. Would having Indian neighbours make a difference?
90b. South Asian?

91a. Looking back, are there more places that you go to in the city as a result of all your moves? Does this make you feel more familiar with the city? In turn, has this made you feel more comfortable or at home in the city?

91b. Are there places where you know longer go as a result of the moves? How does this make you feel?

92a. Have you met more people as a result of changing neighbourhoods? Who? Does this make you feel more at home with people of the Gujurati/Indian community? With people of the host community?

92b. Have you lost touch with people as a result of changing neighbourhoods and homes? Who? Has this affected your feelings of belonging to this society?

93. Would you say that there areas in Montreal that are particularly important for Indians? Why? Important for South Asians, why?

Now that we have discussed your home in a physical sense and the activities that take place there, I would like to ask you a bit about home in a broader sense. That is I would like to ask you a few questions that might help me gain a better understanding about how "at home" you feel here in Canada. In other words, I would like to ask you some questions about the sense of belonging you have in the South Asian community, in Montreal and in Canada.

94a. Do you participate in any clubs, organizations, or associations (i.e. religious, ethnic, professional, family, community, recreational, and so forth)? What do you do? How often do you go to meetings or take part in these activities? Do you see any other members outside of these meetings? (If yes, probe for number and frequency.)

94b. Did/Does this make you feel more at home with the Gujarati/Indian community?
94c. Did/Does this make you feel more comfortable in Canadian society?
94d. Did/Does this help you learn the language more quickly?

95a. How would you best describe yourself? (probe categories – Indian, Hindu, immigrant, Canadian)

95b. Which of these words would you use to describe your children?

96. With which of the following persons do you feel most at ease? Why?
English-Canadians
French-Canadians
Canadian-born Indians
Indian immigrants
Others_____
DK/NA

97. Do you feel now you belong in Canada or do you feel you belong in India...or some other place? How has this changed since you first arrived?

98. Do you feel there is prejudice against Indian immigrants or Canadian born Indians?

99. How do you feel about the experiences you've had with Canadian people?

100. To what extent do you feel that you've been a victim of prejudice because of your membership in a minority group?

101. Does this make you feel more at ease with other South Asians than with other Canadians? Explain.

Reflecting on the various homes you lived in and the places in which you have felt the most "at home" or most comfortable, I would like to ask you the following questions.

102. How has what you think of as 'home' in India changed since you've left? How has your hometown/city changed?

103a. What is the difference between your home in India and your home here? (probe)
103b. Which is better? Why?

104. Would you ever consider going back to India to stay?

105a. Where do you consider home to be? Why?
105b. What makes it not home? (language)

106. Are you satisfied with your choice of being in Canada/Montréal?

107. What advice would you give to a new immigrant about living in Montreal and starting a home here?

108. Are there any other themes that you think we should discuss before ending the interview?

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