Toronto Metropolitan University

Canada Excellence Research Chair in Migration & Integration

Toronto Metropolitan Centre for Immigration and Settlement

Does Crisis Narrative Tell a Different Story? South Asian Women Working from Home Post-Pandemic in Toronto

Sutama Ghosh
Toronto Metropolitan University

Manum Shahid
Toronto Metropolitan University

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly transformed earlier conceptions of home-based work. Despite some push for in-person work, work-from-home (WFH) arrangements have become the new normal for many immigrant women, regardless of their skill levels, work hours, wages, and job positions. Within this context, drawing on the experiences of twenty-eight South Asian immigrant women residing in the Greater Toronto Area, our study examines the factors that influence their decision-making process regarding continued work-from-home arrangements after the pandemic. This research reveals that an interplay of diverse macro-, meso-, and micro-level factors has led participants to not only work from home (WFH) but also work simultaneously in both the formal and informal sectors of the economy, and in traditional and platform economies.

Keywords: work from home; formal economy; informal economy; South Asia; Greater Toronto Area; Canada.

Table of Contents

Introduction

> Few social phenomena are as complex, multifaceted, and dynamic and carry as much potential impact as large-scale crises and disasters. These events bring together psychological, social, economic, political, technological, and environmental factors within the context of high uncertainty, high risk, and severe harm. The subsequent tapestry of stories, accounts, and explanations of these events is a narrative process necessary to make sense and determine action (Seeger & Sellnow, 2016, p. 7).

The COVID-19 crisis has reshaped cultures, beliefs, lives, and institutions, especially in the context of immigrant labour market experiences. Studies have shown that during the pandemic, immigrants experienced diverse labour market outcomes depending on their geographical and social locations ('race,' class, gender, age, ethnicity, household structure, and so on) (Benedi Lahuerta & Iusmen, 2021; de Haan, 2020; Galmen, 2020). The pandemic has also significantly transformed previous conceptualizations about home-based work (Craig et al., 2021; Hupkau et al., 2020). Due to government restrictions, workers from various occupations and skill levels were required to work from home (WFH) during the pandemic. Thus, the home was no longer used solely for running home-based businesses; it was also the 'place of work' in the traditional economy.[1]

Studies reporting on workers' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic found the following: First, migrants had differential economic outcomes during this period. By and large, although many workers were at high risk during the pandemic—e.g., they lost employment, experienced lower earnings, were unable to travel internationally, and bore more significant health risks by attending work in person (Benedi Lahuerta & Iusmen, 2021; de Haan, 2020; Galmen, 2020). However, some highly skilled migrants were able to take advantage of digitalization and remote work (Rymaniak et al., 2021) to become "digital nomads" (Andrejuk, 2022, p. 8). Second, there were gender differences in experiences. Although women and men both worked from home during the pandemic, they faced differential challenges while performing paid work and caring for their children; mothers, as primary caregivers, found it more difficult to manage their work-life balance (Bahn et al., 2020; Craig et al., 2021; Hupkau et al., 2020). The purpose of this research project was to find out what happened next.

In the Canadian context, many workers continued to work from home after the pandemic ended. In 2023, Statistics Canada reported that since the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of Canadians engaged in home-based work had increased rapidly, reaching almost 5 million and accounting for approximately 40% of the working population (Statistics Canada, 2024). Home-based work was particularly prevalent among women and in industries that did not require in-person contact, such as accommodation, food services, and retail trade (Clarke & Hardy, 2022; Clarke et al., 2022). Our life experiences corroborated these statistical reports and suggested further complexities in home-based work, sparking interest in this research.

Corroborating with such statistical findings, despite our different vantage points, we observed that many South Asian women continued to WFH after the pandemic, and some had even changed their career pathways so they could WFH. From our participant observations, it seemed that working from home was more common among married women, regardless of their skill levels and professions. Many of these women worked simultaneously in the formal and informal sectors and the traditional and platform economies. From an initial survey, we had found that since March 2020[2] South Asian women-owned home-based businesses have rapidly

---

[1] We use the term 'traditional' economy to include those occupations that require in-person attendance, e.g., nursing, manufacturing, school, college, and university teaching, retailing, etc.

[2] On March 17th, 2020, the first lockdown was declared in Ontario. Between May and August 2020, a three-stage plan was formulated, by which restrictions were slowly lifted. In November, however, new colour-

increased and diversified in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), and many such businesses continued after the pandemic.

Building on the research about crisis-induced WFH and its differential gender effects, this study investigates why and how South Asian immigrant women decided to continue to WFH after the pandemic. Drawing on participant observation and topical interviews with twenty-eight South Asian first-generation immigrant women and five key informants, this research aims to understand their simultaneous engagement in both the formal and informal sectors, as well as in the traditional and platform economies. We asked two interrelated questions: under what circumstances (i.e., macro-structural, meso-group, and micro-individual) did they decide to continue to WFH after the pandemic? Which pathways did they follow to work simultaneously in diverse work modes (i.e., traditional and platform economies) and engage in both the formal and informal sectors? We adopt an intersectional (Crenshaw, 1991) approach to investigate the interplay of various aspects of their social identities (e.g., age, education, class, household composition, and religion) which determine their social locations within the family, within institutions of formal employment, and the society at large. Acknowledging that researchers need to be cautious of pathologization and generalization of immigrant women's experiences (Gupta et al., 2014; Henry et al., 2021), we neither claim that this study represents the experiences of all South Asian women in the GTA, nor do we think that the findings are generalizable to other geographical contexts.

Literature Review

It is common for immigrant women to lose their professional and social networks when arriving in a new country, which is detrimental to their career aspirations (Liversage, 2009; Man, 2004; Shih, 2005). Additionally, through social reproduction, women are made to be responsible for everyday domestic work and physical and emotional caregiving (Laslett & Brenner, 1989). Under the pressures of labour market discrimination and the responsibility of fulfilling patriarchal familial and cultural norms as mothers and primary caregivers, many immigrant women are unable to reconstruct their economic and social lives (Cangià et al., 2018). As "trailing spouses" (Yeoh & Willis, 2005), some prioritize the careers of their husbands and children and redefine success by being supportive mothers and wives (in reproductive labour). While others choose the path of self-employment—operating small businesses from home (Phizacklea & Ram 1996). Self-employment (ethnic business) thus is seen as the outcome of "mixed embeddedness" —shaped by multiple situational, cultural, and institutional factors (Antias & Cederberg, 2009).

Previous research on the labour market experiences of racialized immigrant women in North American cities has well established that they accrue multiple disadvantages through migration. In Canada, regardless of their admissions class, education levels, and previous job proficiencies, they are often deskilled, commodified, and discriminated against in the labour markets (Akbar & Preston, 2021; Bauder, 2003; Dhiman et al., 2020; Ghosh, 2020; Goldberg, 2001; Lamb et al., 2021; Man, 2004; Ng, 1990; Purkayastha, 2005; Yeoh & Willis, 2005). As a result, often underemployed, unemployed, and earning lower wages than the Canadian-born, these women experience blocked mobility both economically and socially (Akbar & Preston, 2021; Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Carter et al., 2015; Ferrer et al., 2023; Ghosh, 2020; Gupta et al., 2014; Liu-Farrer et al., 2021; Lucchini & Riva, 2018; Maitra, 2013; 2021; Pio & Dana, 2014; Premj, 2014; Vorley & Rodgers, 2014).

Research on racialized married immigrant women in heterosexual relationships demonstrated that when met with barriers, often, the husband's career takes precedence over

---

coded restrictions were created, which led to rolling lockdowns in various parts of the province. Stay-home orders were again imposed in January 2021 and phased out in March 2021. Such uncertainty continued until March 2022.

the wife's professional and personal aspirations, and over time, these women either re-domesticate [3] and become "trailing spouses" [4] (Yeoh & Willis, 2005). Others choose the path of part-time self-employment while also being the primary caregivers of their families (Akbar & Preston, 2021; Ghosh, 2007, 2014). Thus, home-based work is documented as an outcome of labour market barriers. It involves low-skill work that comes 'naturally to women'—such as cooking, cleaning, and stitching—and is therefore not considered 'real work' (Alon et al., 2020; Aujla, 2016; Cockayne, 2021; Lucchini & Riva, 2018; Maitra, 2013; Martinez & Jayawarna, 2020; Simoes et al., 2016).

Research on labour market changes during COVID-19 has further exposed gender imbalances in labour (Bahn et. al., 2020). Several studies have reported that during the pandemic, not only did many more women than men work in the frontline and were therefore vulnerable to the disease, but they also faced the most job losses (predominantly employed in the low-wage sectors, e.g., retail, food, and hospitality). In White settler societies, research reported that "the gendered dimensions of this crisis also apply within the home, where the gendered division of work has been slow to change" (Bahn et. al., 2020). Women shouldered most of the unpaid work, which affected their physical and mental health (Cohen & Venter, 2020).

Over the past three decades, little has changed for racialized immigrant women in the Canadian labour markets (Bauder, 2003; Dhiman et al., 2020; Goldberg, 2001; Lamb et al., 2021; Ng, 1990). Deskilled, commodified, and discriminated against, immigrant women suffer from unemployment, underemployment, and problems associated with lower earnings (Akbar & Preston, 2021; Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Carter et al., 2015; Ferrer et al., 2023; Ghosh, 2020; Gupta et al., 2014; Liu-Farrer et al., 2021; Lucchini & Riva, 2018; Maitra, 2013, 2021; Pio & Dana, 2014; Premj, 2014; Vorley & Rodgers, 2014). Mainly, to overcome such barriers in the labour market, some women choose the path of self-employment (Alon et al., 2020; Cockayne, 2021; Lucchini & Riva, 2018; Martinez & Jayawarna, 2020; Simoes et al., 2016).[5] In 2022, over a million Canadian women were engaged in unincorporated small businesses, many of whom were South Asians (Uppal, 2023).[6] For many such self-employed immigrant women, home is their place of work.

Despite their economic and social contributions, immigrant women's home-based self-employment is often undervalued and restricted to informal, low-skill labour that comes 'naturally to women'—such as cooking, cleaning, and stitching. Recent Canadian studies have, however, demonstrated that such modes of self-employment may not be restricted to low-skill labour but rather require specialized skill sets (Akbar, 2016; Aujla, 2016; Ghosh, 2007, 2014; Maitra, 2013), e.g., managing businesses, and teaching.

With regard to why immigrant women work from home, studies have found that at the macro-level, complex structural barriers limit their access to various 'forms of capital' (Bourdieu, 1984), restricting them from obtaining loans and entering larger markets (Brush et al., 2019; Lucchini & Riva, 2018). At the meso-level, gendered cultural and religious norms are often

---

[3] Through the process of re-domestication, women negotiate their professional ambitions, structural realities, and cultural expectations (Elitok & Nawyn, 2023).

[4] They leave their careers to support their husbands and families (Yeoh & Willis, 2005).

[5] Studies show that although there is no one immigrant experience, immigrant women's pathways to self-employment are often created by multilevel "push" and "pull" factors (Carter et al., 2015; Cockayne, 2021; Ferrer et al., 2023; Gupta et al., 2014; Haq, 2015; Liu-Farrer et al., 2021; Lucchini & Riva, 2018; Maitra, 2013, 2021; Pio & Dana, 2014; Premj, 2014; Robertson & Grant, 2016; Vorley & Rodgers, 2014).

[6] The most recent Labour Force Survey suggests that over a million women in Canada were engaged in unincorporated small businesses, including retail and wholesale trade, early childhood education, real estate, restaurant and food services, light-duty cleaning, and esthetics (Uppal, 2023). However, there is a lack of data on the number of South Asian women currently engaged in home-based work in the platform economy.

transposed from the home to the migrant societies—i.e., the 'transnational habitus'[7](Ghosh, 2020; Guarnizo, 1997)—severely circumscribing their ability to expand formal businesses beyond their immediate ethnic enclaves. Lower earnings and precarious employment push them to engage in home-based work at the micro-level (Gupta et al., 2014; Maitra, 2013, 2021; Vorley & Rodgers, 2014). Personal networks play an important role in the success of such businesses, although friendships do not always turn into economic opportunities (Bilecen, 2021). Thus, immigrant women's home-based businesses have been analyzed as a form of agency-social resilience—i.e., as a strategy to overcome employment barriers (Akbar & Preston, 2021; Phizacklea & Ram, 1996). In this regard, Andrejuk (2022) further contended that "migrant entrepreneurs tend to be particularly flexible, resourceful and innovative in dealing with critical situations…crises, times of socioeconomic hardships constitute an exceptional arena for research on the mechanisms of entrepreneurial persistence" (p. 1).

Developing on the migrant agency framework (not explicitly connecting to social resilience), Triandafyllidou (2018) introduced the notion of "social navigation" to understand "not simply […] where one wants to go and what one wants to achieve but also what one wants to become" (p. 7). Building on these ideas and establishing connections between macro- (externally determined), meso- (human and social capital connected to migration and settlement experiences), and micro- (individual and personal) level factors, Lam and Triandafyllidou (2022) identified six possible pathways migrants may follow to enter platform work.[8] The six pathways are as follows: (i) looking to earn extra money (opportunity); (ii) changing jobs (transitioning); (iii) exploring new opportunities as a temporary solution (exploration); (iv) being unable to find suitable employment in their area of training and expertise (impasse); (v) employed in a job but use platform work as a backup plan (security); and (vi) unable to find work and are seeking to retrain (acceptance) (Lam & Triandafyllidou, 2022, p. 6). They argue that choosing to engage in platform work demonstrates that "migrants were neither passive nor hopeless victims of exploitation" (p. 12). However, despite the 'freedom' that platform work promises, workers experience precarity due to unstable work, low wages, and a lack of upward mobility under the guise of 'agency'—i.e., constrained agency.

Building on this state of knowledge, OECD's recent revelation that for many workers worldwide, platform work may not be their only occupation (Horodnic et al., 2023; OECD, 2019), our life experiences during and after COVID, this study attempts to understand the nature of home-based work among immigrant women and why and how they engage in such activities. We ask: under what circumstances (i.e., macro-structural, meso-group, and micro-individual) did these women decide to continue to WFH after the pandemic? Why do they work simultaneously in the formal and informal sectors (platform economy)? Is it only for security (pathways v)?

The Power of Bargaining and Social Location

Theoretically, critical of Gary Becker's (1965, 1981) unitary model of the family—which treats the household as a single entity in consumption and production—feminist scholars have long contended that within the household, men and women occupy different social locations based on which they can negotiate and fulfil their aspirations. Specifically in the context of women's access

---

[7] "A transnational habitus is a particular set of dispositions that inclines migrants to act and react to specific situations in a manner that can be but is not always, calculated, and that is not simply a question of conscious acceptance of specific behavioural or socio-cultural rules….The transnational habitus incorporates the social position of the migrant and the context in which transmigration occurs" (Guarnizo, 1997, p. 7).

[8] Formal and informal businesses facilitated by online platforms, including social media (Horodnic et al., 2023).

to employment and means of earnings, Agrawal (2011, p. 4) calls to consider their "bargaining" power—an integral aspect of decision-making—inside and outside the household. Agrawal (2011) contends that women's social location within the household is often based on their relative access to economic assets, institutional and social support systems, and "doxa" (Bourdieu, 1997), i.e., unsaid social norms that are not open to questioning or contestation. Doxa restricts their earning possibilities, prevents them from working outside the home, institutionalizes lower wages, defines childcare as their responsibility and limits their mobility and job options, and ideologically constructs men as breadwinners and women as their dependents (Agrawal, 2011, p. 16). Such limits to bargaining favour not only men over women but also older women over younger ones. Overcoming such barriers, especially gender-age-marital status-based social norms, may also require bargaining. In this regard, women's support systems, "even friendships, can prove critical" (p. 17). The support they require may be economical, e.g., in the form of "interest-free credit from relatives or friends, or inter-generational transfers between parents and children," or social, e.g., advocacy groups fighting for their cause inside and outside the home.

Research Design and Research Methods

This project started with a survey of South Asian businesses advertised on digital platforms.[9] We found that over two hundred home-based businesses (formal and informal) were started in the GTA during the pandemic, many of which were owned by women. In addition to selling products (e.g., food, clothing and jewellery, home décor, and groceries), diverse services were sold (e.g., driver training, gardening, home repair, event-hosting, spiritual and religious ceremonies/classes, immigration consultancy, web designing, tutoring, catering, and esthetics).

Based on the survey results, we conducted in-depth topical interviews with twenty-eight South Asian women (11 Indians, 9 Pakistanis, 5 Bangladeshis, and 3 Sri Lankan Tamils), selected by snowball sampling. To maximize variation, we recruited participants by posting flyers on Facebook and 'cold calling' every fifth phone number from the survey. Additionally, we interviewed five key informants: two worked in the IT sector, one in banking, one in health care, and one in retail management. All interviews were transcribed, coded, and thematically analyzed.

Table 1 summarizes the socio-demographic similarities and differences among the participants, reflecting their life stages and associated social locations. In terms of age, the majority were above forty, and although all were married in heterosexual relationships with children living at home, the household compositions varied. For instance, although some had high-school and university-aged kids, many families had infants, elementary and middle school-aged children, who generally require more care and supervision. A few families also had extended family members living with them, including aged grandparents and unmarried siblings. Except for the three Sri Lankan Tamil women sponsored by their families, the rest entered Canada as skilled workers with their husbands. All were Canadian citizens and lived in the GTA for over ten years.

All Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi women were university-educated with at least a bachelor's degree from their country of origin. Their areas of training and associated job experience ranged from computer science/technology, data management, engineering, life and health sciences, nutrition, finance, business and commerce, and arts. Compared to them, the Sri

---

[9] Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp groups; South Asian Canadian Business Network; Businesswomen Group Canada; Bengali of Toronto and Southern Ontario; Bengalis of Toronto in GTA; Tamils in Toronto; Toronto Tamils Classified; Pakistani Community; Pakistani Canadian Businesses; Toronto Downtown Indians, etc.

Lankan women were less educated (two had completed high school, and one had a college diploma from Canada). They were also less fluent in English.[10]

Table 1

Socio-Demography and Occupation of Participants

N=28		Socio-Demography and Occupation					
Country of Birth		Indian: 11, Pakistani: 9, Bangladeshi: 5, Sri Lankan Tamil: 3					
Age	30 - 39	6					
	40 - 49	17					
	50 - 59	5					
Marital Status		All Married					
Average Household Size		4					
Household Composition and Living Arrangements	With Children (infants to 14)	15					
	Youth (15 to 24)	8					
	Elderly	5					
	Unmarried Siblings	3					
Length of Stay in Canada		10+ years					
Immigrant Class		Skilled Immigrants (88%), Family Class (12%)					
Education		COB	School	Some College	Bachelor's	Masters	
		Indian: 11	-	-	7	4	
		Pakistani: 9	-	1	6	2	
		Bangladeshi: 5	-		4	1	
		Sri Lankan Tamil: 3	2	1	-	-	
Employment Prior to the Pandemic (All)			T 0-1	T 2	T 3	T 4	SE
		Indian (11)	7	3	-		1
		Pakistani (9)	4	2	-	2	1
		Bangladeshi (5)	-	3	-	2	-
		Sri Lankan (3)	-	-	2	-	1
Household After-Tax Income[11]		150,000+	6				
		100,000 to 149,999	13				
		79,000 to 99,999	9				

---

[10] During the interviews, we allowed the participants to switch to their mother tongue: Hindi/Punjabi/Urdu/Bengali. Since none of us spoke Tamil, it was challenging to recruit Sri Lankan women who did not speak fluently in English.

[11] These figures are based on self-reported values and estimations based on the participants' LinkedIn profiles, approximate years of service, prices of homes, and residential locations.

As shown in Table 1, all participants worked outside their homes before the pandemic. Close to 40% were employed in well-paying jobs (TEER[12] 0 and 1). Eight of them were in the IT sector.[13] About a third were employed in TEER 2 jobs as daycare teachers, call centre agents, and administrative assistants. Six were employed in relatively low-skilled and low-paying occupations (i.e., TEERs 3 and 4). Most of these were in manufacturing and retail sales and services. Three were self-employed, owning and operating formal businesses. Based on their household income, about one-half were in the middle-middle class (100,000 to 149,999 CDN), six households were earning more than 150,000 and nine were earning less than 100,000. Despite such differences, most of them owned single and semi-detached homes in the "ethnoburbs" (Li, 2008)[14]–West Brampton, Milton, Mississauga, Caledon, Markham, Ajax, Oshawa, Pickering, and Whitby. Some owned multiple residential properties (i.e., they were landlords).

Research Findings

The pandemic significantly impacted and altered the work and family lives of the participants. During the pandemic, all participants WFH, and almost all remained in the same occupations in the formal sector. After the pandemic, all participants continued to WFH in the formal and informal sectors. In Table 2, the participants' formal home-based occupations during the interview are listed. Table 2 (left column) shows that nearly half were formally employed in the IT sector (TEER 0–1). Most of these were Indian and Pakistani women employed in different types of IT jobs and as full- and part-time employees. Since before the pandemic (Table 1), only one Bangladeshi woman had moved from a TEER 2 to a TEER 1 position. Among non-IT workers, except for one (accountant), all others were engaged in TEERs 2, 3, 4 and 5 occupations, working part-time as call centre agents, office administrators, and social media influencers. A few participants worked in multiple jobs in the formal sector as well. Therefore, it was hard to determine which one was their primary occupation. Three participants continued to remain self-employed after the pandemic. An important finding was that nine participants (many of whom and their husbands worked in IT and banks) had invested in real estate. Often close to transport hubs and universities (e.g., in Scarborough, Mississauga, and Kitchener-Waterloo), these properties were rented out to new immigrants and students.

In the informal sector (right column), participants' occupations can be broadly categorized into the following: entrepreneurs and service providers (i.e., they owned and operated a plethora of businesses), tutors (academic), teachers (music, dance, art and crafts), managers, and social media influencers. As in formal work, participants engaged in multiple informal activities–e.g., a

---

[12] According to Statistics Canada, TEER 0 to 1 are professional and managerial jobs that require a university education, e.g., software engineers. TEER 2 are supervisory occupations requiring a college diploma, e.g., medical lab technologists. TERR 3 also require a college diploma, but these are lower in pay and more hands-on, e.g., dental assistants. TEERs 4 and 5 are usually relatively low-skilled and low paying jobs, e.g., home childcare providers, retail, landscaping, etc. https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/find-national-occupation-code.html

[13] Key informants revealed that the IT sector is extremely complex. Workers in this sector differ not only by qualifications and experiences but also by portfolios and pay scales. Some corporations employ full- and part-time staff (usually national banks or large IT firms). Some are contracted by staffing agencies, who place them with businesses to work on assignments for large corporations. When the assignment is completed, the staffing agency will put them on another project. Some independent consultants market their services to corporations and bill them for those services.

[14] Most participants lived in relatively affluent ethnic neighbourhoods in the suburbs–West Brampton, Caledon, Mississauga, and Milton in the west, and Markham, Ajax, Whitby, Pickering, and Oshawa in the east.

person who tutored school children also had a jewellery business. Also, some entrepreneurs ran businesses both formally and informally. In the following few paragraphs of this paper, we attempt to chart their pathways to these work modalities and careers: why they continued to WFH after the pandemic and how that has affected their engagement in the formal and informal sectors.

Table 2

Types of Home-Based Occupations in the Formal and Informal Sectors

Types of Home-Based Work	
Formal Full and Part-Time	**Informal Part-Time**
Information Technologist (13/28) Accountant Call-Centre Agent Office Administrator Social-Media Influencers Entrepreneur Real Estate Investor	Entrepreneurs and Service Providers Tutors (academic) Teacher (music, dance, art and crafts) Managers Social-Media Influencers

Why Continue to WFH after the pandemic?

The decision to continue to WFH in the formal sector seems to have resulted from diverse and interrelated macro-structural, meso-group, and micro-individual level factors. Among structural causes, three were most frequently discussed: (i) pandemic-induced changes in work modalities; (ii) limited availability of suitable jobs in the traditional economy and the emergence of new careers in the platform economy; and (iii) systemic infrastructural issues in the GTA (e.g., lack of affordable housing, daycares, after-school programs, and unreliable and expensive public transit).

All key informants mentioned that "the pandemic changed the system of work globally" (KI #3)[15] and "WFH is common–the new normal" (KI #2). Although global, this change of place of work (i.e., from the outside to the inside of the home) had a more significant impact on specific segments of the labour market, where regular in-person attendance was not required. For instance, among those employed in the IT sector (mainly Indians and some Pakistanis), it was common for both husband and wife to continue to WFH after the pandemic. Explaining this new normality of work, KY #1 said:

> Unless one is working in an exceptionally high-level managerial position, most corporations no longer need on-site staff…they are trying to save operational costs (i.e., renting and operating costs). We all have office laptops and Wi-Fi, so WFH is what we do.

Although not in IT, AR, a call centre agent, had no other option but to continue to WFH as her company changed her position "from in-person to home-based" AR during the pandemic.

For some women, a combination of factors led them to WFH. Difficulty in securing suitable employment in the traditional economy and the emergence of new career opportunities in the platform economy. As S. Sh (worked in retail prior to the pandemic) explained:

> When the pandemic started, I was scared and left [job]. Afterwards, I tried, but I wasn't getting something, like a regular job…I was also scared–what if the pandemic returned? …During COVID, I had developed a new hobby…creating daily vlogs during the

---

[15] All key informants are indicated by KI.

8

lockdowns…once I posted that on Facebook, many relatives back home really liked, and more people started watching, my followers kept growing.

Describing her primary occupation as a "social media influencer," S. Sh. revealed that she now earns more than her previous job. Unlike S. Sh., FB is still in the IT sector. However, since the pandemic, she has monetized her pre-COVID YouTube channel and "started a second career" (FB).

Several participants mentioned that city-wide structural inadequacies (e.g., the scarcity of affordable family-sized homes in Toronto and its inner suburbs, expensive and lengthy commutes, and a lack of safe and affordable daycare in residential neighbourhoods and at places of work) 'forced' them to continue to WFH post-pandemic. Many participants pointed out that although they initially rented apartments close to their place of work (predominantly in downtown Toronto) these areas were neither affordable nor suitable for raising a family. Several such households had moved to the ethnoburbs, in the outer suburbs of the GTA. In doing so, even though they progressed in their housing careers (i.e., moving from renting to homeownership) they faced other compounding challenges. First, the time and cost of daily commuting had increased and there was a lack of affordable, safe, and suitable daycare spaces for their children. As JG described:

We both earn well, but even for us, buying a house in Toronto was impossible…also I mean Toronto is not that good to raise families. All our friends also live in the West…before we moved, we knew that the commute would be costly, but not this unreliable.

S.S. stated, "basically, we decided that after completing the year, I would find something close to home or continue to WFH. I could not find anything better."

Those with relatively younger children (infants, pre-school, and school-aged) cited the unavailability of affordable daycares. In this regard, while MH complained that she was "forced to WFH," VG was unwilling, "to pay the proxy mom more than I earn." Pointing out that "there is something wrong with this system," (RP), MK further complained:

They have made these laws that you cannot keep kids alone at home …but my employer never gave me the hours I wanted. I was new. Why will he…all four kids [hers and the neighbours] stayed alone [in the neighbour's apartment] until one of us returned from work; sometimes, that would be like at 9 p.m. Thank God COVID happened.

RP further observed that compared to their home countries, professional women like herself faced more infrastructural barriers in Canada: "Back home, you have the extended family and staff…everyone cannot afford to have a nanny, daycare is expensive…we won't qualify for a subsidy."

The interplay of macro-structural inadequacies and gendered norms exposed further diversities in the participants' pathways to WFH. Regardless of their places of birth and other socio-demographic differences, most women perceived and emphasized that their primary role was parenthood. Often describing themselves as "the parent in charge" (DR), they heralded that they were "responsible for the home and family" (S. Sh). This meant they had to perform multiple daily tasks, such as providing healthy meals, supervising their kids' homework, and engaging them in extra-curricular activities. Consequently, some participants felt that the pandemic-induced WFH was beneficial as it enabled them to "work and be a good mom" (LG). Such responses reinforce earlier findings that even though they come from diverse countries of birth, different linguistic and religious backgrounds, and occupy diverse social locations in the migrant society, South Asian mothers are expected to perform typical gendered duties. Additionally, some expectations are transposed from home to migrant society (e.g., the duty to provide food for the family); however, the extenuating circumstances in the migrant society (e.g., having to earn a

living, not having the support of the extended family or staff) create unique challenges in the transnational habitus (Guarnizo, 1997). In the new habitus, while they must earn a good living and keep good homes (Ghosh, 2020), to perform those tasks successfully, they must rely on other women who also WFH to provide such services formally and informally, which is discussed later.

At the group level, several women chose WFH to minimize job insecurities and mitigate financial and emotional stress. However, some differences were noted among participants based on their life stages (i.e., social location). In general, most workers indicated that COVID-19 had further intensified their job insecurities. Alluding to the changed work culture in IT, SM said, "There is a huge difference between what was there before and after COVID." Similarly, others (except for the entrepreneurs) indicated they faced multifaceted and cumulative challenges when working from home in the formal sector. This included increased workload and surveillance due to reduced staff, more extended hours, work in different time zones (especially in IT), and insufficient compensation. Within this broad spectrum of challenges, the new mothers had additional pressure. Several of these women indicated that in India, since "no one takes more than 3 months of maternity leave, we are expected to do the same here" (SM), and SR said, "Look, the competition is huge; if you want to stay employed you must perform. Company will not understand that today your child is sick, so you cannot take them to daycare, right?" Thus, some took the advice of their professional and social networks to "cut short maternity leave and return to work" (MH), and in this regard, "WFH was the best option because even if I am not personally cleaning or changing diapers, at least I am at home to look after everything" (SM).

Although seeking career advice from transnational professional networks was more common among IT professionals, reliance on local social networks (in person and over online forums) was common for all participants. A few professionals revealed that on the advice of their social media groups, they opted for WFH because, in addition to being able to look after the family, it enabled them to "retrain and negotiate better salaries in the future" (AN).

Regardless of their education and training, some women searched for alternative career paths in the formal and informal sectors to "minimize confrontations" (SR). For instance, MH, a trained accountant, said:

> I felt intense pressure to perform more [when WFH] and my son was little. It was tough to do both things…I was falling sick all the time; my husband said maybe I could do something else…we have an investment property, yes, that is my other job…I am actually better now, as I have more flexibility. If I want to change my job, I can.

While TD stated:

> My husband travels a lot, and now this has increased even more. So, I had to do all the sacrifices; otherwise, there would be a divorce. My friends advised me to WFH and change careers, so I did.

Like SR and TD, several other participants also connected their mental health situations (e.g., stress, anxiety, and isolation) and their familial decisions to WFH. DR, an IT professional, "found a creative outlet" in her catering business, while DC bakes, and AS teaches music to adults and children in the community. All three stressed that engaging in this type of work was "not necessarily to earn money" (DC) but rather to attain "peace and provide some relaxation for others" (AS).

While some women started an informal business "for time pass" (MQ) during the pandemic, it became their mainstay in time. For others, the primary purpose of starting an informal business was to support an elderly family member. As PA described:

In Pakistan, she was used to a vibrant social life…during the pandemic, she was stuck in one room…we were all at home, but we are all so busy with work and the kids are with school, she was actually very lonely…she was crying and wanting to go back. But we can't do that. There is no one back home to take care of her…So we thought if we sell some Pakistani goods, that way people could come over to our house and she could speak in Urdu…but then that small idea now became an actual business…she is delighted that she is earning her own money also.

PA's elderly mother-in-law felt highly isolated during the pandemic and was developing mental health issues. Not knowing about the culturally appropriate services provided by the city of Brampton for elderly daycare, PA took it upon herself to create a social network for her mother-in-law. Similarly, LB started a not-for-profit online kid's club with other mothers during the pandemic, which continues.

Some participants also entered the informal platform economy to utilize the demand for specific gendered services (e.g., home cooking, owning and managing a cleaning service, tutoring, and teaching art classes). Although such businesses existed before the pandemic, perhaps the demands grew during and after COVID-19. LG owns and operates an education franchise, and her husband works as an independent IT consultant. They started an informal catering service in the latter half of the pandemic because:

There is a massive demand for homemade food, mostly from young couples…some are raised here, others are like us, they came from Bangladesh. They still want ethnic food, you know, but don't have the time to cook, which is very time-consuming. Most of my regular clients are like that young people.

Speculating why there is a growing demand for such informal services, KI #4 said, "I think Canadian-born women are now realising that they too need these services; it is better when it is informal, it is cheaper." Commenting about migrant women, KI #3 said:

Like us, when they were back home, they were used to having someone cook, and clean. But here, they can't get all these done formally – it is out of reach – so they get it from the community.

Supporting these comments, several participants—especially those relatively younger and in TEER 1 and 2 jobs—admitted that they regularly acquire "food for the week" (SS) from home cooks like LG because "they are reliable and affordable" (AR).

Although they work full-time formally, SV (Sri Lankan), RP (Indian), and KG (Bangladeshi) have online ethnic boutiques. Describing her formal at-home business as a transnational family operation, SV revealed:

My daughters do most of the work with the sarees and jewellery business…we have family back home who are engaged in the same business, so they send us stuff, and we sell here. I mainly tailor blouses as I am trained in that.

Recounting their reasons for entering transnational business partnerships, RP and KG, however, added a different narrative. Demonstrating acts of indirect reciprocity (Molm, 2010).[16] RP recalled:

---

[16] "Acts of indirect reciprocity convey even greater expressive value, because they benefit another to whom the giver owes no direct debt and at the same time contribute to maintaining a collective enterprise that benefits the collective network as a whole" (Molm, 2010, p. 124).

> During COVID, I read daily reports about how they [artisans back home] suffered. I wanted to help, and the more I read in the newspapers and watched on TV and social media, the more I wanted to do something for them…This was my way of giving back to them.

KG's reasons, on the other hand, demonstrated a "mixed motive" reciprocity–integrative bonds were created despite some risks, and relative social capital was generated (Molm, 2010):

> My relatives were in a crisis back home, so I wanted to help them. Plus, there is a growing market here for clothes and accessories. They needed to work, and I needed help for my business, so we decided to collaborate.

Discussion

In a conceptual diagram (see Figure 1), we summarize the complex pathways of participants' decisions to WFH and engage simultaneously in the formal and informal sectors. The diagram's outer perforated border represents the dynamic nature of the transnational habitus. Within this habitus, several macro-, meso-, and micro-level factors create similar and different situations for the participants, influencing their reasons for continuing to WFH and entering the platform economy. As the double arrows indicate, we contend that the factors are interconnected and range from global to local and transnational/trans-local scales. Also, WFH and engaging in the platform economy are forms of resilience.
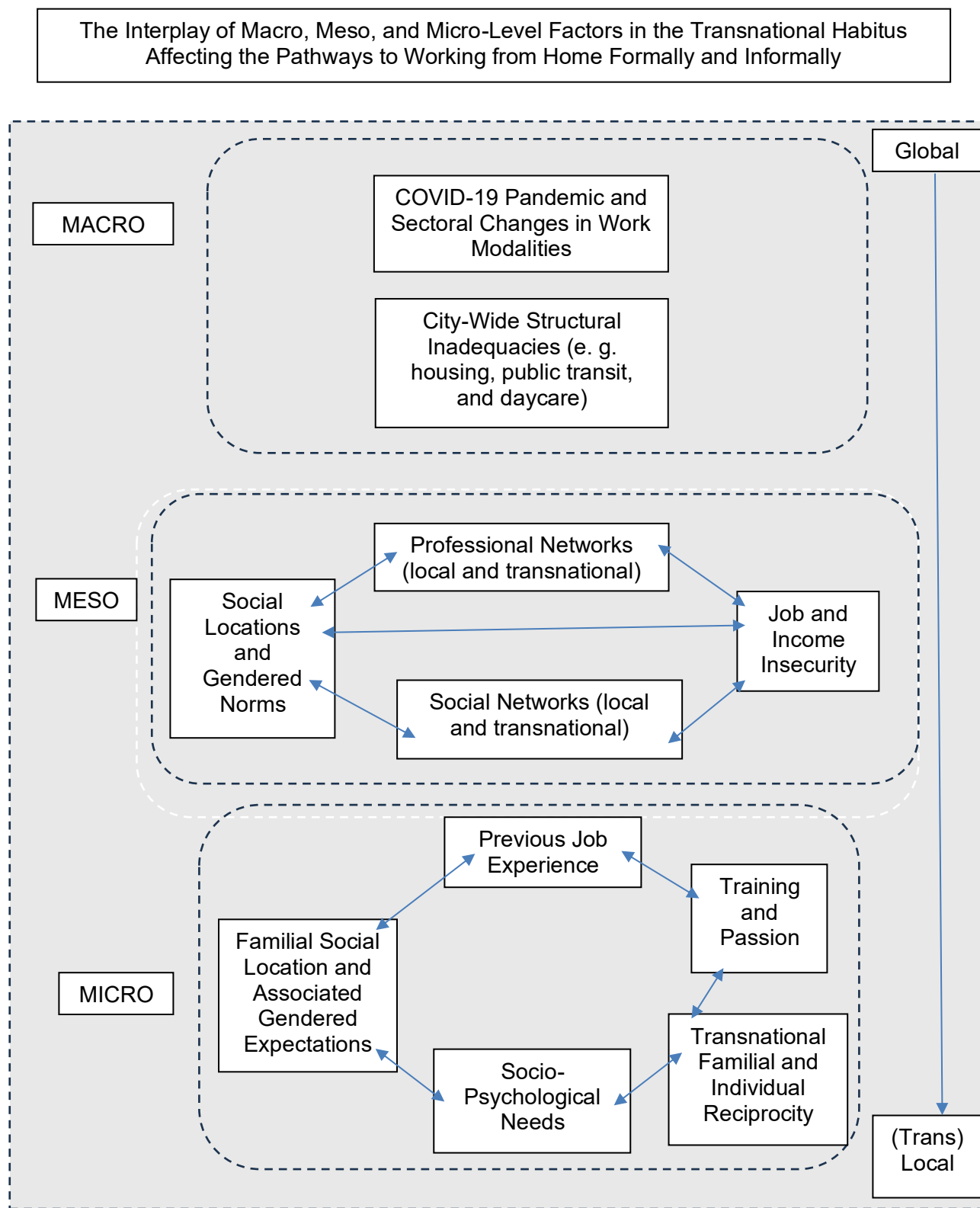
At the macro-level, global systemic overhauls, exceptionally but not limited to the IT sector, created unavoidable conditions for immigrant women, leading them to choose to continue to WFH post-pandemic. In this regard, sectoral changes created new work modalities whereby professionals were not required to 'go to work' every day. However, city-level structural inadequacies created unique and more complex challenges for the participants, mainly because of transposed gendered norms. For example, our study showed that regardless of their countries of birth, religious and linguistic differences, education levels, and earnings, participants perceived themselves to be 'in charge' of gendered domestic duties (e.g., cooking, cleaning, tutoring kids, and caring for the elderly). Therefore, the structural barriers, especially spatial mismatch—a byproduct of revanchist gentrification processes and masculinist, neoliberal city planning devoid of equity and inclusivity—affected the women more than their husbands, severely circumscribing their abilities to find and sustain employment outside of the home. Therefore, the participants perhaps sought only those jobs that would allow them to WFH.

At the meso-level, the study demonstrated that structural factors, especially inadequacies, differentially impacted the participants based on their differential social locations. For instance, compared to women with older children and those living in nuclear families, factors such as distance between home and workplace, associated costs and travel time, and limited access to affordable daycare spaces had a more significant impact on the new mothers, women with younger children, and those living with the elderly. Additionally, they faced unique job precarity at work and home, demonstrating masculine social norms (doxa). As a result, they suffered from limited employment choices (where to work and when to work). Under such challenging circumstances, however, depending on the strength of their transnational professional and social networks, many women could resist masculine power structures and gain some individual agency to bargain for better working conditions (Cockburn, 1985). In doing so, they could choose whether to WFH in the formal sector and/or engage in both economies formally and informally (traditional and platform).

At the micro-level, the challenges faced by our participants varied not only by gender, age, marital status, and household composition but also according to their social locations within the family. Women with a "well-earning husband" (SR) and/or an elderly in-law seemed to have less

Figure 1

The Interplay of Macro, Meso, and Micro-Level Factors in the Transnational Habitus Affecting the Pathways to Working from Home Formally and Informally

power to bargain where they could work and in what type of jobs. Several participants also suffered from "false consciousness," that is they were responsible for taking care of their family members. Although they had similar education and training, some women underplayed their skills and professional aspirations, describing their needs as synonymous with their family's needs. Lack of affordable daycare spaces significantly impacted those women whose earnings were not high enough to afford private daycares, yet not low enough to qualify for subsidized ones.

At the macro- and meso-scales, increased participation of women in professional and managerial jobs has not only "changed household arrangements" (Green et al., 1999, p.7) but also indirectly encouraged the expansion of home-based informal work. However, due to their professional commitments (i.e., structural issues), several participants indicated that when they could not do these chores, they "get it done" (KI #4). Acting as managers, they acquire home-cooked meals and arrange for cleaners, tutors, etc., "from the community" (KI #4). In these ways, professional migrant women indirectly contribute to the growth of an informal economy where such services are available at affordable rates. Such micro-scale interactions establish symbiotic relationships between the formal and the informal sectors at the meso-group level (indicated by double arrows in Figure 1).

This study corroborates Lam and Triandafyllidou's earlier work, which reported that the formal and informal sectors are intertwined (pathway v) and found evidence that supports the idea of the sixfold paths (Lam & Triandafyllidou, 2022). However, the paths seem more complicated when their motivations for entering the platform economy are studied in conjunction with the type and nature of their platform activities. For instance, this study demonstrated that migrants may engage in the informal sector to earn extra money (pathway i) while retraining (pathway vi). Also, engaging in quasi-formal and quasi-informal businesses may not always be a temporary stop-gap measure (as indicated by pathway ii) but rather a permanent business strategy to meet the needs of other community members (e.g., the demand for affordable home-cooked food, cleaning services, clothing etc.). Thus, although the decision to enter the platform economy was made individually and as a family, the type and nature of platform activity were different–modulated by their previous job experiences (e.g., teaching), passion and training (e.g., baking, photography, music, and dance), transnational and local social networks (e.g., enabling them to find a market for their talent and develop business partnerships), and the demands of the specific community they belonged.

Finally, unlike the previous pathways, this study establishes that participants' rationale for entering the platform economy was often mixed (Figure 1). While it is true that they wanted to overcome the compounding barriers in the formal job markets and increase earnings, they were also motivated to achieve socio-psychological well-being for themselves, their immediate and extended family members in Canada, and the community back home. These findings, on the one hand, reinforce that women often undertake community volunteerism to fulfil their maternal instincts and contribute to the economy (Mannon & Petrzelka, 2006). On the other hand, they also demonstrate that such acts are often driven by self-preservation, e.g., the need to socialize, which may not be entirely altruistic (Hodgkins, 2018). Thus, at the micro-level, the tools used to gain individual agency were contextually dependent and "crisis narratives are telling a new story" (Page-Tan, 2020).

Conclusions

Research has long established that migration often disrupts immigrant women's careers and aspirations. Studies have demonstrated that although there is no one immigrant experience in general, it is common for immigrant women to be de-professionalized, underemployed, and face insurmountable challenges in recreating professional networks. As a result, some 'choose' self-employment, demonstrating constrained agency. Adding to this growing body of literature, recent

studies have highlighted the crucial role of the platform economy–often used by immigrants as a stop-gap measure while they wait for better opportunities in the formal sector (Lam & Triandafyllidou, 2021, 2022; Luo et al., 2024; Shahid, 2024). It is also generally agreed upon that platform work is usually home-based. Building on the state of knowledge, in this post-COVID study, we attempted to understand under what circumstances (i.e., macro-structural, meso-group, and micro-individual) immigrant women continue to WFH, and simultaneously participate in the formal and informal sectors.

Our study demonstrated that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly transformed earlier home-based work conceptions. Under the new normal, working from home is commonplace for both women and men, regardless of whether they are high-skilled or low-skilled, in salaried independent or (sub)contractual jobs, working full- or part-time, and in temporary or permanent positions. In other words, WFH varies by type of work, occupation, and sector. In investigating multilevel challenges and opportunities that have led participants to 'choose' WFH, this study further revealed the connections between formal and informal sectors. Also, a home-based business (e.g., catering/boutique) can be formal or informal, quasi-formal and quasi-informal, owned individually or familial, and may involve other workers locally and transnationally.

Previous research noted that immigrant women enter self-employment to overcome systemic and individual barriers in the labour markets and block economic mobilities. Their primary motivation to enter self-employment and the platform economy is economic. Our study adds another dimension to this knowledge. We found that in addition to financial reasons, macro-structural inadequacies and socio-psychological factors influence their decisions to WFH and engage simultaneously in the traditional and platform economies (i.e., formal and informal sectors). Furthermore, in investigating how they enter such complex situations, it was found that these women found unique ways to "navigate structure and culture" (Purkayastha, 2005) in the transnational habitus.

References

Akbar, M., & Preston, V. (2021). Entrepreneurial activities of Canadian Bangladeshi women in Toronto: A family perspective. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 49*(11), 2817–2836. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2021.2010522

Aldrich, H. E., & Waldinger, R. (1990). Ethnicity and entrepreneurship. *Annual Review of Sociology, 16*(1), 111–135. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.16.080190.000551

Alon, T. M., Doepke, M., Olmstead-Rumsey, J., & Tertilt, M. (2020). *The impact of COVID-19 on gender equality* (Working Paper No. 26947). National Bureau of Economic Research. https://doi.org/10.3386/w26947

Andrejuk, K. (2022). Pandemic transformations in migrant spaces: Migrant entrepreneurship between super-digitalization and the new precarity. *Population, Space and Place, 28*(6), e2564. https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2564

Anthias, F., & Cederberg, M. (2009). Using ethnic bonds in self-employment and the issue of social capital. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 35*(6), 901–917. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830902957692

Aujla, N. (2016). *Temporary employment agencies in Ontario: Experiences of South Asian immigrant women* [Master's thesis, York University]. YorkSpace. http://hdl.handle.net/10315/32737

Azad, M. J., & Pritchard, B. (2023). Bonding, bridging, and linking social capital as mutually reinforcing elements in adaptive capacity development to flood hazard: Insights from rural Bangladesh. *Climate Risk Management, 40*, 100498–. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.crm.2023.100498

Bahn, K., Cohen, J., & Meulen Rodgers, Y. (2020). A feminist perspective on COVID-19 and the value of care work globally. *Gender, Work & Organization, 27*(5), 695–699. https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12459

Barber-Dueck, C., Terefe, B., & Lamontagne, M. J. (2011). *Estimating the underground economy in Canada, 1992–2008* (Income and Expenditure Accounts Division Report). Statistics Canada.

Bauder, H. (2003). "Brain abuse," or the devaluation of immigrant labour in Canada. *Antipode, 35*(4), 699–717. https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1467-8330.2003.00346.x

Béland, L.-P., Fakorede, O., & Mikola, D. (2020). Short-term effect of COVID-19 on self-employed workers in Canada. *Canadian Public Policy, 46*(S1), S1–S17. https://doi.org/10.3138/cpp.2020-076

Berger, S. (1986). *The unrecorded economy: Concepts, approach and preliminary estimates for Canada, 1981* (Report No. 86-1). Statistics Canada.

Bilecen, B. (2021). Personal network analysis from an intersectional perspective: How to overcome ethnicity bias in migration research. *Global Networks, 21*(3), 470–486. https://doi.org/10.1111/glob.12318

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook for theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). Greenwood Press.

Brill, L. M. (2005). *New forms of labour organising in a globalizing world: A comparative study of homebased workers and their organisations in the UK and Chile* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Bradford]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Bruegel, I., & Warren, S. (2003). Family resources and community social capital as routes to valued employment in the UK? *Social Policy and Society, 2*(4), 319–328. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1474746403001374

Brush, C., Edelman, L. F., Manolova, T., & Welter, F. (2019). A gendered look at entrepreneurship ecosystems. *Small Business Economics, 53*(2), 393–408. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-018-9992-9

Cangià, F., Levitan, D., & Zittoun, T. (2018). Family, boundaries and transformation: The international mobility of professionals and their families. *Migration Letters, 15*(1), 17–31. http://dx.doi.org/10.33182/ml.v15i1.343

Cangià, F. (2020). (Im)mobile imagination: On trailing, feeling stuck and imagining work on-the-move. *Culture & Psychology, 26*(4), 697–712. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X19899070

Carr, M., Chen, M. A., & Tate, J. (2000). Globalization and home-based workers. *Feminist Economics, 6*(3), 123–142. https://doi.org/10.1080/135457000750020164

Carter, S., Mwaura, S., Ram, M., Trehan, K., & Jones, T. (2015). Barriers to ethnic minority and women's enterprise: Existing evidence, policy tensions and unsettled questions. *International Small Business Journal, 33*(1), 49–69. https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242614556823

Chai, S., & Kim, M. (2010). What makes bloggers share knowledge? An investigation on the role of trust. *International Journal of Information Management, 30*(5), 408–415. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2010.02.005

Chiu, C.-M., Hsu, M.-H., & Wang, E. T. G. (2006). Understanding knowledge sharing in virtual communities: An integration of social capital and social cognitive theories. *Decision Support Systems, 42*(3), 1872–1888. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2006.04.001

Claridge, T. (2018). Dimensions of social capital—structural, cognitive, and relational. *Social Capital Research, 1,* 1–4.

Clarke, S. J., & Hardy, V. (2022). *Working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic: How rates in Canada and the United States compare* (Catalogue no. 36-28-0001). Statistics Canada. https://doi.org/10.25318/36280001202200800001-eng

Clarke, S., Dekker, J., Habli, N., Macdonald, R., & McCormack, C. (2022). *Measuring the correlation between COVID-19 restrictions and economic activity.* (Catalogue no. 11-633-X — No. 040). Statistics Canada.

Cockayne, D. (2021). The feminist economic geographies of working from home and "digital by default" in Canada before, during, and after COVID-19. *The Canadian Geographer, 65*(4), 499–511. https://doi.org/10.1111/cag.12681

Cockburn, C. (1985). *Machinery of dominance: Women, men and technical know-how*. Pluto Press.

Craig, L., & Churchill, B. (2021). Dual-earner parent couples' work and care during COVID-19. *Gender, Work & Organization, 28*(S1), 66–79. https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12497

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review, 43*(6), 1241–1299. https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039

Dalton, R., & Kittilson, M. C. (2012). Virtual civil society in the United States and Australia. *Australian Journal of Political Science, 47*(1), 11–29. https://doi.org/10.1080/10361146.2011.643162

de Haan, A. (2020). Labour migrants during the pandemic: A comparative perspective. *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics, 63,* 885–900. https://doi.org/10.1007/s41027-020-00283-w

De Stefano, V. M. (2016). The rise of the 'just-in-time workforce': On-demand work, crowd work and labour protection in the 'gig-economy.' *Comparative Labor Law & Policy Journal, 37*(3), 471–504.

Dhiman, M., Wong, A., & Yvonne, J. (2020). *Employment services responses to labour market challenges for South Asian women: An ACCES Employment study* (Working Paper No. 2020/11). CERC in Migration and Integration.

Dunbar, R. I. M., Arnaboldi, V., Conti, M., & Passarella, A. (2015). The structure of online social networks mirrors those in the offline world. *Social Networks, 43,* 39–47. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socnet.2015.04.005

Elitok, S. P., & Nawyn, S. J. (2023). The re-domestication of high-skilled immigrant women: Modifying career ambitions post-migration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 49*(19), 4946–4963. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2023.2189075

Ferrer, A., Pan, Y., & Schirle, T. (2023). The work trajectories of married Canadian immigrant women, 2006–2019. *Journal of International Migration and Integration, 24*(S3), 697–716.

Gamlen, A. (2020). Migration and mobility after the 2020 pandemic: The end of an age?. International Organization for Migration.

Ghore, Y., Long, B., Ozkok, K., & Derici, D. (2023). Rethinking human capital: Perspectives from women working in the informal economy. *Development Policy, 41*(5), DI https://doi.org/10.1111/dpr.12705

Ghosh, S. (2006). *We are not all the same: The differential migration, settlement patterns, and housing trajectories of Indian Bengalis and Bangladeshis in Toronto* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Ghosh, S. (2007). Transnational ties and intra-immigrant group settlement experiences: A case study of Indian Bengalis and Bangladeshis in Toronto. *GeoJournal, 68*(3), 223–242. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-007-9072-1

Ghosh, S. (2014). Everyday lives in vertical neighbourhoods: Exploring Bangladeshi residential spaces in Toronto's inner suburbs. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 38*(6), 2008–2024. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12170

Ghosh, S. (2020). 'I am the over-educated maid who must also earn a good living': Exploring migration and sense of freedom among professional Indian women in Toronto. *Ethnicities, 20*(5), 915–938. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796819838537

Gupta, T. D., Man, G., Mirchandani, K., & Ng, R. (2014). Class borders: Chinese and South Asian Canadian professional women navigating the labor market. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal, 23*(1), 55–83. https://doi.org/10.1177/011719681402300103

Hall, P. A., & Lamont, M. (Eds.). (2013). *Social resilience in the neoliberal era*. Cambridge University Press.

Haq, M. (2015). South Asian ethnic minority small and medium enterprises in the UK: A review and research agenda. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business, 25*(4), 494–516. http://doi.org/10.1504/IJESB.2015.070222

Hiller, H. H., & McCaig, K. S. (2007). Reassessing the role of partnered women in migration decision-making and migration outcomes. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 24*(3), 457–472. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407507088014

Hodgkin, S. (2008). Telling it all: A story of women's social capital using a mixed methods approach. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 2*(4), 296–316. https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689808321641

Horodnic, I. A., Williams, C. C., Apetrei, A., Maţcu, M., & Horodnic, A. V. (2023). Services purchased from the informal economy using digital platforms. *The Service Industries Journal, 43*(11–12), 854–874. https://doi.org/10.1080/02642069.2023.2189242

Horodnic, I. A., Williams, C. C., Apetrei, A., Maţcu, M., & Horodnic, A. V. (2022). Who purchases from the informal economy and why? *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*, 940076. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.940076

Hupkau, C., & Petrongolo, B. (2020). Work, care and gender during the COVID-19 crisis. *Fiscal Studies, 41*(3), 623–651. https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-5890.12245

Hyman, I., Mason, R., Guruge, S., Berman, H., Kanagaratnam, P., & Manuel, L. (2011). Perceptions of factors contributing to intimate partner violence among Sri Lankan Tamil immigrant women in Canada. *Health Care for Women International, 32*(9), 779–794. https://doi.org/10.1080/07399332.2011.569220

Laaroussi, M. V. (2009). *Mobilité, réseaux et résilience: Le cas des familles immigrantes et réfugiées au Québec* [Mobility, Networks, and Resilience: The Case of Immigrant and Refugee Families in Quebec] (Vol. 41). Presses de l'Université du Québec.

Lam, L., & Triandafyllidou, A. (2021). An unlikely stepping stone? Exploring how platform work shapes newcomer migrant integration. *Transitions: Journal of Transient Migration, 5*(1), 11–29. https://doi.org/10.1386/tjtm_00029_1

Lam, L., & Triandafyllidou, A. (2024). Road to nowhere or to somewhere? Migrant pathways in platform work in Canada. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space, 56*(4), 1150–1169. https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X221090248

Lamb, D., Banerjee, R., & Verma, A. (2021). Immigrant–non-immigrant wage differentials in Canada: A comparison between standard and non-standard jobs. *International Migration, 59*(5), 113–133. https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12808

Lassalle, P., & Shaw, E. (2021). Trailing wives and constrained agency among women migrant entrepreneurs: An intersectional perspective. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, 45(*6), 1496–1521. https://doi.org/10.1177/1042258721990331

Leclerc, K. (2020). *Caring for their children: Impacts of COVID-19 on parents* (Catalogue no. 45-28-0001). Statistics Canada.

Li, W. (2008). *Ethnoburb: The new ethnic community in urban America*. University of Hawaii Press.

Liu-Farrer, G., Yeoh, B. S., & Baas, M. (2020). Social construction of skill: An analytical approach toward the question of skill in cross-border labour mobilities. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 47*(10), 2237–2251. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2020.1731983

Liversage, A. (2009). Vital conjunctures, shifting horizons: High-skilled female immigrants looking for work. *Work, Employment and Society, 23*(1), 120–141. https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017008099781

Lucchini, M., & Riva, E. (2018). Gender differences in business survival: Evidence on migrant entrepreneurship. *MONDI MIGRANTI, 2*, 149–168. https://doi.org/ 10.3280/MM2018-002008

Luo, D., Desjardins, E., & Provenzano, M. (2024, February 12). *The underground economy in Canada, sources and methods* (Catalogue no. 13-604-M2024002). Statistics Canada.

Mahapatra, N. (2012). South Asian women in the US and their experience of domestic violence. *Journal of Family Violence, 27*(5), 381–390. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-012-9434-4

Maitra, S. (2013). Points of entry: South Asian immigrant women's entry into enclave entrepreneurship in Toronto. *South Asian Diaspora, 5*(1), 123–137. https://doi.org/10.1080/19438192.2013.721065

Maitra, S. (2021). Are we not being entrepreneurial? Exploring the home/work negotiation of South Asian immigrant women entrepreneurs in Canada. In M. Nilsson, I. Mazumdar, & S. Neunsinger (Eds.), *Home-based work and home-based workers (1800–2021)* (pp. 329-346). Brill.

Man, G. (2004). Gender, work, and migration: Deskilling Chinese immigrant women in Canada. *Women's Studies International Forum, 27*(2), 135–148. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2004.06.004

Mannon, S. E., & Petrzelka, P. (2006). Keepin' this little town going: Gender and volunteerism in rural America. *Gender and Society, 20*(2), 236–258. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243205284498

Martinez Dy, A., & Jayawarna, D. (2020). Bios, mythoi and women entrepreneurs: A Wynterian analysis of the intersectional impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on self-employed women and women-owned businesses. *International Small Business Journal, 38*(5), 391–403. https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242620939935

Mindes, S. C. H., & Lewin, P. (2021). Self-employment through the COVID-19 pandemic: An analysis of linked monthly CPS data. *Journal of Business Venturing Insights, 16*, e00280. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbvi.2021.e00280

Molm, L. D. (2010). The structure of reciprocity. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 73*(2), 119–131. https://doi.org/10.1177/0190272510369079

Nason, R., Vedula, S., Bothello, J., Bacq, S., & Charman, A. (2024). Sight unseen: The visibility paradox of entrepreneurship in an informal economy. *Journal of Business Venturing, 39*(2), 106364–. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2023.106364

Ng, R. (1990). Immigrant women: The construction of a labour market category. *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law, 4*(1), 96–112.

Onyx, J. (2001). Implementing work-based learning for the first time. In D. Boud & N. Solomon (Eds.), *Work-based learning: A new higher education* (pp. 149–166). Taylor & Francis.

Orozco, M. (2022). The salience of ethnic identity in entrepreneurship: An ethnic strategies of business action framework. *Small Business Economics, 59*(1), 243–268. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-021-00532-2

Page-Tan, C. (2020). The role of social media in disaster recovery following Hurricane Harvey. *Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, 17*(1). https://doi.org/10.1515/jhsem-2018-0054

Phizacklea, A., & Ram, M. (1996). Being your own boss: Ethnic minority entrepreneurs in comparative perspective. *Work, Employment and Society, 10*(2), 319–339. https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017096010002007

Pickren, W. E. (2014). What is resilience and how does it relate to the refugee experience? Historical and theoretical perspectives. In L. Simich & L. Andermann (Eds.), *Refuge and resilience: Promoting resilience and mental health among resettled refugees and forced migrants* (pp. 7–26). Springer.

Pio, E., & Dana, L.-P. (2014). An empirical study of Indian entrepreneurs in Christchurch, New Zealand. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business, 22*(1), 17–35. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJESB.2014.062128

Premji, S., Shakya, Y., Spasevski, M., Merolli, J., Athar, S., & Immigrant Women & Precarious Employment Core Research Group. (2014). Precarious work experiences of racialized immigrant women in Toronto: A community-based study. *Just Labour*, *22,* 122–143. https://doi.org/10.25071/1705-1436.8

Preston, V., Shields, J., & Akbar, M. (2022). Migration and resilience in urban Canada: Why social resilience, why now? *Journal of International Migration and Integration, 23*(3), 1421–1441. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-021-00893-3

Purkayastha, B. (2005). *Negotiating ethnicity: Second-generation South Asians traverse a transnational world.* Rutgers University Press.

Purkayastha, D., Vanroelen, C., Bircan, T., Vantyghem, M. A., & Gantelet Adsera, C. (2021). *Work, health, and COVID-19: A literature review*. ETUI Research Paper-Report.

Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon and Schuster.

Raj, A., Livramento, K. N., Santana, M. C., Gupta, J., & Silverman, J. G. (2006). Victims of intimate partner violence more likely to report abuse from in-laws. *Violence Against Women, 12*(10), 936–949. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801206292935

Robertson, D. W., & Grant, P. R. (2016). Immigrant entrepreneurship from a social psychological perspective. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 46*(7), 394–409. https://doi.org/10.1111/jasp.12369

Ross, H., & Berkes, F. (2014). Research approaches for understanding, enhancing, and monitoring community resilience. *Society & Natural Resources, 27*(8), 787–804. https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920.2014.905668

Sasunkevich, O. (2018). 'But I liked it, I liked it': Revealing agentive aspects of women's engagement in the informal economy on the EU External Borders. *European Journal of Women's Studies, 26*(2), 117–131. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506818762984

Seeger, M., & Sellnow, T. L. (2016). *Narratives of crisis: Telling stories of ruin and renewal.* Stanford University Press.

Shah, D. V., Kwak, N., & Holbert, R. L. (2001). "Connecting" and "disconnecting" with civic life: Patterns of internet use and the production of social capital. *Political Communication, 18*(2), 141–162. https://doi.org/10.1080/105846001750322952

Shahid, M. (2024). *Self-employed immigrant women during COVID-19: A case study of Pakistani women in the ethnic economy*. [Major research paper, Toronto Metropolitan University]. In Press.

Shih, Y. (2005). *Narratives of Chinese female immigrant professionals: Factors that affect their career development and strategies used for career adjustment*. University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Silvey, R., & Elmhirst, R. (2003). Engendering social capital: Women workers and rural–urban networks in Indonesia's crisis. *World Development, 31*(5), 865–879. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X(03)00013-5

Simoes, N., Crespo, N., & Moreira, S. B. (2016). Individual determinants of self-employment entry: What do we really know? *Journal of Economic Surveys, 30*(4), 783–806. https://doi.org/10.1111/joes.12111

Slater, T. (2004). North American gentrification? Revanchist and emancipatory perspectives explored. *Environment and Planning A, 36*(7), 1191–1213. https://doi.org/10.1068/a368

Statistics Canada (1986, April). *Canadian Statistical Review* (Catalogue no. 11-003E).

Uppal, S. (2023). *Self-employment among women in Canada* (Catalogue no. 75-006-X). Statistics Canada.

Vorley, T., & Rodgers, P. (2014). Home is where the business is: Incidents in everyday life and the formation of home-based businesses. *International Small Business Journal, 32*(4), 428–448. https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242612452173

Vorobeva, E., & Dana, L.-P. (2021). The COVID-19 pandemic and migrant entrepreneurship: Responses to the market shock. *Migration Letters, 18*(4), 477–485. https://doi.org/10.59670/ml.v18i4.1400

Williams, C. C., & Horodnic, I. A. (2017). Explaining participation in the undeclared economy in Central and Eastern Europe: A demand-side approach. *Post-Communist Economies, 29*(3), 297–312. https://doi.org/10.1080/14631377.2017.1335453