Labour Market Integration Experiences of Immigrant Women from sub-Saharan Africa

by

Amanda Topen

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Supervisor: Dr. Evangelia Tastsoglou

Reader: Dr. Alexandra Dobrowolsky

Examiner: Dr. Mythili Rajiva

DATE: Nov. 16, 2006

AUTHOR: AMANDA TOPEN

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Abstract

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By Amanda Topen

This thesis utilizes an integrative analysis of gender, race and class to understand and explain the labour market integration experiences of women from sub-Saharan Africa in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The research moves from macro, to meso and micro considerations. Colonialism and the effects of current forces of globalization, as well as the particular historical racialization processes in Nova Scotia, provide a socio-historical backdrop to the lived experiences of the migration and settlement processes of sixteen women from Sub-Saharan Africa in Halifax. The study highlights the interface of work, family and community. The argument is made that systematic discrimination, rooted in both gendered norms and racialization (past and present), contribute to employers' devaluation of foreign educational credentials and international work experience and contribute to practices that marginalize immigrant women from Sub-Saharan Africa in the labour market. Nonetheless, these women as active agents have challenged and resisted such experiences. The study offers a number of suggestions to overcome the barriers immigrant women in general, and those from sub-Saharan Africa in particular, face in the Canadian labour market.

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INTRODUCTION

Background

The mass movement of people across borders has become a prominent feature of contemporary society, but there have been as yet relatively few attempts to look beneath the surface of this mass movement to disentangle the specific experiences of women (Buijs, 1993:1). Global capitalism has been the underlying root of this growing interconnectedness of the world, the so-called "global village," as ideas, labour, goods, money and various other commodities move across borders more rapidly than ever before.

The pervasive image of an international migrant as a male worker still persists in much of the scholarship on global migration and hence, migration appears as a male affair only, rendering women "absent" in the early literature on migration (Castles and Miller, 1998; Pessar, 1999; DeLaet, 1999; Lazaridis, 2000). If one feature of the early literature on migration is its relative neglect of female migrants, another is that, whenever women were not neglected, they were mentioned within the framework of the family. These analyses lacked an assessment of women's condition in any but the most stereotypical roles which portray them as wives and mothers with non-economic value. These limited gender ideologies have been translated into immigration regulations that failed to take into account the economic contribution of migrant women to the host society. Immigration policies have, in turn, directly or indirectly, influenced the gender composition of international migratory flows and the legal status and rights of female migrants. For instance, most women migrating for legal permanent residence have done so under policies designed to facilitate family reunification (DeLaet, 1999; Agnew, 1996;

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Castles and Miller, 1998). This state of affairs renders women dependent on the "migrant" who is considered to be the male breadwinner, although the male breadwinner issue is in most cases a fallacy (Lazaridis, 2000:51; Ng, 1991:18; Dolphyne, 1991).

While it is true that family reunification remains the major reason for immigrant women's entry into industrialized countries, (Kofman et al, 2000; Nagar, 2000), there is still evidence that some women migrate for employment reasons in significant numbers (Pessar, 1999; Grieco and Boyd, 1998). What is more, women who are not explicitly admitted as labour migrants find themselves, more often than not, in the labour market, and some of these women are also professionals. Researchers are now beginning to acknowledge the inadequacy and "sexist myopia' (Lazaridis, 2000:43) that was consistent with previous approaches. Hence a radical shift from previous approaches from family to other issues, such as migrant women's role as wage workers, has taken place. As a consequence, migrant women are now assessed in the migration literature as individuals whose migration decisions, are also determined by individual motivations, the exercise of their "human agency" (Lazaridis, 2000:52; Agnew, 1996:36; Grieco and Boyd, 1998).

In spite of this change, there has still been a partial picture presented in the analysis of migrant women's wage employment with the absence of extensive research on skilled female migrants. The deliberate lack of attention to the migration of professional (highly skilled) women partly reflects limited data on female migrants, leading to biased assumptions about those "who migrate" (DeLaet, 1999: 3; Castles and Miller, 1998). Much of the work available to migrant women is confined to jobs in the so-called "female" occupations in the care and service industries; involving roles that have

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traditionally been viewed as appropriate to women and require little or no skill (Whelehan 1995: 50; Kofman et al, 2000). Nevertheless, it is important to make the point here that not all immigrant women work as unskilled labourers. As this thesis attests, immigrant women cover the entire spectrum from highly skilled to unskilled occupations (Grieco and Boyd, 1998:24), and many skilled immigrant women are compelled to take unskilled jobs.

Existing studies suggest that women migrate across international borders for a variety of complex reasons (DeLaet, 1999:15; Raghuram and Kofman, 2004). For instance, some women migrate independently for economic reasons, as students and refugees. For many migrant women, the move has been accompanied by de-skilling and underemployment (Man, 2004; Raghuram and Kofman, 2004). Racial and sexual discrimination in the labour market in host communities, have led to occupational segregation, unemployment, and poor pay and conditions of work for those who have found employment (Kofman et al, 2000:3). Nonetheless, the significant human and social capital of female migrants, with, for instance, their involvement in community organisation, politics and their contributions to the economic and social life in receiving countries and ethnic communities, as well as their economic contributions to their countries of origin, cannot be overemphasized.

The research in this thesis is based on one such disadvantaged group, immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa who have made Canada their new home. These women, by virtue of their race, ethnicity and gender roles, have encountered multifaceted experiences of international migration, characterized simultaneously in many cases by both liberation and discrimination (Pessar, 1999). In this research, emphasis has been

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placed on the labour market integration experiences and processes shaping such experiences of immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa in Canada, specifically, Halifax, Nova Scotia. Here, Blacks, most of whom were originally born in Africa, historically came to settle largely as slaves, Loyalists and pioneers after the American Revolution (Clairmont and Magill, 1970:7; Henry, 1973; Walker, 1979:8) and quite recently as immigrants and refugees (Pachai 1987:1; Danso and Grant, 2000:30). Much of longstanding Africans' perceived identity as inferior has been informed by their initial status of freed slaves to Nova Scotia. Stereotypes on the basis of racial superiority (Hill, 1993; Clairmont and Magill, 1970:21) were developed during the American Revolution.

Like other black workers, indigenous Blacks and their children have encountered racism, discrimination and exploitation in such areas like employment and education, in their communities (Hill, 1993; Pachai, 1997; Clairmont and Magill, 1970:21). For many years, both indigenous Blacks and Black African newcomers have occupied the lowest social and economic positions in Nova Scotia. Black women have worked for more than a century as domestic cleaners and even lose out in some of these positions once salary scales and other benefits become attractive to white applicants (Pachai 1997:31; Hill, 1993:41). Attitudes and prejudices that became hardened and continued over centuries were born out of such circumstances and consequently shaped the perception of Blacks in Nova Scotian society. Decades of racial discrimination here also resulted in impoverished communities, lower quality schooling and inadequate academic skill (Pachai, 1997:23; Saunders, 1994:19). This type of treatment has thrived under different guises in the contemporary scene and has set the tone and patterns of unequal treatment that exist in employment in Nova Scotia towards Blacks in general, but especially towards women

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from sub-Saharan Africa who are perceived as immigrants and different (Pachai, 1997: viii; Walker, 1979:4).

The research in this study focuses on African migration to Canada from 1967 (when the "point system" was first introduced) to the present. This work appears at a pivotal juncture in history, as the province of Nova Scotia is currently expressing great interest in immigrants, and immigration. This research, therefore, will go a long way to add to a much needed literature in order to develop new programs to ensure that the voices of immigrants, and those from sub-Saharan Africa, in particular, are included in this immigration dialogue. The study is useful because it includes an intersecting gender, race and class analysis, one that is often missing from "the dialogue" on migration. I argue that, just like migration from any other place, female migration from sub-Saharan Africa is gendered, but given the context of women from sub-Saharan Africa, i.e., their particular cultural background, their race and their move to a society with a long standing history of racialization of Black Africans, and often their class positions, their migration experience is quite different. This is why I focus this study on the labour market integration experiences of immigrant women from Sub-Saharan Africa, as they go through adjustment to resettle in Halifax. Since labour market integration experiences are greatly affected by family circumstances and gender roles in the family, the interface of work and family in the lives of immigrant women in the study is also explored. In addition, the interface of labour market experiences and volunteer community involvement is examined, as the latter potentially has an impact on paid employment and labour market integration. In this research, the concept of the "ideal" labour market integration is provided by Tastsoglou and Preston's definition, as "a process of accessing

employment, income and work that is commensurate with one's qualifications, within a time-frame that is equivalent to that of Canadian-born people with similar qualifications" (2005:47).

From the Researcher's Location to the Topic of Research

I chose this topic because, as an international student coming from sub-Saharan Africa, I, personally, found the resettlement process extremely difficult. I was therefore spurred by this experience to take a course in Gender and International Migration, which has heightened my awareness of the challenges immigrant women face. Women's perceived "natural" role as caregivers reproduces a sexual division of labour, which creates unique concerns about their labour market participation upon migration. Such a concern is less pronounced or even non-existent in the case of men who are protected by the presence of a female partner who attends to a disproportionate share of unpaid work in the home (Whelehan, 1995:45). Gender analysis is therefore essential in investigating migration and labour market integration of women, against the backdrop of social and cultural structures that operate and influence migration of both the sending and receiving countries. I focus on both feminist and migration theories to explain the parameters shaping migration from sub-Saharan Africa. Even though immigrant men and women are generally involved in each of the stages of migration, in different capacities, this research focuses on the experiences of women. The research seeks to find out how migration theory and feminist theory can shed light on respondents' entry and integration into the Canadian labour force.

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This course also helped me to appreciate the fact that women from sub-Saharan Africa in Canada face multiple challenges in a bicultural world with two distinct historical communities shaping their identities (Agnew, 2003). With some exceptions (Vijay Agnew's work for instance), researchers have largely ignored the African immigrant population in Canada. Rather, they focus more on European, Asian and Caribbean migrants, despite the long history of migration from Africa (Lake, 1995; Winks, 1997). An African perspective in the academic discourse and, especially, a focus on issues pertaining to labour market experiences of skilled immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa are particularly lacking.

Immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa in Canada, face a multitude of problems in their settlement process. Finding jobs, housing, coping with children for those with families, adapting to a new culture, to name but a few, are tremendous burdens on these women. There is little orientation to the Canadian culture, which is vastly different from where African immigrant women come from. It takes a while for most women to figure out the basic elements of Canadian society and culture, and they often do so, on the basis of trial and error. Various factors, such as non-recognition of foreign credentials, invalidation of international work experience, language and accent, make the resettlement and labour market integration of immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa extremely difficult. Although these are issues that apply to both women and men, the former have also had to contend with undervalued un-paid activities undertaken within the home in the form of procreative, domestic responsibilities (social reproduction) and outside of it, such as women's community involvement. Therefore, more formal research and documentation of labour market experiences of this group of immigrants needs to be

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undertaken and given more attention, especially given that the African population in Halifax, Nova Scotia, is gradually increasing. Figures available from census data indicate that a total number of 315, 621, 431, 7,405 immigrants from the continent of Africa were recorded for the census year 1986, 1991, 1996, and 2001 respectively (Statistics Canada, 1986; 1991; 1996; 2001). A most significant way to attract and retain immigrants is to make them feel a part of the society by offering them the opportunity to avail themselves of their services in terms of work.

Rationale for the Study

Immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa present a unique case which makes the study of their labour market integration all the more important. First, the argument has to be made that women from sub-Saharan Africa are generally disadvantaged due to differential access to education for males and females in most African societies. Africa is the continent facing the highest poverty and low school enrolment rates of girls (Dolphyne, 1991). For instance, in Ethiopia and Togo, the total percentage of children who completed primary school in 2002 was 24% (Ethiopia) and 63% (Togo), with 31% and 86% being males (respectively) and 18% and 41%, being females respectively (World Bank, 2002). The numbers indicate the low school enrolment of girls in most sub-Saharan African countries.

Primary education may still be free in certain parts of Africa, but the required parental contribution in the form of books, furniture, and other supplies has effectively driven many children from poverty stricken homes out of the school system (Dolphyne, 1991). Since higher education is also supported by user fees, this is likely to mean fewer

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girls than boys in schools in an already unequal situation (Dolphyne, 1991). Girls are more likely than boys to be pulled out of school in response to rising educational cost, thus perpetuating the disadvantage suffered by women relative to men in most sub-Saharan African societies. Again, as women's unpaid work burden becomes heavier, they enlist more help from girls, thus reducing the girls' time and attention for school work. Deteriorating female enrolment in schools appears to be closely linked with periods of increasing unemployment due to poor administration of the economy and other unfavourable global economic conditions (Boafo-Arthur, 1999). Girls may have to stay out of school to baby-sit younger siblings whilst mothers engage in income generating activities. After a series of absences from school, the girl thus, has difficulty catching up with the rest of the class, and in due course she may give up school completely. Consequently, more males than females get more education. Those women, who do receive higher education and experience, are likely to get good jobs and occupy higher job status (Dolphyne, 1991). This confers elite standing on most educated women in sub-Saharan Africa.

Second, looking at the recruitment and settlement criteria used in the selection of immigrants to Canada, it stands to reason that it is the cream of the African society: the skilled, those with resources, connections and networks who migrate (Folson, 2004:25). Given contemporary Canadian immigration policies, they have the best chance of being welcome. To be accepted under the Skilled Worker Selection Program, points are awarded to applicants on the basis of education, work experience, official language proficiency, age, arranged employment in Canada and adaptability. Applicants must, at present, achieve a minimum of 67 points to qualify for landed immigrant status

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(www.cic.gc.ca/English/Skilled). The more advanced the immigrant's educational background and work experiences, the higher her chances of approval because the intention is to ensure that immigrants are able to economically establish themselves in Canada. Immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa, especially women, therefore, leave the shores of Africa with the hope of availing themselves of job opportunities, as well as developing and utilizing their capabilities in more developed economies. Many also flee life threatening situations (in those sub-Saharan African countries experiencing war) and most also seek to provide themselves and their children improved conditions of life. All this leads to the exodus of highly skilled professionals from the African continent. Reports from the UN Economic Commission of Africa indicate that 27,000 African intellectuals immigrated to developed countries between 1960 and 1975. Between 1985 and 1990 the number jumped to 60,000 and has averaged 20,000 annually ever since (Cheru, 2002:12). Although the continent loses these professionals in the process, countries are supported at the same time by remittances earned from emigrants. Officially recorded remittances to sub-Saharan Africa represent 1.3% of the region's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Unofficial remittances probably are much more than recorded flows – for instance, it is estimated that 85% of money remitted to Sudan is not officially recorded (Sander, 2004). The loss of skilled professionals notwithstanding, it is accurate to say that sub-Saharan African communities have come to rely heavily on remittances.

Since female migrants provide more kin help than men (Salaff, 2000; Wong, 2000), they contribute significantly to the economy of their countries of origin through the remittances they send home to their families. Although migration threatens family unity, women from Africa strive to keep kin and friendship ties going at both ends of the ocean.

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Research conducted by Wong (2000) among Ghanaian women in Toronto reveals how women's work is crucial to the production of families and households in Canada and Africa. In African societies, where there are few or no social security benefits for old people, and parents look to their children as insurance against poverty in their old age, these women are expected to meet the needs of those who live in Canada and those in Africa. This, in turn, makes the social, economic and psychological burdens on these women quite overwhelming. Having said that, if these women from sub-Saharan Africa are not able to find remunerative jobs, commensurate with their qualifications and experience, this ("brain waste"), becomes a double loss to their countries of origin as well as sub-Saharan Africa as a whole. The idea of benefiting from the education of the individual in terms of her service to the country of settlement is lost, at the same time that remittances to the economy of her country of origin to compensate for her absence are also negatively affected or completely lost as well. There is also a loss to individuals as underutilization of skill or unemployment can be a discouraging experience. This forces some women, who are highly educated, to settle for part-time or menial jobs, as evident by this research. The Canadian state also loses because "brain waste" occurs as a result of deskilling, and constitutes a human power loss for the Canadian economy.

The third reason why women from sub-Saharan Africa are unique in their experience, and why research around their labour market integration is important, is the cost which comes with retraining and credential certification. This cost has gendered consequences. After spending so much money on the immigration processes and the eventual travel, most immigrant families are left with very little funds to begin life in their host societies. Under this circumstance, and due to gendered socialization of males

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and females in most sub-Saharan African societies, women are more likely to defer to their husbands to take the lead in recertification. Therefore recertification becomes an extra cost and burden especially to women as they have to find money to go back to school. Most of them may end up not having the chance to retrain at all because of other financial commitments and patriarchal ideologies associated with gender division of labour. Immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa are more likely than men to either ignore or take flexible career options in order to stay closer and give more care to their families. These choices invariably diminish their prospects for meaningful employment and confine them to low paying jobs (Tastsoglou and Preston, 2005). Those who are less educated and in need of language training also find themselves in more precarious situations as they schedule their training around their care giving responsibilities. Some of them find it difficult, if not impossible, to effectively participate in training programs, leaving them the option of low-wage and insecure jobs (Donkor, 2004).

The zeal to bring such issues to the forefront of scholarly debate, and possibly to help frame social policy that would address the problem at various levels, forms the basis of this research project. The findings in this research have uncovered the treatment of immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa as one of the "others" in the Canadian society, which prevents their successful integration into the labour market. This may provide an initial step to finding a lasting solution to the problem immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa face in the labour market in Canada. It is even more the case when Nova Scotia is employing the rhetoric of opening up to immigrants and pursuing more aggressive policy to attract more immigrants to the province. Policy makers within the Atlantic Provinces could hopefully use the results of the research to improve policies for

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managing migration and cultural diversity. This will help facilitate the labour market integration of immigrant women in general and those from sub-Saharan Africa in particular, and foster a more conducive and welcoming environment for such women to settle in Canada.

Objectives

There are three key objectives to this thesis. The first is to identify empirically the kinds of obstacles and barriers that immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa face in obtaining employment that is commensurate with their qualifications (and finding such employment in a reasonable time frame) in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The second objective is to assess the effect of class (including education), gender and race on the labour market integration experiences of immigrant women from Sub-Saharan Africa, in order to enhance the understanding of their involvement in paid work. Finally, by understanding how gender, race and class define, perpetuate and re-create positions of power and privilege for certain groups of people over others in the labour market, I am aiming at providing timely and critical reflections that can help retain immigrants in the Atlantic region.

The major analytical points based on my findings in this research are that, historical racial and gender discrimination in employment in the form of employers' devaluation of international educational credentials and work experience, as well as the use of accent to deny employment, coupled with weak market conditions in Halifax, Nova Scotia, has segregated women in general and those from sub-Saharan Africa in particular, into low paying, part-time, temporary and insecure employment, under poor working conditions.

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In addition, gender expectations in the family, volunteer community work (necessitated by the prospect of acquiring much needed Canadian work experience) and chilly climate between the new immigrants and Black indigenous Nova Scotians, further compound the problem of labour market integration for immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa.

Chapter Organization

This thesis elaborates on the foregoing contentions and provides a careful empirical study. More specifically, it consists of six chapters. While this chapter, chapter one, has set the context for the study, chapter two explores the theoretical issues at play in the study, elaborates upon the analytical categories from a socialist feminist perspective, a critical race perspective and women's standpoint theory, and introduces a number of themes that are pertinent to the analysis of the findings. Chapter two also discusses the research methodology used in collecting the data and gives a detailed description of the research setting, the selection of research participants and how the interviews were conducted. Chapter three examines both the push and pull factors which cause women from sub-Saran Africa to migrate to Canada, and to choose Halifax, Nova Scotia as a place of destination. Chapter four provides an illustration and analysis of how race, class and gender intersect, to disadvantage women from Sub-Saharan Africa in the Canadian labour market. Chapter five considers unpaid work in the home and community, and assesses its impact on the labour market integration of immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa. Chapter six offers a summary of the findings, recommendations based on the research findings and conclusions.

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Chapter 2

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This chapter details the theoretical issues at play in the thesis. It presents the conceptual framework which frames this study of the lived experiences of immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa, as they attempt to integrate themselves into the labour market in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. First, I draw upon migration theory that tries to integrate various levels of analysis: macro, meso and micro that structure migration. Second, I turn to key feminist theories and particularly socialist feminism, a critical race perspective, and women's standpoint theory, in order to understand the varied intersections of social inequalities experienced by the women in this study. Finally, I show the significance of using migration theory, feminist theories and critical race theory, in order to explain the findings of this research. What becomes evident is that, while immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa have put their lives on the line, they do not constitute a completely vulnerable and entirely oppressed group as most literature on migrants tends to portray. That is, in spite of significant structural barriers, this particular group of immigrant women should be seen as active agents, who consciously challenge and resist discrimination and victimization in the various situations in which they find themselves.

This theoretical framework is followed by a section to situate the research. An explanation of the methodology used to tease out the voices of research participants and how they make sense of their everyday lived experiences in their new environment is given is the next section. Beyond details on the feminist methodological principles employed in the study, this section also describes the procedure for data collection, and the profiles of participants in the study.

Theoretical Framework

Migration Theories

Grieco and Boyd's (1998) three stage model of migration has been used in this research to illuminate the structural conditions shaping the migration process of both women and men on the macro, meso and micro levels. At the "macro" level, the global factors include: colonialism (historical legacies) and global capitalism, promoting for example, the "brain drain" from the global South to the global North (Raghuram and Kofman, 2004). At the "meso" level, I consider the national, regional and local interests that have an impact on this study's participants, as well as the patriarchal extended family setups. At the "micro" level, I explore how the women as agents also make personal choices for various reasons, depending on their individual circumstances. As Dobrowolsky and Tastsoglou (2006:17) explain, there are unequal power dynamics embedded in migration at each level (macro, meso and micro).

Subject to these various influences, Grieco and Boyd (1998), show how gender interacts with roles and hierarchies in the migratory process to influence migratory possibilities for both women and men at different stages to produce differential migratory outcomes. The researchers examined the "Pre-Migration stage," focusing on factors of sending societies; the "Act of Migration" looking at the interface of factors of both sending and receiving societies; and the "Post-Migration" stage, examining factors of receiving societies in integrating immigrants.

Drawing from this body of work, I consider the impact of all three stages, but, in particular, I focus on the third stage, "Post migration," to investigate specifically, how the

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interlocking forces of gender, race and class, have influenced the impact of migration on women from sub-Saharan Africa.

Feminist Theories

This research is informed by three key theoretical perspectives: socialist feminism, critical race theory and "standpoint theory", taking the standpoint of women. To begin with, I discuss socialist feminism and why it is crucial to incorporate its broader structural, political and economic considerations that factor in gender and class. Beyond looking at gender and class as socialist feminists mostly do, I also examine race because a critical race perspective is crucial to the study of immigrant women. I plumb the intersections between gender, race and class and treat them as structural relations that are very much mutually reinforcing. At the same time, I look at more specific issues from "women's standpoint" approach in order to understand the everyday lived experiences of immigrant women, in general, and those from sub-Saharan, in particular, but I situate this in the larger social and economic context.

Socialist Feminism

My mode of enquiry to address the challenges immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa face in their labour market integration is informed by the core principles of "socialist feminism". Socialist feminists believe that the root cause of women's oppression lies in the political, economic as well as social structures of society and not as a result of "individuals' intentional actions" (Tong, 1998:94). Societies have to be examined first and foremost, in order to explain the behaviours of individuals living in

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specific social contexts (Arneil, 1999:138) since individuals gather and continue with an already established familial way of living within any given society. However, despite its strength in explaining how gender and class serve as equally powerful oppressive mechanisms to oppress women (Whelehan, 1995:45), socialist feminism, historically, has not sufficiently, taken into account the issue of race. Since my research subjects are women of colour from different regions in Africa, I have assumed that adding a race perspective to a socialist feminist approach may be a fruitful way to tease out the varied structural impediments facing the women in the study, as well as their potential agency. Before I discuss the "race" aspect, I will elaborate on the "gender" and "class" dimensions.

The socialist feminist framework is useful, in that it helps to expose the patriarchal structures that accord women's work a lower status and affect notions of 'value' (Whelehan, 1995:45) of both the paid and unpaid work women do, in general, and, more specifically in this study. "Unpaid work" in this paper refers to the procreative, domestic labour and voluntary services undertaken in the community, mostly by women, which have no economic value, in the private sphere (Jackson, 1996:26); whereas "paid work" refers to wage work that has financial compensation in the public sphere (Tong, 1998). In this study, gaining insight into the patriarchal underpinnings from an African perspective, along with the institutional barriers and systematic sexism and classism that shape the labour market can help understand the integration experiences of research participants.

According to Tong (1998:119), socialist feminists "seek to explain the ways in which capitalism interacts with patriarchy to oppress women more egregiously than men" The argument here is that since there is an intricate interplay between capitalism and

patriarchy, one cannot be destroyed without the other (Tong, 1998:119). To socialist feminists, class inequalities, intertwined with other forms of inequalities (e.g. gender, disability, age, etc.), operate to affect human personality and human action in subtle ways (Ritzer, 2000:334). Tong (1998:121) quoting Juliet Mitchell (1971), explains that the causes of women's oppression are buried in the psyche and until men and women's minds have been liberated from the thought that women are less than men's equal, women will remain subordinate to men.

Gender in this thesis alludes to the social behaviours and roles that groups within societies assign to men and women as a result of their sex (Vickers, 1997:25). Gender is by definition relational, as it refers to the roles of the two sexes in relation to each other. Characteristics of gender vary across cultures and time depending on the context, but there are some commonalities. For instance, women are often responsible for caring and men have often been assigned the responsibility of breadwinning. This gender-based division of labour reinforces other patriarchal cultural practices that assign women to lesser status and power roles within society. Patriarchy uses these sorts of gender roles, to determine who gets paid more and who gets paid less for "work of comparable equal value" (Tong, 1998; Whelehan, 1995) in capitalist societies. In addition, in this research, I demonstrate that immigrant women, in general, and those from sub-Saharan Africa more specifically, who work in the paid workforce, have suffered the effect of insecurity of "part-time or out of work" (Whelehan, 1995), due to their commitment to domestic unpaid work, informed by such gendered assumptions.

Both men and women from most sub-Saharan African countries have been socialized based on patriarchal ideologies that are more traditional in terms of gender

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relations, where men's role as household heads or breadwinners and women's assumed domestic responsibilities as caregivers are perceived as natural. Hence, sub-Saharan African immigrant women, like other immigrant women, receive more pressure from their ethnic groups to preserve traditional "culture" to an extent where this has affected notions of women's career potential in the paid workforce. The work that women do is considered demeaning to men and their manhood if they step in to undertake this work (Sen and Grown, 1987:26). This is something that becomes significant to this thesis because gender socialisation, which ties all women and those from sub-Saharan Africa in particular,[1] to unpaid work of mothering and caring responsibilities, affects the women's own views of career potential and their upward mobility in the paid labour force in Canada. Therefore, my analysis considers some of these complexities to investigate how these women negotiate gender roles and ideologies with their male partners to ease the burden of unpaid work on them.

In terms of class, Ng argues that it is a process whereby people use whatever means available to them, to "construct and alter their relationship to the productive/reproductive forces of society" (1991:16). It is a social as well as an economic relation (Smith, 1987; Ng, 1991) in which some groups are able to claim they own the means of production, while other groups work to do the producing (Ritzer, 2000:333). Like gender, class is also a relational category, as classes are formed in relation to each other. In a class society, it is the dominant culture that sets the basic parameters for its minority members (Tong, 1998:7). Class does not imply a "homogenous status" for all its occupants (Whelehan, 1995:54). Individuals may experience disadvantage because they are

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[1] Most African countries have well established informal traditional setups, to see to the enforcement of gender roles (Dolphyne, 1991).

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members of a group but that does not mean that people deemed to be members of the same social class, have comparable jobs at equal rates of pay. "An internal hierarchy within class positions" (Whelehan, 1995:54) has its own dividing lines which factor into the account gender (and race). These two sets of relations (gender and class) are seen as arising out of the struggles of domination and control and each one cannot be understood in a specific social formation without reference to the other (Ng, 1991:20). As we shall see, class and race also frequently interweave with each other since those are two fundamental tools society use to justify exploitation and oppression.

Race

Like gender and class, race is also a social construction. It is "associated with the subjective perception of affinity, common traits and common experiences among members of a group of antipathy directed at members of a group who are visibly and audibly different" (Ralston, 1996:8). The critique by Black feminists and other women of colour that mainstream feminism is theorized from the standpoint of middle class White women, and rarely includes the knowledge and awareness of different groups of women, is an example of racialized system of domination (Ralston 1996; Agnew, 1996; Hooks, 1984). Mainstream feminist approaches oppress women who do not belong to this group by imposing norms upon them.

The term "immigrant women", for instance, has racist, sexist and class biases (Tastsoglou and Preston, 2005). It is socially constructed and it refers not so much to legal status but to describe some women who are "different in characteristics such as skin colour, language or accent, religion, dress, food customs and so on" (Ralston, 1996:2). In

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the legal frame of the word, an immigrant woman is a person born abroad who has acquired permanent residency status in Canada or Canadian citizenship. The term "immigrant woman" in this research combines both the legal and social criteria. It refers to foreign-born women who meet the following two criteria: (a) have acquired permanent residency status or have become citizens and (b) belong to a racialized group, and/or do not speak English (or French) well or have English (or French) as a second language. The term does not include undocumented foreign-born women and people on temporary visas. Within each racialized group, men and women, and people of different classes are subject to differential treatments; and hence, I have assumed in this research that immigrant men from sub-Saharan Africa do not experience migration the same way as women from the same continent. However, my focus is on women.

For many women in my study the experiences of gender, race and class tend to be inseparable. Women from sub-Saharan Africa, like other women of colour, tend to experience the three oppressions simultaneously in varying intensities (Kline, 1991:46; Agnew, 2003:276). Emily Woo Yamasaki observing these interlocking systems of social oppressions (gender, race and class) describes her experiences and that of other women of colour in the following way: "We are discriminated against as workers on the economic plane, as racial minorities on the economic and social planes, and as women on all three planes – economic, social, and domestic/family planes" (cited in Agnew, 1996:61). As a result of these multiple layers of discrimination, black women find it difficult, if not impossible, to separate experiences they attribute to their gender from those ascribed to their race, class and other differentiating characteristics (Monture 1986:167, cited in Kline 1991:46).

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To examine gender division of labour, one can explain not only inequalities based on gender but racial inequalities as well (Arneil, 1999:142). Therefore, it is important to find out how gender, race and class intersect in the lives of immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa and how the various influences shape the interests of this group of women and guide them especially in the kind of paid and unpaid work that they find themselves doing in the Canadian society. The real question is how racialization, intertwined with gender and class discrimination, affect women from sub-Saharan Africa's employment opportunities. One can safely assume that women, who are not racialized in their countries of origin, would become more sensitized to issues of race in a society that does racialize them (e.g. Canada). Thus their perspective would change.

Dei and Calliste (2000:16) advocate an integrative analysis of race, class and gender, in order to capture the subtleties and complexities of these social oppressions. Such analysis of gender race and class assumes that discrimination based on these intersecting forms of social divisions does not only reflect individual biases, but institutional structures underpinning these biases. Therefore, an integrative anti-racism approach is used in this research to build on the analysis of gender, race and gender, to provide a more grounded understanding of how the effects of race, are mediated simultaneously with other dimensions of social oppressions like gender and class. In theorizing an integrative anti-racism, race becomes the point of entry through which the interactive forms of social oppressions, can and must be understood (Dei, 1995:16). As grounds for specifically female voices, feminist theorizing, also, regards gender as a key as well as entry point in the feminist integrative approach in order to provide a better understanding of the lived social reality of women (Miles, 1996; Stasiulis, 1999:347). Hence, in this

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research, inspired by both feminist and anti-racist integrative theorizing, gender and race are employed as distinct foci of analysis in understanding the racialized immigrant women's labour market integration experiences from their own perspective.

This research uncovers how labour is divided both within and outside the home for immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa and how this division informs the "choices" women from sub-Saharan Africa have in employment in Canada. This helps in explaining the challenges immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa face in their effort to integrate themselves into the Canadian labour market and how they rework their identities in their new environment.

The Concept of "the Women's Standpoint"

My theoretical perspective in this thesis also incorporates Smith's notion of women's standpoint (1987). Standpoint in this context refers to "the relationship between the "knower's" experience and the social organisation generating her experience" (Ng, 1991:4). According to Hartsock (1998:108), standpoint is based on the notion that "differences in material experiences construct knowledge and understanding of social relations in "complex and contradictory ways from material life." Hartsock argues that the standpoint concept puts forward a series of levels of reality in which one can see beneath the surface of what is presented and explain "the logic by which the appearance inverts and distorts the deeper reality" (1998:108). The objective of the standpoint approach is to develop a framework that allows feminists to find both the room and the voice to give women to speak to their own experiences of everyday living in order to

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explain how their varied social realities, are shaped in the context of larger social and political relations.

Segal has argued that since patriarchy is as basic a structure as capitalism, there is a degree of shared experience between women of their systematic injustice because of their sex, which moves beyond class and race boundaries (1987:49). Therefore, through analysis from a women-centred perspective that emphasizes elements of exclusion unique to their gender, we may be able to identify the forces that shape and constrain the lives of women. For instance, Jaggar (1983:77-8) demonstrates that:

> ...all women are primarily responsible for housework, while all women who
> have children are held primarily responsible for the care of those children;
> and virtually all women who work in the market work in sex segregated job...
> (cited in Whelehan, 1995:62).

And yet, Sen and Grown (1987:18), supporting the position in the debate that feminism cannot be monolithic in its issues, goals and strategies, have also argued that "while gender subordination has universal elements, feminism cannot be based on a rigid concept of universality that negates the wide variation in women's experiences." hooks dismisses the notion of a "universal sisterhood" under the concept of women's standpoint by claiming that it obscures the various forms of oppression experienced by different groups of women by homogenizing such experience, whilst alienating those women who suffer the most (cited in Whelehan, 1995:110; Tong, 1998:217). Not all women see reality the same way (Tong, 1998). Some white feminists have been accused of retaining what hooks terms "a sexist-racist attitude" towards black women that weakens the concept of universal sisterhood (cited in Whelehan, 1995:110). Therefore, integrating a critical anti-racist perspective into standpoint theory helps define the construction of differences based on skin colour, and the interpretations put on the perceived differences.

My position in this debate is that since lived experience is "embedded in the particular historical forms of social relations that determine that experience" (Smith, 1987:49), research should start from the perspective of women by making them the subject of analysis so that they can articulate their lived experiences without any distortions. But at the same time, it should take on a contextual approach by grounding each experience within a particular context. Feminist theorizing must, therefore, reflect the lived experiences of different groups of women in order to determine what shaped each experience. It can not be over emphasized that all women are oppressed one way or the other, but the reality is that not all women are oppressed equally. Some women are oppressed more than others. Not until feminist theorizing acknowledges the varying degrees of oppressions (gender, race and class) experienced by differential categories of women, will feminists' effort to address the injustices women face as a group, reach their full potential.

In sum, my analysis interweaves gender and migration theories, examining the factors at the macro, meso and micro levels that influence migration, with feminist theories (socialist feminism and a feminist standpoint perspective with a critical anti-racist analysis). These theories are actually complementary because they all seek to investigate structural inequalities. While these structural inequalities are central to this study, it is important not to lose sight of the agency involved in fighting or negotiating them. And so, my analysis begins from the standpoint of women from sub-Saharan Africa as they describe their lived experience from their own perspective. I then explore the activities that the women actually partake in, taking into account the socialist feminist and integrative anti-racist perspective and the interlocking relations between gender, race

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and class. However, evidence from this research will prove that women from sub-Saharan Africa are not just passive recipients of the structural forces of capitalism and racialization in their new environment, but they serve as active agents in shaping their everyday lived experience in the Atlantic region.

Situating the Research

Immigration policy has been one of the major means by which the state has historically controlled membership in the Canadian political community by selecting who would be (and who would not be) eligible for entry, residence, and citizenship in Canada. Abu-Laban and Gabriel (2002), Knowles (1992) and Whitaker (1987) have noted that race and gender have always been constructed and used to police national borders. Danso and Grant (2000), Abu-Laban and Gabriel (2002), among others, have also made the claim that Canadian immigration has generally not favoured immigrants from Africa because of prejudice, stereotypical attitudes, and discrimination based on race.

Racialized Policing of Canadian Borders

During the boom period of 1947-57, the Liberal government gradually eased immigration restrictions to admit displaced persons from a growing number of countries. This was always done with a view to preserving the fundamental character of the Canadian population as white. Black women and "third world" polities have been the primary targets of this kind of population control (Davis, 2004: 64; Knowles, 1992; Whitaker, 1987), with some exceptions made for Black maids and nannies from the

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Caribbean for example, who fulfilled particular economic demands in certain periods like the 1950s – 60s (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1999:9).

Whereas almost one in every three immigrants to Canada in the postwar decade had been British, the proportion had fallen to less than one in five by the end of the 1960s when the "Point System" was introduced (Whitaker, 1987:214; Isajiw, 1999:85; Tastsoglou and Miedema, 2003). More immigrants of colour from different countries were coming to Canada than in the past. Even though the "White Canadian Policy" was abandoned (Gabresellasie, 1993:5) with the adoption of more "objective" criteria, immigration was still highly selective. Naidoo (1985) points to the fact that immigration from Africa continued to be very slow among the non-traditional source regions like Asia and the Caribbean. Between 1961 and 1970, Africa as a whole contributed 2.2% of all immigrants to Canada. Between 1981 and 1990, the ratio was 4.9%; and for 1991 and 2000 the percentage increased to 7.5 and it is predicted to continue to increase (Musisi and Turrittin, 1995:15; Danso and Grant, 2000:29)

In the 1970s and 1980s, newcomers who emigrated from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, or Latin America, settled in disproportionate numbers in the lower Fraser Valley (most often in Hope, British Colombia and Vancouver), the Toronto area, and the greater Montréal region. By contrast, other parts of the four Atlantic Provinces (Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Princess Edward Island and New Brunswick) remained virtually untouched by this immigration (Knowles, 2000: 88).

Although Knowles' (2000:88) studies point out that, recent waves of migration brought immigrants, and for the purposes of this study, immigrants from the continent of Africa, to the province of Nova Scotia, the studies do not give the reason why early

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waves of immigrants decided to settle in disproportionate numbers in the above mentioned places. In contrast, this research examines the structural factors that bring immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa to Canada, most specially, Halifax, Nova Scotia, to fill in the gap.

Most of the studies conducted by the above mentioned researchers, also tended to lump "blacks" into one category, on the assumption that being "black" necessarily meant that all the group members share either the same aspirations or the same cultural and historical experiences. The analytical framework of black "voices" necessitates some form of clarification as this may provide the much needed grounds for developing comparisons. It is important to note here that, the black group in Canada represents a wide array of cultures having different historical, geographical and social experiences (Danso and Grant, 2000). There is the "indigenous" African Canadian community, as well as the immigrants from the African continent, South America, the Caribbean, and the United States. Although all members share the same African heritage, they have different backgrounds, values, languages, religious and political beliefs among others (Nova Scotia Department of Education, 2004). The focus of my research is on 'blacks' from sub-Saharan Africa, with the intention of giving them a unique voice. Although there are enough commonalities in the social and political status that characterized the majority of people from sub-Saharan Africa who have been interviewed for this study, other details such as ethnic affiliation, and language, among others, were also considered in this research, as diversity of experiences is still present even within this sub-group of sub-Saharan Africa.

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Outsiders within: the Halifax Experience

Isajiw (1999:93); Danso and Grant (2000:19) have argued that the story of immigrants, should not be seen only through the immigration process alone. As soon as immigrants arrive in the host country, they begin processes of adaptation and adjustment. But they also form or become part of existing ethnic communities. The majority of immigrants (85 percent) in Atlantic Canada now (after 1980) live in Nova Scotia. About 90 percent of the African immigrants settling in Nova Scotia reside in the Halifax Regional Municipality, while 10 percent of the community settle elsewhere in the province (Nova Scotia Department of Education, 2004:28). In spite of this high percentage of African immigrants in Halifax, the intersectionality of race, gender, class, nationality and immigrant status, positions women migrants from sub-Saharan Africa as outsiders.

Despite its belief in fair play and the inherent worth and dignity of its people, Canadian society suffers from ethnic and social class prejudice and discrimination (Agnew, 2003). Values, beliefs and dreams of the majority group are synonymous with mainstream Canadian culture. Groups outside the mainstream, the minority groups which are mostly immigrants, who share physical, social, or cultural characteristics that set the group apart from the larger group, may either be passively neglected or actively be discriminated against by the larger society (Elliot, 1971). For this reason, even though Canada's skill based immigration system, "the point system," attracts hundreds of thousands of immigrants yearly, most of whom are professionals and technical workers, the skills and experiences of these immigrant professionals are devalued upon their arrival on the shores of Canada. Underlying the "point system" is the idea that importing

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highly skilled immigrants will contribute to economic growth as well as improve the welfare of the immigrant himself/herself (Salaff and Greve, 2006). But the truth of the matter, as stated by Slade (2004:106), is that Canada has been constructed as a white British nation, and policies and unwritten practices have been implemented to ensure that the notion of professional in Canada is that of a white man. Therefore, immigrant professionals, especially women, and worse still Africans, have experienced a greater difficulty in establishing themselves in their professions in Canada. They get little or no chance at all, to see their dream come true in Canada, because of institutionalized racist and sexist processes in the form of non-recognition of international education credentials, devaluation of international work experience and labour market conditions (Tastsoglou and Miedema, 2005; Man, 2004) that discriminate against them.

Nova Scotia faces a serious problem of aging population and an economy that is increasingly dependent on a highly skilled workforce (Akbari and Mandale, 2005). Yet despite being highly skilled, many African immigrant women in Nova Scotia, and indeed across Canada, feel that while politicians and employers publicly talk about lack of skilled workers, their skills and education are discounted (Danso and Grant, 2000). They are often the last to be hired, and are not offered the opportunity to practice or work in their areas of training and expertise (Kofman et al., 2000:132). In desperation, many have accepted jobs well below their qualifications because job experience obtained in Africa, is not accredited as comparable skill and knowledge in Nova Scotia.

Barriers in the Labour Market

Cultural values and stereotypes are other elements that contribute to the access denial and discrimination against professional immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa in the labour market. Stereotyping involves assumption and prejudging, in this case by employers, based on racialization of the type of jobs that are appropriate for African immigrant women. The racialization process in the labour market creates a separation between "good jobs" and "bad jobs" and disproportionately consigns particular groups of people, notably women and people of color, to the least paid and least stable employment (Wong, 2000). Gender, race and class intersect to ensure that women of color are highly concentrated in lower paid and insecure jobs than white women. The few women, who find themselves in stable jobs, also encounter the agony of having their education and training viewed as substandard.

The above-mentioned issue is explored more concretely by Modibo (2004) in a case study involving black nurses in some of Toronto's hospitals. Modibo examined the varied strategies of this distinct group as they attempted and still attempt to negotiate the labour market in the Canadian context. Her findings suggest that, there has been a general assault on the recognition of skills and abilities of Black nurses in Canada based on racial stereotypes, and these stereotypes, serve as obstacles to equitable treatment and promotion within the workplace and the nursing profession for Black nurses. For instance, with the acceptance of Blacks into the nursing profession, hospital administrators began distinguishing between Black, Brown and White nurses and their country of origins. Nurses from England were called graduate nurses, whilst others from elsewhere were called "foreign-trained" nurses. To make the difference obvious, graduate

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nurses were allowed to wear white uniforms; foreign-trained nurses were made to wear Registered Nurse's (RN) uniform (Modibo, 2004:111). White co-workers therefore viewed the training and education of the foreign-trained nurses as inferior. This is indicative of the fact that, even in the midst of a nationwide outcry of the shortage of nurses, Black nurses were still discriminated against. The question that Modibo's research (2004) leaves unexplored is how other forms of discriminations (e.g. based on gender and class) are experienced in the workplace by Blacks, especially women, not only in the nursing profession, but in other professions as well. In contrast, this thesis, which is based on immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa, examines patterns and experiences of discrimination encountered by respondents at their various places of work, and the intersection of race, class and gender, which serves as barriers to their labour market integration, forms the central focus of analysis.

Another significant barrier is that of "accent". In this research, it becomes apparent that, for most sub-Saharan African immigrant women, "accent" keeps them from being hired. As a result, "Canadian English" constitutes a border allowing only partial and provisional crossing for those with an "African English" accent. "The accent border is material and figurative." (Creese and Kambere, 2003:569). It affects access to material benefits such as jobs and shapes perceptions of who has the right to jobs in Canada. Drawing on a preliminary research conducted in Vancouver with immigrant women from English speaking Africa, Creese and Kambere (2003:565) posit that even though the "point system" rewards fluency in Canada's official languages, perceptions of language fluency remain contested in everyday interactions. Thus, "accent forms a site through which racialized power relations are negotiated and "Others" are reproduced materially

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and figuratively in Canada." Excuses such as accent (among others) are used to deny immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa in particular, access to employment and other services. This study, by Creese and Kambere is only a preliminary one, which suggests that there is the need for more extensive research to discern how socially defined "foreign accents" shape perceptions of language fluency; and how this intersects with processes of racialization, gender and class, in order to reproduce inequality in the labour market. This is what this study attempts to do in the context of Halifax, Nova Scotia.

A final barrier immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa face in securing employment, is the difficulty they encounter with the accreditation of their certificates and professional licenses obtained outside Canada (Danso and Grant, 2000:25). The most challenging areas as cited by the Nova Scotia Department of Education (2004) are teacher's certification, medical board licensing, and other professional licensing boards and professional associations. As noted above, even in a profession that receives less difficulty in terms of accreditation like nursing, Black women, especially, still encounter differential treatment in the workplace (Modibo, 2004:111). This indicates that the acceptance of the Black "exotic"[2] does not mean that she has escaped being stigmatized. These are some social implications that gender and race and their intersections have had on workplace hierarchy, and these practices have consequences with respect to class.

The Impact of Migration on Gender

Gender is critical in considering the challenges that women face cross-culturally in the migratory process as they negotiate gender roles (Crawford, 2004:100; DeLaet,

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[2] "Black Exotic" in this thesis refers to immigrants of racialized Black descent, who are seen as visibly and audibly different.

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1999:13). Depending on the family composition (nuclear, extended, single or otherwise), and various structural arrangements, some women may experience more freedom in a new society. There is the potential for female liberation through migration (Yeoh et al, 2000:155), as movement may allow an escape from the constraints of patriarchal control, particularly in the households where women have greater capacity for decision making. Other migration scholars like (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1999; Pessar, 1999) have studied the impact of immigrant women's employment on gender equality in the family and emphasised that migration and settlement arrangements bring changes in traditional patriarchal arrangements due to the contributions women make to household sustenance. The claim is that women's access to wage work leads to more control over budgeting and provides them with some amount of leverage in soliciting male assistance in daily household chores. Other studies have shown that there is little difference in spite of women's access to wage work, and in fact, economic emancipation does not translate into liberation or equality (Kitson, 2004; Kibria, 1990; Grieco and Boyd, 1998).

Crawford (2004) and Tsolidis (2003) have also made the claim that immigrant women may encounter restrictions due to reinforcement of traditional patriarchal norms. More pressure is said to be placed on women than men to preserve traditions of "original" ethnic culture by socializing children to retain some of these cultural traditions. Again, women bear unequal share of the household unpaid labour because of their reproductive role in nurturing children. Which reason, women in the labour force, face the burden of the "double shift" as they try to negotiate their identities as mothers, wives and workers outside the home. And yet, some women may also turn onto their own

traditional gender norms as "resistance" to racism and oppression (Espiritu, 1997, cited in Pessar, 1999:550).

Given these complex findings, my argument is that it is too simplistic to conclude that migrant women constitute only a vulnerable, exploited class. At the same time, it is just as simplistic to assume that migrant women are necessarily liberated from restrictive gender roles in their host societies. Gender roles before migration, as well as culture, class and race/ethnicity, play a role in how gender relations are shaped after migration (Pedraza and Rumbuat, 1996). This research explored some of these articulations in the context of Saharan African women in Halifax. This study is expected to contribute to the policy discussion by ensuring that the voices of immigrant women are included.

Methodological Framework

The methodology for this study was formulated to tease out the labour market integration experiences of immigrant women from sub-Saharan African in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. The women from sub-Saharan Africa were treated as a legitimate category for this research and analysis, first because of the common histories of their countries of origins, anchored in colonialism, as well as current socio-economic and political experiences based on the legacies of colonialism. Migrating into a society with a profoundly racialized past and present like Canada (Stasiulis and Abu-Laban, 2004), the women's experiences enable them to name their commonality as a distinct racialized group of African women, which helps them to develop a sense of identity, built on the recognition of a common oppression and a shared demand for equality. With this as the basis, a snowball sample of sixteen immigrant women from eleven sub-Saharan African

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countries was recruited (see appendix "A" for the list of countries representing sub-Saharan Africa). Two of the women are from Nigeria, two from Ghana, two from Sierra Leone, two from Sudan and one from each of the following sub-Saharan African countries: Togo, Kenya, Liberia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Rwanda, and DR. Congo. Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with the sixteen immigrant women. A qualitative analysis of in-depth labour market integration accounts was used, rather than a quantitative analysis, although some statistics provided background to the research. I drew on census data and have linked this data with qualitative interviews to examine the labour market integration experiences of women in the study, with the hope that it will enhance in-depth understanding of the issues under study. All the interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim onto computer diskettes. Field notes taken were also transcribed onto computer diskettes. The data were retrieved, coded, and systematically organised according to patterns and themes using the qualitative analysis programme QSR NUD*IST. Although I, as the researcher, tried to feature the voices of participants as much as possible, the analysis is mine. I hope that the conclusions drawn from this research will stimulate debate on the issues raised and provide an impetus for further research in this area.

Data Collection

In order to incorporate more diverse views into this study, immigrant women with origins in various sub-Saharan African countries living in Halifax were selected as participants. To capture a broader range of experiences in the Canadian labour market, I balanced my sample to include some earlier immigrants (over five years stay in Canada)

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and more recent ones (less than five years stay in Canada). The choice of Halifax as the research location is significant because of the long history of black slaves in Nova Scotia, which has made racism quite acute in the province.[3] The second reason is the geographical and ethno-cultural heterogeneity of the African population in Halifax, although the population is relatively small in relation to the total number of African immigrants in Canada. Lacking an existing circle of extended family in Halifax, as compared to the large immigrant receiving cities like Toronto and Vancouver, immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa may feel less reticent to volunteer private information, in that they do not have to worry about their extended family getting to know of such information.

Participants were identified through a snowball sampling method. In order to be included in the study, certain criteria were set for participants to meet. Two screening devices were employed to generate the sample. First, participants had to be immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa who have acquired permanent resident status or citizenship in Canada, and have English or French as a second language. Second, in order to capture all the variations of the same phenomenon (that is labour market integration experiences), the aim was to select adults in their active years of labour participation from as heterogeneous a group as possible (i.e., from different sub-Saharan African countries as well as various ethno-cultural backgrounds). At the time of the interview, participants were supposed to be: engaged in paid labour; actively looking for paid work; or had consciously taken a break from paid work in response to reproductive unpaid work in the family. Even though steps were taken to ensure heterogeneity of participants in terms of their geographical location as well as their ethno-cultural backgrounds, in

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[3] Refer to chapter one of the thesis for details.

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analyzing their accounts, I do not assume that their views represent the entire population of immigrant from sub-Saharan Africa in Halifax, much less of Canada. Individuals go through unique and contextually grounded experiences and therefore the nature of these experiences may differ in a range of situations. Nevertheless, I believe there are similarities that illustrate the difficulties many of the immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa who live under similar conditions, encounter in other parts of Canada. The insights gleaned from Halifax are crucial, but also, can have broader resonance and relevance.

My success in obtaining such rich narratives from my respondents was due, in no small part, to the access and help accorded to me by the executive members of African immigrant associations such as the African Diaspora Association of the Maritimes (ADAM) (a very recent umbrella group for Africans in the Maritimes), service providing agencies such as the Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA) and the YMCA Newcomer Centre. Some of the leaders of these organisations themselves identified potential participants who fitted the criteria for selection, made the initial contact and handed out the Project Information Sheets and the Invitation to Participate, on my behalf. They gave me the list of those who showed interest in the project and I randomly selected some of the women from this list. As such, when I first contacted the women, they knew who I was and what the project was about. I also asked some of the women I contacted whether they knew of other women from sub-Saharan Africa who might be interested in the study. I distributed an "Informed Consent" form developed to describe the nature of the study to intended participants prior to the interviews. This was done to ensure that they fully understood what I intended to do in the study and to enable

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each of them to reflect on and make an informed decision concerning participation. Interviews were scheduled after the women confirmed their participation. In all, I contacted twenty four potential participants and interviewed sixteen of them. A thank-you letter was sent to participants after the interviews. A copy of the interview transcript and summary of the findings will be sent to participants who indicated that they are interested in knowing about the outcome of the study.

The data collection involved: a) the filling in of Socio-Demographic Information Sheets in the interviewer's presence; b) an open-ended interview. The Socio-Demographic Information Sheets were used to collect personal information which was used for classification purposes only. This covered topics such as year of birth, marital status, immigration status, education, training and work experience in the home country and in Canada. The issues covered in the semi-structured, in-depth interviews were related to more sensitive issues, such as: the decision to migrate to Canada (the primary influences); the value of international work experience in Canada; the extent to which international experience and community volunteer work is recognized and/or rewarded in the job market; among other concerns. Although I ensured that the main points of my interview questions were addressed, participants were encouraged to identify other themes and influences that have been most pertinent to them beyond the selected themes.[4]

Ethical standards were strictly adhered to when the interviews were conducted, and my research was vetted by the Saint Mary's University (SMU) Research Ethics Board. Before beginning each interview, I explained the purpose of the research to the women and asked them to sign the Informed Consent form. Asking research participants about

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[4] Please refer to attached documents: (Appendix: B) Project Information (Appendix: C) Invitation Script (Appendix: D) Consent Form, and (Appendix: E) Interview Guide.

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their unpaid and paid work experiences entailed the disclosure of sensitive matters which they sometimes found painful and personal - but they were assured to only give information that they felt comfortable with and were relevant to the aims of the research, as they understood them. They were also made aware that they could withdraw from the study at any point in time if they felt the need to do so. The interviews were conducted in English (a second language to both the researcher and the participants), and ranged in length from forty five minutes to one hour. All the women agreed to have their interviews audio taped, and these tapes were later transcribed verbatim. In only a few cases was the recording halted at the request of an interviewee so that she could say something "off the record." Brief notes were taken during the interviews. Some follow up interviews, for the purpose of clarification, also occurred during the transcribing stage. Although the women were extremely busy working in paid jobs and taking care of their families, they were still quite willing to set aside time, and even anxious to share with me their experiences. Most of them also provided their own pseudonyms with which to be identified in the transcripts and resulting report. Interviews were conducted at a time and place most convenient to participants. The interviews took place in residences and workplaces of participants. Safety, comfort, privacy, and convenience were the factors that influenced the women's decision in selecting meeting places.

Pseudonyms and codes were used for the transcripts and field notes to ensure that the real identities of participants and their places of work/institutions remain anonymous. The confidentiality of data was secured through making appropriate changes and generalizations in the analysis that allowed me, as the researcher, to talk about the general issues without compromising the anonymity of participants. In addition, participants were

not associated with their countries of origin specifically, but rather, I referred to their general geographic location within sub-Saharan-Africa (although I have listed each of these countries at the beginning of the methodology). These changes of identifiable characteristics were cautiously carried out without altering the content of the study. The data collected has been securely stored in my room in such a way that I will be the only person who will have access to it. However, in writing up my thesis, I discussed my findings with my supervisor and reader. This primary data will be destroyed one year after I have defended my thesis.

Themes were derived from the transcripts and used as a Coding Scheme (See Appendix F), for the QSR NUD*IST analysis programme. Themes extracted from the interview narratives were organised under the three main stages of migration: before, during and after migration with much emphasis on after migration. The experiences the women described illustrate the way in which race, class and gender intersect to produce material consequences for women from sub-Saharan Africa in the labour market.

Application of Feminist Values

Interviewing – Feminist Framework

In the spirit of feminist research that recommends qualitative research which requires an interchange and sharing of information between a researcher and a respondent (Lather, 1987; Reinharz, 1992; Oakley, 1981), I conducted my interviews in a semi-structured format. This methodology allowed me to centre my data collection and analysis on the specific vantage point of immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa whose direct accounts provided understanding of their labour market integration experiences (Smith,

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1987). McKendrick's case studies on international migration indicate that only individual interviews can "tease out the personal significance of the migration act from the collective rationalization" of it (1999:42). Hence, one-on-one interviews with the women, helped to provide detailed and descriptive narratives of the nature of immigrant women's experiences in the labour force, which would not have been available through alternative means of data collection (Kvale, 1996; Maynard and Purvis, 1994; DeVault, 1999).

Although interviewing has become the preferred choice for most feminist researchers as an antidote to centuries of having men speak for women, some feminists of colour have criticized the hierarchies implicit within feminist theory itself. Their argument is that feminist research and practice has not yet adequately addressed issues of ideological and class bias within feminist scholarship as scholarship and discourse of women of colour and working class women have been obscured in women studies (hooks, 1984; Collins, 1990). Joyappa and Self (1996:2) explain that, "despite a visible increase in research by and about women, there have been little demonstrated awareness of or concern for cultural diversity" (Self 1988 cited in Joyappa and Self 1996). This has been a downside of women's studies research, and this research on labour market integration experiences of immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa, provides a significant contribution to fill in the gap. The overall approach to data collection and analysis for this research was to deploy "standpoint theory" from the women's perspective as articulated by Dorothy Smith (1987), to honour interview narratives of my research participants, the personal testimonies of women from sub-Saharan Africa (a group which has very little written about them in the Atlantic region), and frame these narratives within a larger social context of "relations of ruling".

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According to Bogdan and Bilken (1998:31), qualitative research demands that the world be approached with the assumption that nothing is trivial, that everything has the potential of being a clue that might unlock a more detailed understanding of what is being studied. Although I guided the discussion from time to time and to an extent, set some parameters for the conversation, I also encouraged the women to elaborate on topics that were not necessarily central to the original goals of the research but appeared to hold particular significance for them. Offering research participants and myself this flexibility, enabled them to give accounts of their experiences, which were heavily contextualized and detailed. This way, the interview was cathartic in that it allowed discussion of themes of participant's experiences which were important to them. The exploration of their lives enabled some of the women to voice their experiences of social inequalities, experienced as "catharsis" during the interview.

The women valued the presence of an empathetic listener, as well as an opportunity to share their experiences with the larger community. Several of the participants used phrases like "I wish you all the best that you will come up with a great paper that we can use," "I hope people appreciate how important this is," among others, to express their interview experience. Most of the women reported that taking part in the study had enabled them to systematically review their experiences and gain a better understanding of them. Some of the participants mentioned that they hoped the knowledge produced will spare other immigrants the frustrations they experienced.

As a young interviewer listening to the challenges my respondents face in integrating themselves into the labour market, I experienced anger and a deep empathy

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for what respondents had gone through. I discussed difficult and emotionally draining materials and processes with my supervisor in a mutual and supportive environment.

Reflexivity within Feminism

Feminist concerns with reflexivity stress situating the researcher and understanding her own lived experiences, as an integral part of the research process (Maynard and Purvis, 1994). Mies (1983:122) also argues that feminist researchers need to employ their own experiences as a starting point and a guide. These considerations have been particularly important in the context of this research. My own personal experiences as an international student from sub-Saharan Africa, guided me throughout the research process. Investing my subjectivity into the research enabled me to become emotionally engaged with the women and their stories, as aspects of their experiences resonated with my own.

I believe that my hybrid insider/outsider status prompted the women to be non-hesitant in speaking about their own experiences, although most of them did not know me at all before our first meeting. My background as a woman from sub-Saharan Africa gave me a partial shared understanding of the subject position of my respondent, but because I am neither married nor a landed immigrant as all the respondents were, this helped me in presenting myself as someone who genuinely wants to learn something from the respondents. The interactive nature of the research method encouraged openness and mutual disclosure (Reinharz, 1992:183). This created a more equal relationship between me and the respondents, and hence prompted the women to disclose more of themselves, which provided me with data that fully captured the depth and richness of their feelings and experiences.

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Even though these exchanges facilitated the generation of useful and important data, I was also cognizant of the effects my personal and theoretical assumptions can have on the research process. Since the research was not about "me," I made a conscious effort to limit the amount of information I disclosed to the women in order not to bias the data with my own personal experiences. I tried not to talk about my migration experiences unless the women themselves express the interest in hearing about them, this way I was able to glean my respondents' point of view.

My goal was to produce knowledge that validates and normalizes the respondents' experiences and provides them an opportunity to educate others by sharing their experiences as they understand them. Hence the theoretical framework for the study, complemented by the interview method, allowed me to interact with participants in such a way as to explore their views in their own words concerning their everyday lived experiences in the labour market.

The Research Sample

The ages of women who participated in this research were between 27 and 58 with a mean of 41 years. Fifteen (94 percent) out of the 16 women were married and 1 (6 percent) was a single mother. Three (19 percent) women did not have children. For the 13 (81 percent) women who did, the average number of children and those under 18 years of age were 3 and 2 respectively.

Of the 16 women, 7 (44 percent) worked full-time and 7 (44 percent) worked part-time. Two women (13 percent) did not work outside the home. Of the 15 women who have spouses, 9 worked full-time, 3 worked part-time and 3 were self employed. The average individual income for all 16 participants for the year 2005 from all sources was

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$26,000. One (6 percent) woman had income under $10,000 while 8 (50 percent) women had incomes between $10,000 and $20,000. Five (31 percent) women had incomes between $20,000 and $40,000 and 2 (13 percent) women had income between $60,000 and $80,000.

The average family income for the year 2005 of the 16 participants was $45,000. Three (19 percent) reported a family income of between $10,000 and $20,000 while 8 (50 percent) reported family incomes between $20,000 and $40,000. Three (19 percent) women reported family incomes between $40,000 and $60,000 whilst 2 (13 percent) women reported family income over $100,000.

The women and their spouses had high educational attainment. One (6 percent) had a high school diploma or less. Four (25 percent) women have had some college education. Three (19 percent) women have finished their undergraduate degree, 4 (25 percent) had one Master's degree, 1 (6 percent) had two Master's degrees, 2 (13 percent) had PhDs and one (6 percent) had two Master's degrees and a PhD. Their spouses' educational attainments were even higher. Of the 15 married women with spouses, none of the spouses had a high school or less education. Three had some college education. One had an undergraduate degree. Five had a Master's degree. Three had two Master's degrees and three had PhDs. Out of the 12 (75 percent) women who indicated that they have had some level of education or about to take some courses in Canada, 8 (67 percent) were asked to repeat the level where they left off in Africa whilst 4 (33 percent) were able to continue from the level where they left off in Africa.

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Detailed Profile of Immigrant Women in the Study

Anita, is a 57 year old married woman from Northern Africa who migrated under the skilled worker class with her husband and two children to Canada in 1997. She had once lived in Toronto where her husband was a student, but Halifax was her first place this time when she finally migrated to live in Canada. She is currently a citizen. She has a PhD and second Master's in a Canadian institution. She worked in her home country as a professor for 20 years before migrating. She has been working as a part-time professor on contract basis at an institution here in Halifax for seven years. Her husband has since moved to East Africa where he works as a political economist.

Brigitte, is a 44 year old married woman from Central Africa who migrated to Canada in 1985 to join her husband, who was an international student. Her husband changed his status from student to a permanent resident after his studies and she and her son were included as dependants. She is currently a citizen and has four children. She lived in Quebec for five years before moving to Halifax. She had a high school education and worked as a bank teller in her home country before migrating. She now has some college education in early childhood education in Canada and is currently working full-time as an early childhood educator. Her husband has a Master's degree and works as a teacher in a high school.

Christine, is a 34 year old married woman from East Africa who migrated independently to Canada in 2002 under a visitor's visa for a cultural exchange program. She was sponsored by her host family to change her status from a visitor to a permanent resident. She is married with one child. She lived in Vancouver for three years before moving to Halifax with her husband, who got accepted at a university to pursue a Master's program. She has a degree in psychology from her home country, where she also worked as a social worker for two years and a teacher for one year. She is currently working with ARAMAC as a kitchen help. Her husband works as a customer service representative with a call centre here in Halifax.

Elizabeth, is a 48 year old married woman from West Africa who migrated from her country of origin to Canada independently as a student in 2003. She later applied for permanent residence under the provincial nominee program and now has her husband and two children living with her in Halifax. She had a first degree in her home country and did a lot of work with non-governmental organizations, some of which she helped to set up and some she spearheaded in setting up. She is still in the process of acquiring her Master's degree and work alongside as a project coordinator for a non-profit organization here in Halifax. Her husband is self employed.

Esi, is a 43 year old married woman from West Africa who migrated to Canada under the skilled worker category with her husband and two children in 2004. She worked as a Principal research scientist in her home country and is now working in a contract job as a research scientist in Halifax. Throughout her work in the research institution in her country, she had the opportunity for training for her Master's and PhD in Canada,

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specifically in Halifax and Denmark respectively. She is currently living in Halifax as a permanent resident. Her husband has a master's degree and has his own private business.

Ezra, is a 39 year old disabled woman from West Africa who migrated to Canada independently as a visitor in 1998. She later filed for a refugee status and is now a permanent resident. She now has her husband and her three children living with her here in Halifax. She had a diploma in teaching from her home country and worked as a teacher for four years before migrating. She now works as a coat checker. Her husband works at a call centre as a customer service repetitive here in Halifax.

Gamey, is a 26 year old single mother from West Africa who migrated from her country of exile Guinea under the refugee resettlement program with her three children in 2005. Halifax is her first place to live in Canada. She completed grade nine and worked as a community health officer for three years before migrating. She is currently taking a certificate course in tourism at MISA, and working alongside as a house keeper.

Jessica, is a 41 year old married woman from West Africa who migrated to Canada in 1994 from Germany. She had a bachelor's degree in her home country and worked there as a teacher for two years. She joined her husband who came to pursue his PhD in Canada as an accompanying spouse and applied as co-applicant to her husband under the skilled worker category to change their status to permanent resident. She is currently a citizen and has two children. Halifax is her first place to live in Canada. She pursued a Master's degree in Canada and is currently working as a program coordinator for a not-for-profit organization in Halifax. Her husband is currently working outside Nova Scotia.

Joy, is a 40 year old married woman from Southern Africa who migrated to Canada independently as a student in 1992, and then later invited her husband and son to join her. She applied to change her status to a permanent resident after her studies and is currently a citizen. Halifax is her first place to live in Canada. She has a Master's degree in information Science and second master's degree in Business Administration. She worked as a public relations officer in her home country for 14 years and is currently working as a full time Management and Economics Librarian. Her husband has an MBA and is working as an accountant here in Halifax.

Mafutamboti, is a 30 year old married woman from East Africa who migrated from her country of origin to Canada under the skilled worker category in 2003 to join her husband who had already lived in Canada for three years. Halifax is her first place to live in Canada. She has no children although she plans to become a mother soon. She has a Master's degree from her home country, where she worked as a legal officer with a law firm for two years. She is taking some accreditation courses in law at a university in Halifax and hoping to practice her law career in Canada. She does that alongside working part-time as a customer service representative in a call centre. Her husband is pursuing an MA in computer science and works alongside as a computer programmer.

Mary, is a 40 year old married woman from Central Africa who migrated from her country of exile Kenya under the refugee resettlement program with her two elder sisters and her niece in 1997. Halifax is her first place to live. She is married to a white Canadian. She has no children. She had some college education and was working as a secretary in her father's business in her home country for 1year before the war started. She was made to repeat grade 11 and 12 in Canada but she currently has a college certificate from a Canadian institution and works as an Office Assistant for a family owned business. Her husband has some college education and works as a salesman.

Namu, is a 42 year old married woman from East Africa who migrated to Canada in 1994 from Mozambique where her husband was working. She migrated under the provincial nominee program (business class) with her husband and four children and is currently a citizen. She worked as a trained teacher in her country of origin for two years and six years in Mozambique respectively. Halifax is her first place to live in Canada, where she has been working for four years as an elementary school teacher. Her husband is a civil engineer by profession and is currently self-employed.

Peggy, is a 45 year old married woman from West Africa who migrated from her country of exile Ghana under the refugee resettlement program with her five children in 2004. Halifax is her first place to live in Canada. She stayed in Ghana for 11 years before migrating. She had some college education in her home country and worked as a secretary for six years in Ghana. She is currently working part-time as a patient attendant. Her husband is a mechanic by profession; he is presently taking ESL classes to upgrade his spoken English skills.

Priscilla, is a 58 year old married woman from West Africa who migrated independently to Canada with her two children in 1989 from USA where she lived with her husband to pursue her PhD. She was joined after six months by her husband and they are now citizens. Halifax is her first place to live in Canada. She had a first degree in her home country and worked there as a teacher for 16 years. She has been working as a full-time university professor here in Halifax for almost 16 years. Her husband has a PhD and works in an elementary school as a teacher here in Halifax.

Sally, is a 42 year old married woman from Northern Africa who migrated to Canada in 2005 from Saudi Arabia where she lived together with her husband. She has no children. She migrated under the skilled worker class and she is presently a permanent resident. She has a Bachelor's degree in English and a higher national diploma in Linguistics from her country of origin where she worked for 10 years as a teacher and five years in Saudi Arabia as human services coordinator. Halifax is her first place to live in Canada. Sally worked briefly at a part-time contract job here in Halifax but she had no job as at the time of the interview. Her husband is pursuing a second Master's degree and working alongside as a teaching assistant at a university here in Halifax.

Tinuke, is a 34 year old married woman from West Africa who migrated from to Canada under the skilled worker category with her husband and two children in 2005.

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Halifax is her first place to live in Canada. She was still in the process of obtaining her PhD in computer science when she migrated. She worked as a teacher in her home country for eight years and is currently working as a full-time customer service representative at a call centre. Her husband works as a male clerk with a company here in Halifax.

Chapter 3

THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL FACTORS AT PLAY IN THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT OF WOMEN FROM SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA TO CANADA

This chapter outlines and analyses the factors that compel women from sub-Saharan Africa to migrate to Canada (and more specifically, to Halifax, Nova Scotia), by focusing on three levels of analysis: macro, meso and micro factors that influence migration. First there are the "macro" factors: historical legacies and structural conditions in terms of colonialism, global capitalism as well as patriarchy (in Africa and in Canada). In addition there are the country specific and regional considerations: the sub-Saharan African political, economic and social situation, versus the Canadian (and Atlantic Canadian) economic, social and political situations that respectively contribute to various pushes and pulls. The "meso" level refers to families, migration chains and pre-existing communities, among others. On the "micro" level, I look at individual choices, circumstances, and context of the specific women starting from their own perspective. Whilst the macro and meso factors are often beyond the control of the women, at the micro level, the women themselves are able to assess options based on relative cost and benefits of remaining in the country of origin or moving to an alternative destination from their own perspective, and independently decide among them (some to a greater extent than others depending on a particular African family context). Women's experiences are then understood in the context of the broader "relations of ruling" and their intersections.

From the perspective of the feminist standpoint theory, the micro, meso and macro factors would typically be analysed in that respective order. However, in this case, for purposes of exposition, to set the context and frame the analysis, and in order for the

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"micro" factors to be understood in all their complexity, I will begin with the macro, move to the meso, and then elaborate upon the multiple facets of the micro. The argument made is that intersecting gender, race, and class, regulate and shape the migratory movement and settlement of immigrant women, in general, and those from sub-Saharan Africa to Canada specifically. Thus, intersecting gender, race and class relations position these women as a flexible and exploitable labour force which can be used in highly instrumental and expendable ways. Nonetheless, the research in this study underscores that women do have agency and negotiate these constraints in various ways.

Forces of Colonialism and Globalization – The "Macro" Level

The economic, social and political crises in many African countries over the last three decades have triggered a mass movement of people searching for more favourable opportunities. Whilst successive governments in different African countries cannot be exonerated from the deplorable state of the African continent due to poor governance, much of the struggle can be attributed to the inheritance of colonialism. The colonizing states turned Africa into a peripheral continent and unscrupulously exploited it to contribute to the development of metropolitan powers. For instance, until independence, those African colonies under British rule served as sources of raw material for the mother country (Cheru, 2002). Hence, what little infrastructure was laid, merely facilitated the expansion of trade routes whereby major sources of raw material would be channelled to the ports where the goods could then be shipped to Europe. Thus, production and consumption were not integrated within the colonies but rather through external trade (Konadu-Agyeman, 2000:471). The result of these exploitative activities was that when

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the colonialists finally pulled out of Africa, they left behind colonies which bore all the most important features of underdevelopment, including lack of any infrastructure. The heart of so many African problems, including conflicts waged by war-lords fighting over scarce resources among others, stem from these structural processes of capitalist exploitation. This has in fact, created the social structures that serve as conditions for migration from many nations of the South, sub-Saharan Africa in particular. As a result, the truth is that immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa do not arrive at the shores of Canada simply by accident. It is the linkage between colonialism and the opportunities it has created for the states of the North (as opposed to nations of the South), as well as the systemic changes that this has created, which has encouraged this migratory movement.

Modern day colonialism comes under a different guise, in the form of globalization,[5] where exploited cheap labour, and, the resources of economically disadvantaged countries are used for capital gains. Now, global inequality in terms of uneven distribution of economic and political power (and, as we shall see, along race, class and gender lines), has created "new 'spaces' in the global North to colonize and create new colonial subjects from the global South," to fill critical labour shortages (Folson, 2004:27). While the forces of globalization are quite powerful and often, beyond the control of individual states, some states do retain important powers. For example, the Canadian state still determines who would legitimately be entitled to enter and stay in Canada (Abu-Laban and Gabriel, 2003:297).

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[5] Globalization can be described as: the shift in the flows associated with people, ideas and goods from serving local markets to serving international markets as a result of worldwide interconnectedness (Abu-Laban and Gabriel, 2002:16).

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The sub-Saharan African Political and Economic Context

One result of the uneven process of economic development, culminating into poverty, income inequality and unemployment is the pressure towards out-migration in search of economic prosperity and stability (Stasiulis and Bakan, 2005:44). On average, sub-Saharan Africa's GDP per capita increased less than 1 percent between 1965 and 1985. A World Bank report in 2000 indicates that "income for nearly half of the continent's 760 million people averaged less than 65 US cents a day" (Cheru, 2002). Twenty five out of the thirty-two countries identified by the World Bank as highly indebted poor countries are also located in sub-Saharan Africa. This economic stagnation and other unfavourable conditions led to less employment opportunities, population growth and political instability, translating themselves into limited progress in real human terms especially for women. The above stated conditions, served as the driving force for the flight of many Africans to more developed nations. North America has been one of the favourite destinations for migrants from sub-Saharan Africa since the 1970s, with some working towards economic prosperity, whilst others seek political freedom (Wong, 2000:46).

All sixteen women in this study gave various reasons for their decision to migrate to Canada. The most recurring theme was that Canada is a peaceful country which promises prospects of better life for the women and their families. Five women cited political unrest in their home countries as the reason for migrating to Canada. Anita (who worked in her home country as a professor for 20 years before migrating), stated that she left her home country to join her husband in Canada, when she realized that life was becoming unbearable for her and her family due to political unrest in her home country. Her account is illustrative of how gendered the concept of migration is, giving men the

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leverage to migrate even in the face of political instability, whilst women are forced to stay behind because of their mothering and care giving roles in the home:

> Well personally regarding my family our reason for migrating was the political situation in Sudan. We had our, we still have our government who took over power through a *coup d'Etat*. It's a military regime and it's still a very fundamentalist society. And they started out by dismissing from work many of the civil servants and professional groups that did not share their views. I was not personally dismissed, but my husband was. He was very active in the union organization and so we tried to stay home as much as possible. They made life difficult for us; my husband could not find a job so eventually he had to leave the country. He left us behind until things cleared out. He happened to be able to come to Canada...he applied for us to join him. I waited until my elder daughter finished her high school so that she could prepare to enter university here.

Such unfavourable conditions (as depicted by Anita), inform the popular perception that immigrants, primarily from less resourced countries, are seekers of refuge whilst Canada, acting as the host country, is a benevolent receiver that rescues "Third World" nations from poverty and civil strife (Sharma, 2004:35; Gogia, 2004:117). This type of ideology narrowly conceives the discourse of migration, and amounts partly to a racialized construction of immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa as encroaching on "First World" nations, by obscuring the historical role that colonialism played in the production of migratory pattern of this particular group of women.

However, it is worthy of note that not all immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa come to Canada as displaced refugees fleeing war and political persecution. Even among those who come as refugees, are included not only the poor, but also highly educated professionals and entrepreneurs. In fact, the seven to eight thousand government sponsored refugees selected every year (the majority of whom are Africans) are assessed based on their ability to successfully establish themselves in Canada. Those who have suffered most will be passed over, in favour of those likely to suit the labour demands (Macklin, 2002:239; Abu-Laban and Gabriel, 2002:46). As evidenced by this research,

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apart from Gamey (a single mother of three) who had education up to grade school, the remaining four women (Anita, Mary, Ezra and Peggy) who cited war as their reason for migrating, all had more than high school education before migrating. Anita for example had a Master's degree and a PhD before migrating, and after migrating, acquired a second Master's degree to obtain a "Canadian education." All five women also were engaged in formal paid work or were independently employed, before migrating.

The Role of Immigration Policies

Immigration policies and regulations as well as the conditions for entry imposed by the Canadian government in organizing and shaping migration and migration outcomes, have ostensibly been "race-coded" and have reconfigured systems of gender, race and class hierarchies. The result of this interlocking hierarchical system has been the drive of highly educated immigrants from the global South to the global North in response to the labour and technical needs of the Canadian state (Gorgia, 2004:117).

With a move away from the more overt racial preference for migrants in the pre-1967 immigration policies that constructed Canada as a white settler nation, the point system was introduced into the Canadian immigration policy (Abu-Laban and Gabriel, 2003). The system allows immigrants to be selected based on more objective criteria. Although there are other classes: the refugee class (humanitarian based admission) and the family class (admission based on sponsorship from a close relative who is a Canadian or a permanent resident) by which immigrants are recruited, much more emphasis has been placed on prioritizing business personnel as well as highly educated, skilled immigrants, with the hope that such people will contribute economically, socially and

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culturally to the economic growth of Canada.

The Economic stream has three classes, with separate eligibility criteria: investors, entrepreneurs and self employed persons. This program seeks to attract experienced business people to Canada who will support the development of the Canadian economy. On the other hand, the Skilled Worker stream selects immigrants based on six selection factors and awards points for each of the selection factors: Education, Knowledge of English or French, Work Experience, Age, Arranged Employment and Adaptability. One may qualify to immigrate as a skilled worker to Canada only if his or her total score, beginning from September 18, 2003, is the same or higher than the 67% pass mark indicated in the table below, taking all the six factors into consideration.

Factor		Maximum points
1	Education	25
2	Language proficiency	24
3	Work experience	21
4	Age	10
5	Arranged employment	10
6	Adaptability	10
Total - Maximum		100
- Pass Mark		67

Six selection factors and pass mark (www.cic.gc.ca/English/Skilled)

Thus the objective of the point system has been to ensure that immigrants are able to become economically established in Canada as permanent residents. Both the federal program (that recruits immigrants to settle in any province in Canada) and the provincial nomination program (that encourages immigrants to settle in specific provinces to benefit the province's economy), use these six selection factors in the recruitment process.

In spite of the inception of the point system, it still has been argued that policies and undocumented practices "have been implemented to ensure that the notion of a

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professional in Canada is that of a white man" (Slade, 2004) because immigration officers exercise a great deal of discretionary power, based on their assumption of certain race stereotypes (Ng, 1999:92). Also, the "point system" is gendered when one considers, for example, the differential access to education for girls and boys, in many developing countries. It becomes predictable that fewer women than men will qualify to migrate under the "point system" because a disproportionate number of men will meet the educational requirements (Macklin, 2002:240; Abu-Laban and Gabriel, 2003).

In response to the high emphasis placed on recruiting skilled workers, a large number of immigrants enter Canada through this category. For instance, in 2002, skilled workers consisting of principal applicant (the main applicant who will enter the labour force as employee) and their dependents (a spouse or dependent child of the principal applicant) constituted 54% of all immigrants coming to Canada (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2002a). Even though the number of principal applicants who are women is not very large, the numbers are still significant. For example, a quarter of all principal applicants who entered Canada in 2002 under the skilled worker category were women (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2002b).

In spite of the fact that most of the women in the study are middle-class professionals from various socio-economic backgrounds, a higher percentage of them did not fill their applications as the principal applicants but rather as dependents on their husbands, who were the principal applicants. This is so because of how migration of skilled persons has been conceptualized as a male affair only, devaluing the skill of women in the process by rendering them dependent on the "skilled worker," who is considered to be the male breadwinner (Man, 2004). Defining women as dependent family members, therefore

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categorizes them "into a "family role" rather than a "market role" (Grieco and Boyd, 1998). This prevents them from being regarded as independent migrants. It can therefore be argued that skilled migration programs reproduce and structure gender inequality within families by rendering women dependent on men.

Beyond gender, class is a big consideration if one considers the cost involved. A search for the full cost of application under the skilled worker stream resulted in the following findings: $550 - non-refundable application fee, $490 - right of permanent residence fee and $10,168 - settlement funds (the amount of money in the name of the principal applicant, as proof that he/she can support himself for a period of six month). The approximate total amount involved is $11,208, excluding other costs involved in obtaining the following: criminal records check, medical examination, among other necessities (www.cic.gc.ca/English/Skilled). If migrating to Canada is this expensive and more available to those who have the money and the skill, then one would expect to see less migration for the economically disadvantaged individuals and their families and given pay differentials between men and women, less women may be able to migrate. The high selection criteria based on education and the monetary commitments involved in the process, also places skilled migration, out of reach of most Africans, especially women from sub-Saharan Africa, given the differential access of male and female education in sub-Saharan Africa (Dolphyne, 1991).

Out of the sixteen women interviewed, eleven (69%) migrated under the economic category (comprising one business class and ten skilled worker class). Only three of this number filled their applications as principal applicants, with the remaining eight, migrating to Canada as dependents. Four migrated as refugees whilst Christen

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(mentioned above) was accepted under the family sponsorship class. The disproportionate number of my research participants migrating as dependents helps reinstate an earlier claim that gender conceptions about the status and roles of women in the family have, directly or indirectly, influenced immigration policies. But it needs to be emphasized that just like the case of Asian migrant women in the Raghuram and Kofman's study (2004), the skills of the women in this study may also count in the skilled migration program which allows the "pooling of skills" (in terms of bringing together education and training of all members of the household in order to meet the migration requirement), in spite of the fact that they have to assume a dependent status. Their qualifications might have given their households the higher propensity to migrate since these qualifications added up in accruing the points needed to qualify. In reality, however, being accepted into Canada on the basis of qualification and skill did not necessarily mean that the skills of women are validated. Most of the women, after going through this stringent process, ended up in Canada finding it difficult, if not impossible, to find jobs in areas that utilized their skills. Anita, a PhD holder who immigrated as a dependent on her husband, indicated how gendered the application process is, in emphasizing women's traditional role as mothers and wives with no economic value, in spite of their education and hence their market value:

> Actually I noted in the application that my husband had noted me as homemaker.
> Now I don't know why, for me it was a new word. But I said thank God he didn't
> say housewife. But it seemed that he, actually I don't know why that was written on
> my paper, but it seemed it must have seemed the right thing to do at the time. I never
> knew why. But anyway they knew very well for he had also asked for my diplomas
> and certificates and so he had all those with him.

Esi and Sally (who before migrating, worked as a principal research Scientist for 20 years and a teacher and Human Services coordinator for a total of 15 years

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respectively), said they were living comfortably in their home countries; but a notion of sacrifice permeated their narratives on their decisions to accompany their spouses in migrating to Canada. These accounts indicate how intra-household relations of power, reconfigure systems of gender inequality to disrupt women's professional careers. A well-educated and professionally employed woman choosing not to join her husband to immigrate becomes less of an option, because the husband's migration, may promise an uncertain future in terms of financial support, for herself and her children (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994:59). Some of the research participants mentioned that, they were forced under such circumstance, to join their husbands to migrate. After migration, however, most of these women had to begin their education and careers afresh. In this instance, it is simply not possible to ensure gender equality of all participants.

Accessing Resources to Facilitate Migration – The "Meso" Level

Migration motivations can also be shaped within the context of patriarchal authority structures in a given society that serve to determine who can, and has the right to make the autonomous decision and access the resources to migrate (Grieco and Boyd, 1998). Thus, the independent decision to migrate has predominantly been a male preserve with most women entering First World Nations, as sponsored or dependent on a male, who is presumed to be the head of the family (Man, 2004). This was evident in the disproportionate number of respondents (eight, i.e. 50% of women) who mentioned that they migrated to Canada because they had to accompany their spouses or join those already living in Canada as students. As such, gender relations within families and sending societies can impact on women's ability to access the resources (both financial

and informational) needed to facilitate migration, and patriarchal structures may enhance male access to these resources rather than female access. Nevertheless, most women have found ways to circumvent these constraints. Not only gender but class also plays a part in determining the way women from sub-Saharan Africa respond to migration challenges and opportunities. A woman's ability to access the resources needed to embark on migration depends also on her educational background and financial standing as shown by this study.

Six out of the sixteen women indicated that they received some form of support, financial as well as informational, from various organizations in order to migrate. Three out of this number, received financial aid from the Canadian government under the refugee resettlement program, offered by the United Nations Humanitarian Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). The Canadian government's package for the women included their travel cost and resettlement funds in Canada for a period of one year. As echoed by Gamey (a single mother of three), these funds are not free, as some Canadians believe, which creates the stereotypical image that refugees from sub-Saharan Africa are encroaching on the resources of Canadians:

> Oh for the ticket and whatsoever, it is the Canadian government but after we arrive here we are responsible to pay the ticket back. Like I have to pay for me and my children, I have to pay $8,965. I have to pay for four of us.

The women who received this support from the Canadian government have to pay back the money when they are properly resettled in their various communities of destination.

Three other women received support from various institutions in Canada. Elizabeth (who obtained a scholarship from the institution where she is currently pursuing her Master's degree) and Joy (who came to Canada under Canadian International

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Development Agency (CIDA) scholarship as an international student) had scholarships to further their studies from some Canadian institutions. Christine (who currently works as a kitchen help with a food chain industry) on the other hand, received support from some organizers of an exchange program who recruit people from various countries to Canada and vice versa, to exchange cultural differences. Each of these offers had its own terms and conditions and those who default are made to reimburse the government. Joy, who decided to immigrate after she completed her education, had to pay the government back in full for the cost of her training.

The remaining ten women mentioned that it was a joint effort between themselves and a family member that helped them to generate the funds needed to embark on their journeys. Tinuke's application was sponsored by her sister who was already living in Canada. Apart from the women who migrated under the UNHCR program, both the women who filled their immigration applications independently and those who used immigration attorneys, all indicated that they had to show proof of resettlement funds as guarantee that they will not be a liability to the Canadian government upon their arrival in Canada. This therefore attests to a previous claim made in the introduction that it is not the poorest from Africa who migrate, but those with the resources and connections.

Individual Choices made by the Women Themselves – The "Micro" Level

Although the majority of the research participants migrated under policies designed to facilitate family reunification, the fact still remains that women also migrate independently, for a variety of complex reasons, such as economic considerations, in order to study or seek refuge. Three of the participants in the research migrated to Canada

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because they wanted to further their education. Tinuke (who was in the process of obtaining her PhD before migrating) for instance, wanted a western educational experience because of certain difficulties she was encountering with her supervisor, and in order to accomplish this goal, she decided to migrate with her family to Canada. On the other hand, Priscilla migrated to Canada with her children from the United States (where she had received her PhD) because she was offered a job in Canada. She was later joined by her husband. The reasons given by these women who migrated independently, debunk the notion that women migrate only as family followers or associational migrants for family reunification purposes. Women from sub-Saharan Africa themselves are key actors in negotiating the global arena and some of them act as the primary movers (principal applicants) in the migration process who take up challenges and transform them into opportunities, demonstrating their agency. It is therefore important for researchers to assess immigrant women based on their individual motivations to migrate. Limiting analyses of migration to skilled labour, typically premised the experiences of men, rather than women, with women being added on as accompanying spouses who, by extension, were seen as unskilled, with no economic value.

In providing their personal accounts of how participants felt leaving their individual countries of origin in Africa to Canada, Elizabeth and Namu showed signs of indifference because they had traveled abroad so many times before migrating, so according to them, they did not experience any emotional strain. The rest of the women expressed mixed feelings since some were even not sure of what they were getting into. To some, it was a moment of joy because they were reuniting with their spouses who had been away for so many years, and for others, it was a time of escape from war-torn countries. In spite of

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general expressions of excitement, all the remaining fourteen women used words like: "lonely, grieve, unpleasant," among others to indicate various levels of sadness in leaving friends and families behind to venture into an unknown destination. Brigitte expressed these mixed feelings and described her efforts in overcoming the hardship of crossing both the geographical and social boundaries. This is indicative of how immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa can put their lives on the line and leave everything that is familiar to them, often at considerable cost, and seek an uncertain future in highly developed countries such as Canada:

> I was happy to come meet my husband after three years of separation but I felt it a little bit that I'm leaving all my family behind. That was one of the pains, for me to go live in a country that I don't know anyone except my husband. I will say it was a big challenge for me but I did it because I say in life, we all kind of choose what we want to do. So it was my choice to come and live with my husband so that is why I did it.

Child care becomes the constant worry of immigrant mothers, whereas society directly or indirectly relieves fathers from such worries. When men migrate they are seen as fulfilling the familial obligation of the breadwinning role for their families but when women do so, they are seen as initiating separation from their family and children and ignoring their socially accepted roles as care givers. This, therefore, does not go without stigmatization and criticism in most African societies, which, not unlike many other societies, impose a sense of guilt upon migrant mothers. Two women who attempted to manage the demands of motherhood, interlaced with the traditional prescriptions for femininity, whilst looking for avenues to improve themselves through migration, mentioned that they were loath to leave those who they felt needed their help. Scripted notions of mothering and femininity made Priscilla's absence from her child and, by extension, leaving her country of origin behind, difficult to manage because she was so

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filled with expectations of caring for others. Her experience is indicative of the constraints imposed by patriarchal social norms and expectations of what *an African woman* is allowed and not allowed to do:

> Well when I was leaving I guess part of me was excited because I was going to further my education but part of me too was not because I was leaving my husband and my 3 year old child and I remember some people were asking why I was leaving my husband you know, to go abroad because I think some of them think that if I leave, somebody will take my husband. And I left my child home so I was worried and I was always checking my mails every time. Like sometimes I will check my mail about 3 times just to see if I had a mail even though I knew definitely well that the mail man had already been there and gone. I will say maybe he forgot so I will go and check because it's hard for a mother to leave a child like that. To deal with the absence and separation from my child, that was the most difficult part.

Since gender patterns do not remain static over time (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2004), such norms are also changing because women from sub-Saharan Africa are now getting more education. But the notion of "good wife and a responsible mother," still influences the behaviours and values of most African women (Dolphyne, 1991). Breaking out of the constraints imposed by the prevailing social norms, takes courage and determination and Priscilla weighed the cost against the benefits, and decided that she would be better off migrating independently, to pursue her career ambition, although it was a very painful experience initially.

Prior Settlement Knowledge – Moving to Canada

In order to determine whether participants had enough information about Canada to enable them to plan for their migration and resettlement, the question of participants' prior knowledge of Canada was asked because research (Wong, 2000; Kitson, 2004, Danso and Grant, 2000) has shown that most immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa

come to Canada with many expectations and, in the majority of cases, they are disappointed.

Two of the women indicated that they had extensive knowledge of Canada before migrating since they had once lived and studied in Canada. Eleven others indicated having some sort of knowledge of Canada through various means. Four of these women had spouses or relatives who were living in Canada so they gained such knowledge through the everyday interactions they had with their relatives. These women mentioned that they knew what to expect and were prepared to face the challenges. This leads me to argue that structural forces leading to global inequality tend to create conditions which force immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa to immigrate to richer states on, virtually, any terms. Thus, in spite of various limitations immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa face in the labour market, some have the impression that migration could offer them some opportunities to enrich their standard of living that may otherwise not be accessible to them if they were still living in their home countries. So out of necessity and often with ingenuity, these women have refused to be victims of circumstances, and behaved as active agents, empowering themselves to brace the odds of migration (Tastsoglou and Dobrowolsky, 2006).

Five of the research participants also said they had learnt about Canada basically from the geography they studied from school, as well as through the use of the internet and from the news media. Only two out of the eleven women mentioned that they had attended information sessions organized by Canadian institutions such as CIDA and the Canadian High Commission in their home countries. Joy, for instance, noted that the information sessions she had attended in her home country were useful to her, as they

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helped her to compare the standard of living in the various cities in Canada before making up her mind as to which city to settle in.

Three of the women, indicated that prior to migrating, they knew absolutely nothing about Canada. All the three women came to Canada through the UNCHR resettlement program. Mary (who migrated to Canada with her two elder sisters and her niece) indicates how refugees from Africa are ill-prepared in terms of information, prior to embarking on their migration:

> No I didn't have any information...I just knew that I was coming here so I didn't have anybody to tell me about Canada; so I just arrived hoping that everything would be like back home.

The absence of any extensive orientation or information session from the organizations responsible for recruiting refugees from sub-Saharan Africa has negative consequences on these women. They therefore face a crisis when they arrive in their various settlement destinations in Canada as a result of lack of useful information into resettlement issues. They migrate to Canada with great expectations because of how immigration consultants and the mass media portray Canada. When these expectations are far from met upon arrival, it adds to these women's already heavy burden of resettlement in an entirely different country. Gamey's words explain her ignorance:

> ... because when I was in Africa they say oh when you go you will find your car, your house and everything. You don't buy anything; you don't pay for house rent...And when I came, I went to the housing office the other day and I said "but where is my house?" And the woman said "you are going to pay house rent"...she said "you are going to rent a house, two bedrooms and you will be paying $600 every month."

Prior Settlement Knowledge - Moving to Halifax

In discussing their knowledge of Halifax, Nova Scotia, Jessica (who joined her husband as an accompanying spouse to pursue his studies), said she had learnt about the

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historical link between Nova Scotia and her country of origin from her geography class back in her country of origin.

Just like the women who had learnt about Canada through the news media, some of the research participants also came to Halifax, Nova Scotia with a lot of hope because of the information they received from immigrant recruiting agencies that try to market Nova Scotia abroad to entrepreneurs looking for various opportunities to invest in the province. Namu (who migrated under the Nova Scotia Provincial Nominee program, "business class") expressed her disappointment with the information she received at the Canadian High Commission in her home country. Her experiences proved to her that her earlier hopes were not justified:

> I realized things were completely different. Yes, they mentioned that it was easy like for me who was working. During the interviews when I mentioned I was teaching, they said "oh well that's good, you can even start up a business. You can open your own daycare," so those kinds of things from that kind of talk. We really could get that we had really been working well and living high standard in our own country and when we came here, we thought it was going to be really excelling because the opportunities are here, we didn't see it as a drawback migrating...Little did I know that I could not teach because of my qualifications. Things were not the same as what we expected.

Charged with the allegation that Atlantic Canadians are not creating opportunities to make immigrants feel part of the community, and that immigrants are relegated to the status of "Come from Away" (Chronicle Herald, April 28, 2004), I wanted to find out the reason why immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa in this study, chose Halifax as settlement destination, or why they ended up in the Atlantic province. The question "was Halifax your first place to live in Canada?" was asked to elicit respondents' responses. Apart from Brigitte and Christine who first settled in Quebec and Vancouver respectively, the rest of the women settled in Halifax when they first arrived in Canada. The most recurring theme for choosing Halifax as a preferred choice was that it is a

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quieter and smaller town to bring up children. Others mentioned safety considerations, lower cost of living and the quality of schools as their reasons for settling in Halifax.

When asked why Christine left Vancouver for Halifax, she responded:

Christine:
> my husband got accepted in Dalhousie for school so we had to move to join him.

Interviewer:
> What was his reason for choosing a school in Halifax and not in Vancouver?

Christine:
> It's because Halifax is the best place to go to school. Life in Vancouver is so fast and people take forever to finish school.

Just like Christine, three other women also mentioned their husband's education as their reasons for choosing to live in Halifax. Jessica stated that even though it was her husband's education that brought her to Halifax, because her sister and her nieces were already living in Halifax, she was happy to join them. Brigitte who was previously living in Quebec and Namu whose first destination was Halifax, mentioned that they chose to live in Halifax because their husbands were offered jobs here. Priscilla mentioned her job offer as her reason for staying in Halifax whilst three of the women mentioned having had their previous education in Halifax as their reasons for choosing to live in Halifax. Four of the women who came to Canada under the refugee resettlement program mentioned that they ended up in Halifax by chance because the decision rested with the Canadian government as to where a refugee is to be resettled. Since the majority of the research participants cited accompanying their husbands or other family members who have secured jobs or came to Halifax as refugees as their most important reason for moving to Nova Scotia, reinforces Tastsoglou and Miedema's claim that the choice of

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Halifax is often not a preferred one but dictated by the sponsor or the settlement program (2000:221).

Two of the women, on the other hand, chose to live in Halifax because of their own social networks or connections. They had relatives and friends who were already living in Halifax. Tinuke migrated to Halifax to be closer to her sister who she anticipated will assist her in childcare:

> Well one of the reasons is because my sister has been here and I thought
> if I get here, well looking for a job and everything, I will need child care,
> and since I'm not used to this place, it's better if I'm in, I'm somewhere
> I know somebody that can assist me, so that is why I came here.

The fact that only two women, including Jessica (named above), which is 19% of the total number of respondents, mentioned having relatives and friends already living in Halifax when they first arrived, underscores how these women lacked informal and organized support services in their settlement process, which has been argued to be crucial in providing immigrant women with insider knowledge on job and job hunting (MacDonald, 2003).

In order to find out more about efforts made in searching for jobs, participants were asked whether they had made any pre-arrangements to enable them to work in Halifax. With the exception of Priscilla who had a job offer before migrating, all the remaining fifteen women arrived in Canada before looking for paid work. The initial status as visitors for two of the women who were international students and two others as accompanying spouses to their husbands who were also international students, did not permit them to work when they arrived in Halifax. Brigitte points to the difficulties spouses of international students encounter in the labour market:

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[sighs] yeah when I came to Canada, with the status I had as a visitor, I was not allowed to work in Canada and if I could work, that work should be the type that any Canadian would not do and that is impossible because in Canada, most of the people are educated and they find all kinds of jobs...

The consequence of this policy on immigrant women and those from sub-Saharan Africa in particular is that "it causes de facto economic dependence on other family members until a working permit, if attainable, has been secured" (Grieco and Boyd, 1998: 20).

Even though the initial status as visitors for two of the women did not permit them to work, since the money they came with was dwindling fast, they needed what Brigitte termed a "survival job". Their precarious economic situations forced them to work "under the table" under very unfavourable conditions. Brigitte, a former bank teller who first joined her husband as a visiting spouse, blamed the national law which banned immigrant women who visit or accompany their husbands from working, as creating an economic situation in which she felt compelled to work for a woman who alluded her to a slave even though she was paying her less for the amount charged for a regular baby-sitting job:

It was really funny the way that, why she did want to hire me. Because her great grand-mother did have a slave that she was black and they did have really, she was really a good slave; that she was looking after the children and so she said that it really reminds her about that and she knew that most of the black people work so hard and they do a good job so that is why she wanted to hire me.

In spite of this, she still went ahead to work for this woman because her husband was a student and she was pregnant with her second baby so she needed money to support herself and her family. The options available to her were limited. With her status as a visitor, she was not entitled to publicly fund medical care and since she could not afford the cost of delivery, she was forced to work for this woman.

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Immigration policies such as the one mentioned above, create and reinforce some of the social factors that disempower some immigrant women and place them in a legally dependent and potentially disadvantaged position that makes them vulnerable to exploitation (Macklin, 2002; Greico and Boyd, 1998:19; Stasiulis and Abu-Laban, 2004:376). It leaves the interest of victims undefended when they choose to work illegally, because they become dependent on their employers. Given the lack of job opportunities for them, they may find their care and domestic services, as their only available commodities. Considering race and class in the context of such services, it frequently involves a middle class, or above, couple, typically white, who contract with a woman of colour, whose background, is working class in Canada. There is an inherent inequality in these respective positions that cannot easily be ignored. The vulnerability of the poor is exploited by those who are more advantaged, and blacks are the most affected. Employers will seek out "care and domestic services" from women of colour since for services such as these, the black skin colour should not matter to the white contractor. They turn to such women because their labour is cheaper and the labour force is more submissive given the immigrant woman's often precarious status, and given unequal gender, race and class relations.

The four women who received help through the Refugee resettlement program also spoke to the fact that they had no pre-arrangement for work since the program does not allow them to work full-time during the one year period that they are being helped to resettle in their new destination. On the other hand, those who migrated under the skilled worker class, either as principal applicants or dependents and the woman who migrated under family sponsorship, indicated that they were not scared about migrating since

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looking at the criteria for selection for successful integration, vis-à-vis their level of education; they believed that, given their skills and education, they would easily locate and obtain jobs. As it will be illustrated in the next chapter, although the women were able to locate jobs, the jobs they located, did not match their skills and educational levels.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed how the "macro" factors of the inheritance of colonialism and globalization, have left indelible changes on the social, economic and political landscape of the continent of Africa and how "meso-level" level considerations, such as family connections, have affected the "micro-level" migration decisions and behaviours of the immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa in this study. In particular, to meso-level factors, systems of gender relations within families in African and Canadian settings become critical considerations. The latter affects women's ability to access the resources (both financial and informational) to make the autonomous decision to migrate, and have an impact on the roles women play, and resources they have in Canada. Particular attention was paid to how the role of immigration policies which target skilled immigrants, have exacerbated the unequal distribution of power along the lines of gender, race and class for immigrant women in general and those from sub-Saharan Africa specifically. It was evident from the study that women from sub-Saharan Africa migrate independently for different reasons as spouses, students, or refugees. Those who come as spouses can also be skilled professionals. Therefore limiting the analysis of migration to formal recognition of skills in migration reinforces the stereotypical perception of skilled

migrants as males and that of women as primarily unskilled migrants, and in the process, situating women in a "family role" rather than a "market role."

NEGOTIATING THE CANADIAN LABOUR MARKET – THE DYNAMICS OF INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION

In this chapter, the perceptions and perspectives of immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa in accessing employment commensurate with their qualifications and experience are described and analyzed. Second, the barriers identified by the women themselves, upon reflecting on their experiences and on how they have been marginalized by such barriers, are examined. Third, the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in the labour market are detailed and assessed. Finally, what becomes apparent is that, even though structural inequality in the labour market marginalizes women from sub-Saharan Africa, they are not passive recipients of this kind of subordination. Through individual strategies, they have tried to re-draw the limits imposed by the Canadian state in order to overcome systematic barriers they encounter in the labour market. It must be noted that some of the issues in the various sections of this chapter, may seem repetitive because key issues reappear, but they are also experienced differently as the women move through different phases in the integration process.

Patterns of Incorporation into the Labour Market

Economic and labour market integration, or the ability to earn a living based on one's own work, especially work that is commensurate with one's qualifications and experience, have a great impact on how immigrant women adjust and make a home in Canada (Tastsoglou and Miedema, 2005). But studies (Man, 2004; Danso and Grant, 2000) have demonstrated that immigrant women and more so those from sub-Saharan Africa, have had their paid employment in Canada as a whole and in Nova Scotia

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specifically, complicated by gendered and racialized institutional processes. Particular reference is made to government policies and the action of "gatekeepers" - in the form of professional accreditation systems and employer's demand for Canadian work experience, as well as general market outcomes. Tastsoglou and Preston (2005), have pointed out that one of the clearest manifestation of racial discrimination is the lack of equity experienced by immigrants and in particular immigrant women of colour in the job markets. This makes it more likely for immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa in particular, to be economically and professionally marginalized in the labour force in Canada. Hence, it is difficult, if not impossible, for the women in this study to get jobs that are commensurate with their skills and qualifications.

Based on economic and demographic realities, Nova Scotia, like the rest of Canada, is experiencing a population decline and a potential shortage of labour in the future (Akbari and Mandale, 2005). Death rates in Nova Scotia now exceed birth rates and the only way to reverse this population decline is to attract immigrants who will work and keep communities thriving. But research indicates that Nova Scotia struggles in attracting immigrants and those who find their way into the province also leave towards Central and Western Canada because they do not find meaningful work (Akbari and Mandale, 2005). The Nova Scotia Office of Immigration has pointed out that while 95 percent of businesses in the Greater Halifax Region "think they need to hire more immigrants, the same 95 per cent have never done so" (Nova Scotia Office of Immigration, 2005:1).

Blacks, and by extension African Canadians, are a marginalized racialized group who often experience difficulties in integrating themselves into the Canadian labour

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market. They have faced racism, discrimination and exploitation in Canada, as a whole, and Nova Scotia, in particular, because of their historical social construction as slaves and Loyalists, thus reducing them to the margins of the Canadian society and disadvantaging them in every aspect of their lives (Clairmont, 1970; Pachai, 1997; Hill, 1993). Although these negative experiences affect both sexes, they hit African immigrant women the hardest as gender roles within the family and in the public sphere also, shape and constrain employment opportunities for women (Grieco and Boyd, 1998). As Danso and Grant put it, a three fold negative of being an immigrant, black, and a woman, exists for women from sub-Saharan Africa (2000:27). Stereotypical assumptions based on race, class and gender have thus created and maintained occupational segregation, to disproportionately consign immigrant women in general, and those from sub-Saharan Africa in particular, to part-time, unskilled, insecure and precarious jobs in the Canadian labour market.

Research indicates that immigrant women achieve an overall higher educational level than Canadian-born women because of immigration policies that tend to attract them and their spouses, but paradoxically, this is not reflected on entry to the labour market. For immigrant women who arrived between 1996 and 2001, 27.7 % among those between the ages of 25 to 44 had a bachelor's degree or a professional degree compared to 20.9% of all immigrant women and 17.3% of Canadian-born women (Tastsoglou and Miedema, 2005). The African Canadian immigrant community in Nova Scotia is also highly educated with over 80.2% and 33% of adult males and females, respectively, educated beyond high school. The median education for adult males and adult females is undergraduate degree (Nova Scotia Department of Education, 2004). Whilst immigrant

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women from Africa have high educational attainments, these achievements do not guarantee them jobs that come with such accomplishment in their new country (Danso and Grant, 2000); they are marginalized and systematically denied access to employment opportunities and existing government programs (Donkor, 2004). Tastsoglou and Miedema (2005) reveal how highly educated immigrant women are marginalized in the Canadian labour market and systematically coerced to accept menial jobs without the prospect of a better career. Social construction of race and gender identities, based on systematic racism intertwined with gender and class discrimination, have been identified as the major reasons for lack of integration in the labour market in Canada for immigrant women, especially those from sub-Saharan Africa (Nova Scotia Department of Education, 2004). Non-recognition of foreign credentials has caused systematic exclusion for immigrant women in the labour market, and provided the context of "choice" for most of them to re-train or raise children. This shows how racist discrimination, intertwined with gender roles, reduces opportunities for women in Halifax and Canada in general.

Human capital theories work on the assumption that the higher a person's educational attainment, the higher his or her earnings, but Salaff and Greve (2006) have indicated that educational attainment does not necessarily translate into professional or earnings status at commensurate levels when it comes to immigrant groups with credentials obtained outside Canada. Similarly, despite their higher than average levels of education, the immigrant women in this study have incomes far less than what would be expected because of gendered and racialized employment systems in Canada that discount educational credentials and work experience obtained in Africa, especially for women. The average family income after tax for the year 2004 reported by the 16

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participants in the study was $45,000, which falls below the $51,000 average family income recorded by the province of Nova Scotia in 2003 (The Daily, May 12, 2005). Therefore, Africans are under-represented in high status occupations and earn incomes lower than their Canadian-born counterparts, in spite of the fact that the majority of them have a considerably higher education. Most of the women in this study had been well educated and professionally employed in their countries of origin before migrating: two were professors; two elementary school teachers, two secretaries and the rest are: a research scientist, a community health officer, a bank teller, a social worker, a lawyer, and a public relations officer. Esi, for instance, indicated that she had worked with a research institution in her country of origin for 20 years. At the time of migrating, she was a principal research scientist; which was two steps away from becoming the director of the institute where she worked. Many of the respondents felt that they are experiencing a status decline in the type of jobs they currently hold, compared to what they were doing in their home countries. Although a majority of the women are currently employed in the labour market, their jobs are low paid, part-time, and insecure without any benefits.

In looking for paid work in Canada, fourteen of the women mentioned that it took between one month and two years with an average of six months, to locate their first job. Only two out of the fourteen women indicated that they were offered jobs commensurate with their qualifications when they first came to Halifax. The two worked as full-time university professors, and in talking about their individual experiences in finding work commensurate with their qualifications, these two women used the word "fortunate," to describe their situation. They are, thus, aware of the fact that it is difficult for immigrants, and especially women coming from sub-Saharan African, to be accepted for jobs that

correspond with their education and work experiences obtained outside of Canada. Anita recounts, how after two years of occupying a full time position as a professor, she became unemployed again when the two professors for whom she was filling in, returned from sabbatical. She was forced by this situation to take a second Master's degree in another area of study, in spite of the fact that she already had a PhD. This was done with the hope that, it would expand her scope in the job market.

> ...so eventually I applied and was accepted in a graduate program...where I prepared my MA. So that gave me further choice if you like in terms of interest and in terms of employment, which is what I have been able to do from time to time, when there is a gap in one of the courses...I can fill in and do the teaching.

For the twelve other women whose initial work did not meet their qualifications, racial differences were apparent in most of their accounts. Most of the women were fully cognizant of the ways in which gender, race and class were intertwined through institutionalized patterns of exclusion, to tag them as good only for certain jobs that Canadian women have themselves forsaken, under prevailing wages and working conditions. Most of them had tried other places to find paid work but the only place they could get the chance without much difficulty were menial jobs which did not require either Canadian education or experience. For instance, the women who looked for paid work with the cleaning and care agencies did not find much difficulty getting into such jobs due to gender stereotyping which defines them as givers of care and others as receivers. Many of the women had to work on average four to five temporary jobs before securing their current jobs, whilst some are still working menial jobs without any hope of getting jobs commensurate with their levels of education and experience, any time soon.

All the twelve women, who mentioned that, their initial jobs did not reflect their levels of education and experience, worked part-time. Two worked as research assistants,

five worked as cleaners, one worked as a baby-sitter, two worked as office clerks and two worked as customer service representatives at various call centres in Halifax. The women who migrated under the refugee resettlement program reported that they were forced to work part-time because the program does not allow more than twenty six (26) hours of work per week within their first year of arrival in Canada (while they are receiving resettlement allowance from the government). Research has shown that "those who work part-time earn less, even on an hourly basis, than those who work full time" (Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 2005:8) and most part-time jobs or contract positions are non-unionized and lack the same protection and benefits of regular full-time jobs. This has important implications for most immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa since, because of their unpaid reproductive role in the home, women are likely to work part-time or temporary jobs more than men. Given the extent to which the cost of living has increased, minimum wage no longer provides employees, even those working full-time, sufficient wages to sustain their basic needs and, therefore, the socio-economic disadvantage experienced by this group of immigrants, disrupting their aspirations of successful integration, is not hard to imagine.

Barriers to Labour Market Integration

The following are some of the systematic obstacles that the women in this study made explicit and understood as hindrances in their search for suitable employment in the Canadian labour market.

Non-recognition of Foreign Credentials and/or International Work Experience

Non-recognition of international work experience was one of the major challenges the women mentioned that they faced in getting a job in Halifax. The other significant challenge was foreign educational credentials. International work experience and foreign educational credentials were, in most cases, mentioned together. Despite their education and skills, immigrant women in this study, found it difficult to get employment corresponding to their previous employment and skill. Fourteen of the women (88%) (seven who had lived in Canada for less than five years and seven who had also lived in Canada for over five years) who sought paid employment along the lines of their education and experience mentioned that their foreign qualifications and previous work experience were not considered as commensurate by employers. In sum, it could be said that both women from sub-Saharan Africa who immigrated earlier, and more recent ones, have had problems with acceptance into the Canadian labour force because of racist social and historical constructions of Africans as inferior, which becomes part of the value assessment of their credentials and experience (Kunz, 2003). This suggests systematic discrimination on the part of employers towards immigrants and most especially women from sub-Saharan Africa. As Salaff and Greve (2006) have demonstrated in the case of Chinese immigrant women from mainland China, foreign degrees from third world nations are considered to be inadequate by employers, without having been submitted to any established evaluation standards. Hence, the economic value of the degree depends on the country awarding such degree, as well as the social characteristics of its holder (Li, 2001). Therefore, Canadian-born women are assumed to be capable, while immigrant women are assumed to be less capable and less intelligent, making it more difficult for them to be accepted as legitimate contenders for professional

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jobs, even though it is these same discounted credentials that were partly responsible for their entrance to Canada.

Immigrant women from sub-Saharan suffer greater and more direct discrimination than other immigrant groups because they are easily identifiable on the basis of their phonotypical characteristics (skin colour). Other immigrants are not, until they begin to speak (although, as we shall see, accent is also a problem for women in this study). The colour of their skin sets them apart from mainstream society and this is often accompanied by prejudicial feelings and sometimes, hostility.

When she first came to Halifax, Tinuke wrote up to about thirty job applications without even a single invitation for an interview. Her first invitation for an interview came after she had lived in Halifax for almost nine months. After the interview, she was told she actually came first but she could not be offered the job because they already had an internal candidate who is a white Canadian. Tinuke's experience provides a description of the racist and unjust structures in the Nova Scotian labour market, which is truly a barrier to employment for women from sub-Saharan Africa.

With prevalence of discrimination based on skin colour, it is highly unlikely that white employers will treat immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa, in the same manner as their white counterparts. Denying immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa the opportunity to work in areas that are commensurate with their qualifications, will mean that they are apt to be segregated into jobs which are part-time, low paid and dead end (Salaff and Greve, 2006:97). In fact, some respondents spoke to the fact that most of the time when they apply for jobs, they are either over qualified or they do not hear from employers at all. Esi pointed out that: "I had to try and sort of undervalue myself to sell

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myself" and by so doing, she had to leave out the highest level of her qualifications for certain jobs.

This research confirms the observation made by some researchers that when Blacks apply for a job with whites with the same qualification, forty percent of the times "the same employer on the same day would interview white Candidates and offer them the same position that was previously alleged to be non-existent" (Francis et al., cited in Danso and Grant, 2000). In fact, it has been observed that with credentials assessed based on value judgement, a job applicant with a white-sounding last name is more likely to receive a response from an employer than an applicant with an immigrant sounding last name (CBC News, November 02, 2005).

It is disappointing to learn that education counts in the point based system used in selecting immigrants but seems to count little amongst Canadian employers. When their foreign credentials and experiences are unrecognised, the immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa in this study needed to retrain. This means re-doing most of the education they already have, all over again. However, since most of these women bear much of family responsibility, the demands placed on them as caregivers as well as workers in the paid labour force, can translate into a "double day" syndrome (and a triple day with volunteer work added), since they have to work these simultaneously, limiting efforts to invest further in their human capital (Salaff and Greve, 2004; Grieco and Boyd, 1998). Recertification and retraining demand time and money and few immigrant women can afford these processes. Even the few who are better positioned to do so still find it difficult, as information regarding recertification is "often couched in vague language" (Man, 2004). This is coupled with a lack of re-accreditation mechanisms in Nova Scotia,

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because the services are not offered locally in Atlantic Canada. This, therefore, provides the context of "choice" for immigrant women: either to retrain or to raise children (Tastsoglou and Miedema, 2005). This indicates how racial discrimination works hand in a hand with stereotypical gender roles to deter some immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa from practicing their profession.

Although she has the intention of pursuing Canadian educational opportunities, when asked why she has not attempted to apply to schools as yet, Christine explained that:

> Because one, I wasn't financially stable. That is the highest barrier and recently I had a baby, and having a family here makes it difficult to go back to school because one, you have to think about who you gonna live your baby with and childcare is so expensive so those are the issues that are really hindering me from going back to school...because there is nobody to leave your baby with... I choose to stay with the baby than to leave the baby with somebody.

Namu, on the other hand, failed to look for a job initially because she was disappointed with the non-recognition of her foreign educational credentials in teaching, and her work as a teacher for over eight years in her home country. However, her husband's financial stability at the time, afforded her the opportunity to forgo wage work to repeat her teaching degree. At the same time, volunteering with her children's school on a part-time basis helped her to get some Canadian teaching and experience to help her obtain work in this field. Her statement brings out the class dynamics in how women experience oppression differently. Yet, this also brings into play gender dynamics too. For settling on this particular arrangement, Namu also became dependent on her husband financially:

> ... I didn't care less because like I said we were not struggling in terms of money. So that probably was a satisfying kind of thing. Because if it was to do with money, then there is no way you can go through this because he was the one paying the fees for me to go to the Mount, and he was the one driving me there or giving me money.

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Sally, who had worked for fifteen years as a teacher in her home country, became desperate when she realised that her teaching experience and qualifications were not recognized in Canada. Having learnt that re-certification meant she had to go through a minimum of two years retaining, she decided instead to volunteer with a counselling and support group. She also refused to take up a job as a patient attendant because she felt this position was significantly below her qualification levels. Sally now calls herself "a big job applier" because she is always searching on the internet and newspapers for job openings. She explained why she decided against re-training too:

> I am a teacher...I have students who are university graduates now and they are doing fine. I mean I did teach them and they are doing okay. They made it. So I can do it. But here you have to be, you should have bachelor of education in Canada before you start teaching. I was very discouraged. I just said "to go to university for two years?" I'm not feeling that yet to go to university to have B.E.D for two years, then I can, oh I don't want it. That is it. I will look for something else.

Accent and Language

Accent was another major theme that most of the women cited as a challenge in getting paid work. In deciding on the criteria for selection of immigrants, formal education and language proficiency have been determined as the two most important attributes for success in the Canadian economy by the federal government. As a result, up to 25 points out of the 67 pass mark are awarded for studies up to the level of PhD, and up to 24 points for proficiency in Canada's two official languages. Yet language competency still remains contested in everyday interactions when immigrants finally arrive on the shores of Canada (Haque, 2004). A study conducted among Blacks from sub-Saharan Africa indicated that the difference in the pace of speech, intonation and syntax, implies incompetence in the speaker to white employers (Creese and Kambere, 2003). Thus,

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accents may provide a rationale for lack of jobs commensurate with the level of qualification and experience of immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa, "without troubling the liberal discourse of equity" (Creese and Kambere, 2003). A majority of the women in this study reported that most of the times they were not called for interviews and the few times that they were called for interviews, they were not hired because of their accent. Jessica expressed her frustration with her experience of systematic discrimination against women from sub-Saharan Africa in the labour market in the following words:

> Most times I have been called to these interviews, when I was really trying to look for a job,...all they say is that you have an accent. So I found that that was a big barrier. People not really taking their time to listen to what you are saying. All they hear is your accent...and they don't even know what accent means. I learnt English in school and for me everybody has a different accent. Just like people who come from Newfoundland and those in Halifax, they speak with different accents. And for us who come from Africa, because we have all kinds of different mother tongues, like our languages are different so it affects the way we speak another language...

Creese and Kambere contend that accent discrimination against women from sub-Saharan Africa is rooted in the processes of racialization, since an African accent, cannot be separated from the skin colour of the African who speaks it (2003). According to Tastsoglou and Miedema, as far as accents go, racism is the real problem, because sound in itself does not present a functional problem; the treatment of a different sound as inferior is the issue (2005:18). Racializing "accent," therefore, shapes social interaction and locates immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa in a particular labour-market.

Another employment related issue concerned language skills. This was more consistent with participants from French speaking Africa than those from English speaking Africa. According to the study, women from English speaking sub-Saharan Africa found it easier to locate jobs in Halifax and greater proportion of these women

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were working within the first two months of arrival, compared to their francophone counterparts; although the jobs they located were not at a level commensurate with their education and experience. The only two women, who attributed their challenge in locating a job in Halifax to language, could only speak French at the time of their arrival. Mary feels that that as a French speaker, she has been discriminated against by employers because of her lack of fluency in the English language:

My experience was not good because when I came here in Canada, I was unable to speak English. Because of the problem of the language, I was not able to find a job because every time I go looking for a job, they interviewed me in English so that was very hard for me. I was speaking French...I did my studies in French. So I didn't do anything in English that is why I'm saying that it was hard for me to find a job. I had a hard time to find a job. I was working for agents so they would place me wherever they want. So most of the time I was working in the warehouse, yes...

This is highly problematic given that French is purported to be one of the two official languages needed for successful integration in Canada.

Lack of Information on Settlement Services

One other obstacle that some immigrant women in the study face in the process of integrating into the Canadian labour market is the lack of information on settlement services. There are various settlement services like Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA) and YMCA Newcomer Centre, which offer high quality services to immigrant women and their families. But if information about these services is not reaching the right audience, then there is still a lot of work to be done. Jessica admitted to the fact that she narrowed the scope of her job search when she first came. This is because she found herself within a small community from her home country with most of the women already working in the housekeeping department and since she joined this

community, that was the form of employment to which she was first introduced; but she was quick to add that she was not aware of any state sponsored organizations and services for newcomers:

My experience looking for job in Canada has been a very interesting one...first of all I must say it didn't take very long for me to start work when I came. There was a small community from my country and they were very knit community...all the ladies were working at a hotel so basically, since I just came and just integrated into that small community, I didn't really know a whole lot about what resources were out there. For example like MISA, whose office was just off the road...since some of these people that I knew were working in the house keeping department, that is what they told me about. And they said you can start from there and just keep looking.

Sally, Namu and Tinuke mentioned that writing style, in terms of putting together a resume and cover letter according to the style acceptable to Canadian employers, was the obstacle that they faced when they first came to Halifax. They were not aware of any employment services unit that offered programs and services to help newcomers. Therefore, a timely awareness of settlement institutions would have saved them some of their initial hassles.

Culturally Specific Gender Roles

Specific traits associated with immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa can also serve as an impediment to successful participation in the labour force. For instance, traditional gender roles within some African societies that cripple self confidence in some African women can be an issue. Coming from a highly patriarchal society, Mary reported that her cultural background, in part, accounted for the challenges she faced in getting paid work:

Another challenge I had was, my background, where I come from, especially women, we are shy people...That is what the culture asks us to do. That you don't speak looking at people in their eyes...They consider that as disrespectful [laughs] so then when I came here that was another thing because I was very, very shy, I speak very softly. Even now I still do that. But that is another challenge I had to over come...

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Disability

Immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa with disability find their chances of securing jobs commensurate with their level of education and qualification even further reduced. Their historical background as slaves, especially in Halifax, Nova Scotia, is already a handicap, coupled with a physical handicap tends out to be unfortunate situation for such women. Ezra, who worked as trained teacher in her country of origin, viewed her disability as a blind woman as the reason for her inability to get paid work commensurate with her level of education and experience. According to Ezra, employers did not want to take up the responsibility of employing her because a lot of technical aids like special computer programs for the blind, accessible doors and elevators are not put in place in the offices. In order to escape from such responsibilities, employers prefer to employ people who are sighted and who do not need any pre-arrangements done for them.

Negotiating Labour Market Integration Strategies

Coming to terms with the importance attached to Canadian education and its own political underpinnings in shaping the labour market, eight of the women repeated or upgraded their education, whereas three are considering going back to school to at least have some education in the Canadian context. Including Namu, who worked in an unpaid, volunteer job, all the women who retrained, worked part-time alongside their education. Two of the women considered going back to school as helpful because it offered them the opportunity to network with their classmates who were already working in the labour market. Peggy had to seek financial help from a friend in order to take the required courses, whilst Ezra who is disabled also had to do a lot of volunteer work just

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to assure herself that she is capable. Some other women said they had to settle for menial jobs as they navigated the bureaucracy of recertification. Jessica (who had a degree before migrating but ended up in the house keeping department as a room-attendant), embraced her situation as a stepping stone:

> First of all I had to go over the shock and I told my friends, you know what, you are out of your comfort zone, you are in a different country and you have to start from somewhere, you know. So I came up with this motto that you have to do what is available, until you get what you want. So I think that was what kept me going...

Tinuke, Sally and Namu spoke highly of the employment services offered by MISA. In particular, they noted that the job search sessions they attended were quite beneficial. They enabled them to learn about the Canadian way of putting together a portfolio, resume and cover letter which is different from how they had learnt to do it from their home countries. Mary also took proactive steps to interact more with people in order to increase her English vocabulary and to overcome her shyness as a result of her cultural up-bringing.

Experience at Current Workplace

After going through the initial stage of looking for and finding paid work, the next stage immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa tend to deal with is identity negotiation at their various places of work as employees. It must be acknowledged that that not all immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa work in unskilled occupations. They are well represented both in the highly skilled and unskilled occupations (Wong, 2000; Danso and Grant, 2000). However, recounting their work histories in the labour market, only six of the women indicated that they are presently working according to their qualifications with two working part-time whilst the other four work full time. Anita indicated that she

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sees herself as qualified just as any other professor in her standing but she feels she is not employed to her full capacity and her full needs because of her part-time and contractual work experience. On the other hand, the remaining ten (63%) of the women who indicated that they are not working in jobs reflective of their qualifications, only four of them mentioned that they work full time.

Most of the women in this category expressed dissatisfaction with their downward mobility in terms of work due to their migration. Gamey, a single mother, who works as a cleaner, indicated that although she could not get the opportunity to upgrade her level of education due to war outbreak in her home country, there, unlike here, she still had the opportunity to practice what she had studied in school in "reasonable" paid work opportunities:

> ...but I never did that when I was in Africa, I never cleaned but here I'm cleaning...
> Any little thing you learn there, they make you eat the profit of it...even if you stop
> in the 9th grade, like I was working and it was not a cleaning job. It is like an office
> job because I go on the field and do some health talk with the people, sensitize them
> about HIV...And everything was good to be frank. I was working with them and
> though I didn't go to school far, but the little I know, they made me do it...

Again, a majority of the women mentioned that they are forced to do the kind of paid work they find themselves doing because that is the only way they can survive. Ezra, who is looking at prospects of going back to school to get Canadian qualification, mentioned that she was trained as a teacher in her home country and not as a coat checker; therefore, she is doing this work because she needs money to support her family. However, this is not something she would like to be doing her entire life.

In talking about their experiences at their current places of work, some of the women mentioned that they are used to their working environment and to what Mafutamboti describes as "the attitude of customers towards people who are perceived to

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be different," and know how to deal with it now. Mafutamboti's experience is not an isolated case, since Nova Scotia's history has been about the exclusion of immigrants, especially Blacks (The Daily News, May 21, 2005). This history of giving the cold shoulder to immigrants who are perceived to "come from away", may have to be revisited and lessons drawn, if the province wants to attract more immigrants.

Some other respondents also mentioned having good relationships with their co-workers and customers. Some described their employers as "nice" in the sense that they commend them when they are performing well and identify areas in which they need to improve. Jessica, who had been on contract work, explained that even when her contract ended, her former employer tried very hard to link her up with some other institutions by forwarding her resume to these institutions; as she puts it, "even if they are pretending, they are very good at doing it." Most of the women acknowledged the fact that with a few exceptions, employers and co-workers try their best by being "nice" to them. Tinuke explains this further:

> Well I think that where I work presently, they embrace diversity and they encourage it
> but you know, you will still have some people that feel threatened about others
> coming into their culture. But I think the company on its own encourages diversity.
> They want to employ people from diverse backgrounds, not necessarily Canadians and
> I think that it has really helped. There are so many immigrants working there.

The women who work in the academic environment also described their experience positively. Joy, for instance, feels she is her own boss because her work is flexible; she picks and chooses what she wants to do. Namu had this to say:

> ... this is my fourth year. And I don't see, now that I've been there for four years
> I don't see anything thrown at me because maybe having gone through the school
> training to be a teacher just like any other person has made it a little bit different,
> in the way of who comes to really sort of make you feel inferior. My going to
> school probably took that away that I could also talk and make sense to somebody...

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Barriers at Current Workplace

The acceptance of the Black immigrant woman in the workplace, does not mean that she escapes from being stigmatized (Modibo, 2004). Immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa still encounter major obstacles in their attempt to integrate and settle in the Canadian labour force. The following are some of the systematic obstacles the immigrant women in the study, encountered after the initial challenge of finding a job at a level commensurate to their education:

Accent

Issues concerning accent continued to be a major theme when the women spoke about challenges and barriers at their current workplace. In their research on African immigrant women in Vancouver, Creese and Kambere observed that "African accent" is an insurmountable barrier that continues to persist beyond an initial period of settling in Canada and thus affects the quality of working life of African immigrant women in diverse ways (2003:7). This conclusion was confirmed by this study as most of the women see themselves as "outsiders within," who can not break in, no matter how hard they try. The majority of the women mentioned that they get frustrated in trying to explain themselves over and over again to employers as well as co-workers. Some of the women feel that most people, who say they do not understand them when they speak, do so deliberately. Priscilla believes that some people block her out even before they listen to her because of the colour of her skin. She cited some of the comments students write when they are evaluating her as "does she speak English at all?," which she finds a little bit rude because according to her, even if they do not understand her, they can say it in a

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nicer way. Mafutamboti and Tinuke, the two women who work as customer service representatives at a call centre, mentioned accent as their biggest barrier. Mafutamboti had this to say about her experience with accent:

> ...and when they call in and they hear that you have an African accent, they just think that you are stupid or you can't speak English and most of them the first thing they say is: "can I get a person who can speak English?"... so at first I was, I didn't like it. I was kind of depressed, but...

Working much harder to prove self

Immigrant women have become aware that a higher educational level may be a prerequisite necessary to enter the labour market, but not a sufficient one, as they are required to work harder than their Canadian counterparts (Tastsoglou and Miedema, 2005). Most of the women in this study stated that they feel pressured to do better than their peers at the workplace. According to them, they have to work extra hard to prove their worth where other people may not have to. Joy says: "when they see you are an African woman, they think you don't know what you are talking about." Esi illustrated this in the interview.

> You always get the impression that you are not totally accepted in that place and you know, there is pressure on you to do better than your peers; especially those who are Canadians. You always have the impression that you know, you are being assessed silently by the people you work with because maybe they don't really have any high expectations from you. In Canada people have low expectations of you if you are an African. All the exposure about news from Africa is always negative so it puts unnecessary pressure on you to over perform. As a woman too there is the pressure to excel because there is always the tendency for the men to bond because they think they have to control affairs and therefore women have to be tough.

According to some of the women, employers demand and give them a heavier work load than what is acceptable. Gamey had this encounter with her supervisor, who gave her extra work outside her usual routine, which also required the same amount of time

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she was using to do her usual work schedule. She did this extra work for more than three months without any pay increment. There was also another instance where, due to a snow storm forecast, Gamey was made to do a five hour job within a four hour period without being paid the extra hour. Peggy, who works with a care agency, also described her experience in the hospital setting where white nurses demand more than what is expected from black patient attendants.

Race and Racism

Internalized stereotypical assumptions based on black history in Canada, particularly Nova Scotia, make it quite difficult for a lot of white Nova Scotians to accept Africans in the paid work environment (Clairmont, 1970; Pachai, 1997; Hill, 1993). Namu, who works as a teacher, explained that she does not see this in her co-workers as much as she sees it in her students' parents. She feels some parents are surprised to see her, an African teacher, teaching their kids. According to her, the expression she reads on some of their faces suggests that parents may be thinking: "What has gone wrong?" Peggy (who works as a patient attendant) account also speaks to this fact:

> One time I went to one lady and she was like "why do they send me people from Africa, why do they want people from Africa to come to me? I don't want them, they don't speak English" and she was very furious and she was mad at the company for sending her somebody from Africa so it wasn't anything pleasant, I didn't like it.

Some respondents indicated that there has been discrimination against them in terms of promotion and getting the benefits that come with the paid work they do. Anita was surprised to learn from her encounter with other African women that no matter how high they go on the educational ladder, they will not necessarily be in the best position in terms of employment and earnings. Brigitte and Christine find problems with the

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"everybody can apply, you are all welcome" slogan, because they have been qualified in their places of work as the senior most internal candidates for various positions, where external candidates with less qualifications have been chosen over them. Brigitte, who worked with a certain daycare centre in Halifax for a period of eight years, expressed how discouraged she was when new employees were offered various opportunities to go for training, without her having even a single opportunity to enjoy this benefit even after all the time she had worked there. She mentioned that although she was next to the director of the centre in terms of education and experience, she was never allowed to act when the director was on leave. Five out of eleven of the respondents also feel there are no advancement opportunities at their current workplace without Canadian education. Ezra, who is a trained teacher from her country of origin, feels there is no way she can see herself moving from her current position as a coat checker, into the administrative side of her workplace because there is no hope for such arrangements.

Lack of Workplace Internships and Mentoring

Another obstacle faced by immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa in their bid to integrate themselves into the Canadian labour market is lack of mentorship at the work place. Priscilla's experience in the workplace has been quite stressful and lonely because of lack of mentorship. Without any programmes in place to properly orient immigrant women on the culture of the workplace, which she calls "the hidden curriculum," she had to learn through trial and error. She feels this made her waste a lot of time doing extra curricular activities, when in fact she could have been doing research work that would have earned her promotion, if she had had access to the same kind of information as her

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white colleagues.

Opportunities at Current Workplace

In as much as there are negative experiences, there are obviously positive experiences at some of the workplaces where immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa work as well. Eleven out of the sixteen women answered the question: "in your opinion, what are the opportunities at your workplace, of being an African and a woman?" Six of the women gave various reasons for why they feel there are opportunities open to them at their current workplace. Esi feels that having obtained her first Canadian work experience, if she performs her duties well, she will earn good references which will be a big stepping stone to her in her future job search. She explains her notion of Canadian experience:

> There is something called Canadian experience without which it is very difficult to get a job in this country. It is a social thing for them to know if you can work in Canada and fit into the society. It is just as important as having Canadian education. It put a lot of pluses on your C.V. It makes your C.V. look good.

Joy, Namu and Priscilla who work in the academic environment also find great opportunities at their various places of work. Assessing the situation from the mainstream, they mentioned that it depends on the individual to tap into whatever opportunities there are in the academic setting since promotion depends on the individual's level of education and the quality/quantity of work she is able to do. As an African, Priscilla is normally invited to give talks and do presentations in various classes about Africa and she uses that opportunity to educate her students. Joy does not dwell on or exploit only African opportunities but works hard to expand her scope to prove that she is like everybody else. Looking at it from the African perspective, she believes she enjoys great opportunities in the academic setting that her colleagues who are whites do

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not even have at all. This is so because according to her, there are a few people to choose from at her workplace who are Africans, and especially women. She is always the first contact person if there is any issue pertaining to Africa coming up. She feels being a minority offers great opportunities:

> So it's this kind of thing, just the same privilege that a white too is going to earn in Zimbabwe or in Ghana. There is always that white thing, you know, supremacy and different than everybody close to them. I feel that too here, and I tell them, you guys owe me. You just feel you were black. Just to fill my position. It's the same thing you know. If you are unique, it's different. So if you are unique and different, you grasp that opportunity.

But looking at this from a different perspective, this can also have negative implications for a professor like Joy, because such demands, in terms of too many extra curricular activities as a result of her uniqueness, can take away from her research and writing time.

Mafutamboti and Tinuke who work at a call centre as customer service representatives, also mentioned that there is an opportunity of growing with the company irrespective of race or gender because the company embraces diversity. Therefore being an African or a woman does not place them in any disadvantaged position because they compete just like any other employee. Tinuke mentioned that she was in her fifth month working for the company when she was promoted from general customer service to join the recruiting and retention team; a position she said even some white people who have worked with the company for more that 3 years, have not had the opportunity to occupy.

Response to Challenges/Opportunities

Six of the women mentioned that because of job insecurity, they avoid complaining about discrimination and poor working conditions at the workplace but rather, focus on their work and come out with results that will bring them the respect and accreditation that

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they deserve. Mary, whose first language is French, said she made a conscious effort to learn the English language and now it is working for her. The rest of the women used various phrases like "I just take it one day at a time," "you let them go for sometime and then you just give in your best and that allow them to work with you," "you have to go by it whether you like or not," among others to express their feelings. Christine (who works as kitchen help) explains why she has not challenged the situation where others with less experience and skill in her company have been chosen over her to occupy available positions for which she had applied:

> Because it will be useless to do that and it might even cost me my job because if they think you are challenging them, they wouldn't like you and they will end up, you know, not giving you more hours or making it even more harder for you to be there, that is why I just decide to keep quiet and move on.

Lingering concerns about victimization, as evident in Christine's statement, discourage some women from sub-Saharan Africa from discussing discriminatory practices by employers in the workplace. Nevertheless, these women have survived by keeping quiet, not out of ignorance, but out of the need to keep their job and make a living for themselves and their families. At the same time, choosing to participate in this research reflects another subtle and safe way of articulating their resistance and resilience. Therefore, this group of women cannot, in any way, be cast as victims.

What is more, the remaining ten women felt that silence neither secures safety nor promotes equality and therefore they have broken the silence by daring to disagree, and taking various actions to address the challenges they faced at their workplaces. Six of the women mentioned that they spoke up when they felt subjected to discrimination. Four out of the six women reported that this procedure helped in changing their individual situations for the better. Tinuke for instance mentioned that a supervisor she describes as

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racist, changed her attitude towards her after she complained to management. Brigitte and Gamey who had problems with pay equity also mentioned that nothing was done when they tried to raise this with their employers. Brigitte resigned when she realized that nothing was being done about her situation, but Gamey said she had no option than to stay on.

Jessica and Mafutamboti employed drastic measures to handle their individual situations. According to Jessica, one thing she learnt when she came to Canada was to stand up for herself, speak for herself and fight if she knows that somebody wants to take advantage of her. The following scenario explained her position:

> They will come and tell you to sign something whether you agree or not with what is written in it and I was able, brave enough to stand there and say to them, "I'm not signing it." And one day they took me to human resources and I was able to defend myself and tell them why I wouldn't sign it and that if that was going to cost me my job, then I was still not going to sign it. They were saying if I was on a floor working and there was a fire, I had to go and make sure that the guests are out...So I asked the question, so what if I'm in the cafeteria, this is downstairs, right, I'm not a fire fighter...I'm not going upstairs. I have a family at home. I'm running out of that building...We Africans when we see trouble, we run away. I don't see trouble and go and say oh how big is the fire...I wasn't going to do it and once I appended my signature, then I had to do it...I just wanted them to know that I know what I'm about.

Mafutamboti who works at a call centre, also challenges the negativity customers associate with her African accent:

> but right now I know how to deal with customers; like when they tell me "I want to speak to a person who speak English," I tell them I speak English too. When they say "you have an accent" I tell them you have an American accent, and I have an African accent so we both have accent...

Most of the women cited the settlement of their children as their reason for not considering moving outside the province in spite of the challenges they face. Some of the women remarked that they are enduring these challenges as a sacrifice for their children's educational progress. Anita's comment brings out the gendered nature of unpaid care

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giving, which forms the basis of the next chapter. Her husband has been out of the province for some time now pursuing his career, whilst she is forced to stay because of her unpaid care giving responsibilities:

> With all the qualifications I have, you'd ask why I didn't choose to go elsewhere. I think this was the trap because my girls had begun school here and one of them is at the university finishing now, and the young one was just beginning high school. So the option was to remain in Halifax as long as we could. By this time, I had come to know the community so much and loved the place that whenever people said you don't have to stay here, apply elsewhere...but I think it is just the love of Halifax that made me stick with it. But it hasn't been easy...he has been away from the turmoil of family life and everything. So in this mean time he has been able to produce two books on conflicts in Africa. So when I look at myself here, the summer comes and I have no benefits and nowhere to sit and write, because I need resources to publish. I haven't even been able to publish. But because he is at least away from the worries he can get that done.

African Nova Scotians and Immigrant Women from sub-Saharan Africa

In order to find out whether and how immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa are working together with Black Nova Scotians in representing the interest of all Blacks, I asked the question, "what has been your relationship with, and experience of the existing indigenous Black community in Nova Scotia?" Most of the participants expressed various sentiments concerning the relationship that exists between Black Nova Scotians and immigrants from sub-Saharan African, which has made organizing as a group to have a single voice, extremely difficult. Tastsoglou and Miedema (2003) have stated that diversity, deeply rooted in historical and cultural issues (see chapter one for details), can create difficulties in organizing and this was made evident in this study. Even though Black Nova Scotians and immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa share a similar history, organizing as a group for political resistance has not yet been achieved.

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Among the sixteen women interviewed, only Mary mentioned that she has not had any occasion to interact with a Black Nova Scotian and therefore she could not comment on the question. For the remaining fifteen women, most were of the view that there are a lot of similarities between the two groups, especially in relation to family life because both groups are family oriented. Namu feels skin colour is the most obvious commonality between the two groups: "we do face the same challenges, if I walk on the streets and there is one black woman from here on the street, we all look alike." As Black women who share similar history and experiences, one would expect that this commonality would bring these two groups together but as explicitly expressed by Audre Lorde, "connections between Black women are not automatic by virtue of our similarities, and the possibilities of genuine communication between us are not easily achieved" (1984:153). This became evident in this research, as internalized racism was found to have turned into competitive and antagonistic tendencies within the black community in Halifax, Nova Scotia, "rendering them susceptible to the usual divide-and-rule tactics of dominant groups and institutions" (Mensah, 2005:76). The research identified this sort of internal fraction as one area which presents obstacles to the successful integration of immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa into the Canadian labour market.

Eight women mentioned that their attempt to get closer to this community has yielded negative feedback. Most of the women in this group stated that they have had negative experiences from their encounters with Black Nova Scotians who they either meet at work, at functions or at workshops. According to Brigitte, there has been more resistance on the part of Black Nova Scotians towards people from sub-Saharan Africa. Namu mentioned that her perception of Black Nova Scotians is not usually a positive one

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because every time she sees them, there is this negative feeling where they are upset of how society perceive them and how Africans from the continent come and do not seem to see eye to eye with them. According to her, in as much as everything that hurts them, whether racism or sexism, applies to Africans from the continent, she cannot fit in their shoes when talking about slavery and what they have gone through because those from the continent have "learnt to take pain differently."

Most of the women also mentioned that Black Nova Scotians look at them as people who are coming to take their jobs. Jessica's story reflects what hooks (1990:92) describes as treating each other as adversaries in white settings:

> ...one thing that have been thrown at my face, a lot of times people think, I mean indigenous, "some" I'm not going to blanket all of them, they think immigrants come here and take their jobs from them...and I told one of them, "show me one indigenous Black Nova Scotian who has a degree and is cleaning rooms,"...what were you doing when I took your job from you? You know, I think it's not fair that they make that comment. And for me sometimes it's sad to say this but it's the truth, I have experienced more discrimination from African Nova Scotians than from white people, but thus just my personal experience...it was an African Nova Scotian that ever told me to take my black ass to Africa where I belong. That is a shame for something like that to come from a black person. You know I wouldn't have been surprised hearing that thing from a white, but it's coming from a black person. And no white person has ever said that to me.

These points of difference between Black Nova Scotians and immigrant from sub-Saharan Africa, are not simply arbitrary, but take on specific meaning as a result of global power inequalities. Because of global inequalities between Canada and Sub-Saharan African states, indigenous Blacks, born in Canada and with a long settlement history, see themselves as superior to immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa, and therefore, entitled to rights by virtue of their birth that more recent immigrants, who are seen as foreigners in Canada, do not have. At the same time, immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa are more educated, as a result of current Canadian immigration policies,

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and thus feel more empowered in terms of social standing than the indigenous blacks. These different social locations and shifting power relations between the two groups affect their relationship, rendering it to an extent antagonistic, constraining thereby the successful integration of immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa into the Canadian labour market.

In spite of these negative experiences, the remaining seven women acknowledged that their experiences with Black Nova Scotians have been positive. From the perspective of this group, Black Nova Scotians are nice people who try to help their African sisters and make them feel as if they belong. Some of the women said they have had the opportunity to serve on various committees and boards for Black Nova Scotians and have also been invited by them to attend various functions within their communities. Gamey says even when they see her on the streets, they say "hi" to her without them knowing who she is. Esi also mentioned that she has not encountered many of them, but the few that she knows are pleasant and sociable. Elizabeth considers herself lucky because according to her, her interaction with the African Nova Scotian community has yielded nothing but positive outcomes but she believes that lot of the barriers the two groups face as blacks, stem from the feeling of lack of trust:

> ...if we just take the trouble to look at the historicity of race and racism, and especially the way it has been played out within the African continent and all that...It has always been the question of giving people the impression that they are different and so should not trust one another, you know. That has always been the political choker of the colonizer. And if we are not careful, that is the same kind of card that is being played here...because it really doesn't matter whether you are from Africa or whether you are from Nova Scotia, when you are applying to that job in the mainstream, or when you are being faced with racism, it's not whether you are from Africa or you are an African Nova Scotia that matters; it is the fact that you are black. So this is the common ground.

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Most of the women expressed concern especially for the future of their children. The question which became clear was, if the two African groups (Black Nova Scotians and immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa) continue to see themselves as separate entities, how could the children of these two groups unite and aim at getting to positions where policies affecting blacks are made? As black women, seeing our marginality in a racist, sexist white Nova Scotia, as a site of connection (hooks, 1990), is crucial to our political struggle for resistance against discrimination based on race, class and gender. This suggests that both Nova Scotian Blacks and immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa have to unite and break through mainstream networks to enter political life.

Summary

In this chapter, I examined and discussed how racialized power relations are negotiated by women from sub-Saharan Africa in the Canadian labour market. I demonstrated how foreign education credentials, international work experience, accents, culturally specific gender roles, among other issues, serve as structural barriers in the labour market, and affect the everyday lives of women in the study. The difficulties of finding employment and working in the Canadian labour market mean that immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa are marginalized in the labour market and therefore become clustered in low paying occupations. The study makes it clear that despite the major obstacles encountered by the women, due to identity markers such as race, class and gender, and their intersections, they have not been passive victims in the Canadian labour market. Through exercising their agency, they have secured employment and responded to various employment situations. They have spoken up against and criticized racist

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structures and the Canadian labour market for its discriminatory practices. Some have also refused to take on jobs that they felt undermined their hard earned degrees and experiences. While this agency employed by the women may not dismantle every obstacle they encounter in the labour market, it can serve as a strong force to support continued and renewed equity and access to paid work, commensurate with their levels of education and experience. A stronger focus on connecting with African Nova Scotians, will go a long way to chisel away the edifice of racism and sexism in the workplace, and restructure a space where men and women, black and white, the poor and the affluent, can move in and out of the labour force, as full and equal participants.

UNPAID WORK AND IMMIGRANT WOMEN FROM SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: EXPERIENCING THE INTERSECTING OPPRESSIONS OF GENDER, RACE AND CLASS

In this chapter, I present the interlocking influence of gender, race and class as a framework for understanding how unpaid work in the home and community (Cossman, 2002; Tastsoglou and Miedema, 2003), shapes the lives of immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section examines unpaid work (domestic work that is generally performed by women, which is excluded from economic measurement) among immigrant women in the study, as well as how the women balance the challenges of unpaid and paid work in Canada (Waring, 1996; Fox, 1980; Armstrong and Armstrong, 1978; Tong, 1998). Again, the section explores the dialectical relationship between women's family roles and employment (i.e. unpaid labour of "love" and paid work), highlighting how immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa's unpaid labour and unequal position in the family, impact on their employment, resulting in lower pay rates and career advancement, which reinforces, in turn, their unequal position in the family. More specifically, the findings of this study indicate that the household serves as an arena for on-going struggle between African and Canadian cultural norms in terms of gender roles. The influence of these traditional African and Canadian gender roles, compound the challenges that women from sub-Saharan Africa face in the labour force.

The second section deals with unpaid work in the community and discusses volunteer work and its implications for immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa.

Particular attention is paid to the relationships and interaction between African Nova Scotian women and immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa. These two groups most clearly illustrate through their experiences and relationships, the links among race, class, and gender.

Women's Unpaid Work in the Home

Almost all African societies assign specific gender roles to boys and girls. Boys are trained to grow up and assume the role of the household head and the breadwinner who provides economically for the household. On the other hand, girls are socialized and trained with the notion that unpaid work in home is generally their responsibility (Dolphyne, 1991). The separation of the private and public spheres made possible by industrial capitalism, has meant an increased burden on women to bear unequal share of unpaid labour in the home, no matter their level of education or professional status. But these gender norms are even more traditional, more pervasive and more enduring for women from sub-Saharan Africa than those in Canada because of the "influence of customs and norms that may dictate differential roles, acceptable behaviours, rights, privileges, and life options for women and men" (Smith et al, 2003:41). However, it is worth noting that these patriarchal traditional African norms that disadvantage women, are also mediated by class differences. For instance, although generally, women, especially mothers, receive assistance from a wider kin in most African traditional settings, professional middle class women who work paid jobs (like most of the respondents in this research), are able to pay for the services of domestic workers. This support, with domestic activities and providing childcare, help women to bridge the

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public and private spheres and attain work and family goals simultaneously (Salaff and Greve, 2004:151). But upon migration, these important services diminish because the women cannot afford to pay for those services.[6]

A movement from a patriarchal African society (Dolphyne, 1991) to a more advanced capitalist state such as Canada (Cossman, 2002) has meant that relying solely on one income for subsistence in the household is not feasible. Thus, the economic situation where everything else with the exception of domestic labour, has to be paid for (Blumenfeld and Mann, 1980:273), has necessitated that both men and women must work in paid jobs whenever available, in order to support and maintain their families, rendering the breadwinner model of the African traditional societies an illusion (Dolphyne, 1991). Although the forces of capitalism (Fox, 1980:174) require immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa's equal financial contribution to household expenses, their male partners' efforts to preserve gender ideologies held prior to migration, make them unwilling to contribute equally to household chores, which in turn, makes integration harder for this group of women (Kitson, 2004). As research conducted by Kitson (2004) on gender relations among Ghanaian immigrants in metropolitan Toronto indicates, immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa continue to bear disproportionate share of the traditional domestic work (previously performed in Africa, at least with the help of other women) because of their adherence to African traditional gender roles and ideologies. This finding became evident in my own research as well, as respondents mentioned that although their male partners acknowledge the significance of their financial contribution to household

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[6] Although employing domestic help has been criticized by a number of feminist researchers on the grounds that privileged women, take advantage of the economic vulnerability of other women to oppress them (Schecter, 1998; Tong, 1998; Armstrong and Armstrong, 1978), it is beyond the scope of this project to delve into this topic but it is mentioned here as a descriptive reality.

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survival, at the same time, they decline to participate in household work because they see it as women's work. This culminates into a double day of labour for most respondents in this study. Patriarchy, as well as capitalism, has therefore joined forces to bind women from sub-Saharan Africa, to a marginalized position in the Canadian society.

The women in the study were asked to relate what a typical day is like for them. This was to give them the chance to think through and systematically recount the work, both paid and unpaid, that they do in the home from morning till evening. The narratives of respondents clearly indicate that much of the domestic work they perform is necessary, and is required on a daily basis. Interestingly enough, only three of the women were able to systematically give an account of what they do in a typical day without including specific things they do for the rest of the week, which they consider to be equally important. According to most of them, there is nothing like a typical day since each day has its own workload without any specific routine on a particular day, to be called a "typical day." With some respondents, their day off from paid work is used to do groceries and cooking for the entire week. They combine what they consider to be the less demanding work with their paid work. In this regard, Armstrong and Armstrong (1978:64) are right in saying that time off may be an illusion for women, as most women work a full day doing housework, even on weekends and holidays.

Most of the research participants start their paid work around 8:30 am and end at 4:00 pm except three of the women who work twelve hour days or night shifts. Priscilla, who is a professor, feels her paid work does not end at her workplace since she has to prepare for her class the next day. The women used phrases like "it's a big challenge," "it's too much," "I'm always busy," "it's crazy," among others to show how hectic each

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day is in what Brigitte calls "working as a mother, a wife and a working person." She described how on top of her paid work and unpaid household chores in the home, she has the added burden of sending and picking her children from various activities like soccer games, music lessons, cadet and drum lessons. Brigitte's experience demonstrates how women from sub-Saharan Africa are more likely to cease working or engage in part-time work, or work irregular schedules as a result of their disproportionate share of family and child-care responsibilities, unlike men, as well as white Canadian women from privileged class backgrounds (who can afford the cost of domestic helpers).

The majority of the women considered combining paid and unpaid work to be double work, which they find difficult to manage because they have to do both simultaneously. They work from the time they wake up till the time they go to bed and as a result, this leaves them with little or no time at all for socializing. Brigitte, who compared herself to her husband, reported that "usually when he comes he is tired, he goes to sleep or when he has time, he is at his work or in a meeting, or like he goes to visit people" but she has no time to engage in such activities. This pattern of gender inequality in terms of leisure time, suggests that women respond to increasing demands for their housework, by decreasing their leisure time, whereas housework has little or no effect on the leisure time of men. This reinforces Waring's (1996:92) findings that women work longer days than men, especially when leisure periods that men enjoy are taken into account.

The experience of women with dependent children and those without dependent children differed and the extent and nature of unpaid work, varied vis-à-vis the number and ages of children. However, most of the women interviewed mentioned that they

cannot count on their husbands to provide much assistance with child care because they believe that most African cultures do not train men to organise reproductive activities since it is seen as women's work. Therefore, men who endeavour to do it are ridiculed by the wider society as being "henpecked" (dominated by their wives) (Dolphyne, 1991:6). However, the women explained that it is possible to maintain that system back in Africa because, there, they receive help from live-in-relatives and domestic helpers. The mothers in the sample, including Jessica, commented on how they miss the services of domestic help:

> And when you come here and you have a child, it's one of the most difficult things that you have to deal with, especially if you had that experience back home: you have people around there, your mum, your aunties, everybody is gathering for this child. All you do is breast feed the child and that is almost about it. And when you come here and you have your first child, most African women I have spoken to, that is the time that you miss home most. Sometimes you really sit and cry because that child is all yours.

The collapse of this care support work after migration has more of a negative impact on women than men as well as women from privileged class and race backgrounds who can afford to pay for childcare arrangements and the services of domestic workers. Without substantial help, women, especially, mothers from sub-Saharan Africa, bear considerable household burdens as children do not only require care but they also increase the time spent doing household work. Every child means additional housework, and for employed mothers, negotiating the demands of the double day, has proven to be extremely difficult in that both paid and unpaid work, demand extensive labour (Armstrong and Armstrong, 1978:56; Waring 1996:97; Blumenfeld and Mann, 1980; Salaff and Greve, 2004; Raghuram and Kofman, 2004:97).

In Canada, child care services are made available through day care centres; but due to budget cuts to these services as part of the neo-liberal agenda of privatization, child

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care has become part of women's unpaid work due to their gender because society expects them to be primary care givers (Man, 2004:137). That means that although skilled immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa are encouraged to migrate based on the assumption that they will participate and contribute to the labour market, they have to withdraw from the labour market altogether or assume part-time positions because they have little or no access to well established and publicly funded childcare facilities (Raghuram and Kofman, 2004). This contributes to the growth of class and race based differences among women. Thus, women who are better situated, i.e., white and middle class, may well be able to make private arrangements with less privileged women, to allow them to continue to work their paid jobs full time, while others, more vulnerable because of their race and class backgrounds, are left with part-time work as the only means to reconcile paid work and child care in an environment where few can afford to forfeit paid employment.

Esi finds it difficult and financially challenging as a working mother with two dependent children. She has to rely on friends and pay babysitters to take care of especially her five year old daughter while she is at work. In a way, she feels this also affects her paid work because she gets tired and has to make up for lost hours. This buttresses Armstrong and Armstrong's (1978:75) point that women's "responsibilities at home, place restraints on the time and energy available for the paid employment." Gamey, who is a single mother with three children, feels she overworks herself in combining both her paid and unpaid domestic responsibilities. With no husband to assist her, she gets up around 06:00 am to prepare her children for school, get herself ready to go to school, come back home after school to prepare dinner for her children and then go

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to work and return after 10:00 pm. On days that she has assignments from school, she stays up until 02:00 am to go to bed. Jessica, with two children, also mentioned that this is tough for her because it appears to her that she works twenty four hours.

All these narratives confirm the words found in *Mothers Are Women* (1999), that "If time spent doing all unpaid work tasks was counted separately, a woman could well exceed twenty-four hours by noon." This seems to suggest that the only time these women obtain a break from working is when they are sleeping (Sparr, 1994:6-17). Namu considers taking care of children a full time work:

> When you go out there and you say you are tired everybody will wonder what you have been doing. You have been at home, you cannot tell them that "I've been holding the baby or I've been cleaning the house." You can't quantify that compared to the other one where you are there two weeks and the salary comes in. There, it looks like you are doing something for a service. You can't quantify the kind of domestic work one does.

All the women with older children acknowledged having solicited and received help from their older children when they are available. Elizabeth, who migrated with her two older children, remarked that it seems to her that she migrated at the appropriate time because she receives a lot of support from her children in terms of helping out with household chores. This would not be the case if they were younger, meaning, she would have to focus her attention on serving them. Those without children also mentioned that they cook once a week and store some of the cooked food for the rest of the week and because they have a smaller family size, it does not take much time to do their household chores even when they are combining it with paid work.

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Women's Unpaid Work across National Boundaries

Family in the African sense transcends the nuclear family that is more common in western societies, because the African family typically includes the extended family. Migration does not absolve sub-Saharan African women, just like most immigrant women from other cultures, from caring for extended family members (Wong, 2000; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). Being enmeshed in family and wider kin circles, women from sub-Saharan Africa, who are the only members of their families to have ever migrated, bear tremendous social, economic and psychological burdens. They are expected by their extended families, to ensure that kin on both sides are physically cared for (Wong, 2000:65).

Priscilla and Sally pointed out that after going through their exhausting day, they use most of their evenings to call or email family members back home to find out how they are faring. The rest of the women mentioned that they have extended family members in their home countries that make demands on their time and resources. The majority of the women used the phrase "African families are big" to indicate not only how large they are but also how family oriented Africans are. Brigitte's father has as many as thirty children with two women, including her mother. Apart from two of her sisters, and herself, who have migrated, all her siblings and her parents are in her home country and the demands on her are enormous. Gamey's statement illustrates how heavy the work of keeping transnational ties is, for women from sub-Saharan Africa. Gamey, a single mother of three, not only has she to take care of her children, but she also has to make an extraordinary effort to maintain her family ties in Africa:

> ...I have my relatives back home. They think when you come here it is heaven.
> They think you just come to pick money under a tree here and they don't

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know that here too money is really hard to get...They call me all the time...they are not doing anything. Just sitting down, calling me here everyday and night. They wake me up, they are the ones who put me to bed, and they are the ones who take me from bed everyday. I'm really; I don't really know what to do. Calling with money problems, money problems because they think when people are here, the money is just floating here. And they don't know the type of condition that is here...

The above excerpt is indicative of how women from sub-Saharan Africa juggle between meeting the competing demands of their immediate and extended families both in Canada and in Africa. These demands place greater financial responsibility on immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa, which make their participation in the labour force crucial. This may not be the same for women from white middle class backgrounds who may regard paid work as just another means to ease boredom (hooks, 1984).

Gender Dynamics within Households

Some scholars have argued that migration precipitates changes in traditional, patriarchal arrangements and enhances women's decision making powers in the household, especially in the situation where women have access to regular wages and contribute to household sustenance (Pessar, 2000; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1999; Sparr, 1994; Kibria, 1990). In her study of Dominican apparel workers, Pessar found that Dominican immigrant women's increased participation in paid work and their regular sources of income, gives them the leverage to renegotiate the terms of gender roles with respect to unpaid work, for a more equitable one. Thus the women's access to waged work, allows them to resist gender subordination in the home (Pessar, 2000:128). Similar to the Dominican immigrant women context, this study also indicates that immigrant women from sub-Saharan African's access to paid work and wages, has led some women to

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challenge patriarchal values that organize unpaid work along gender lines, for a more egalitarian option, although a few still adhere to patriarchal values.

In talking about responsibilities in the home in terms of gender roles, four of the women said they have not experienced any real changes as a result of migration and their access to paid work, because even though their culture encourages women to be solely responsible for household chores, there are no specific chores assigned to anybody in their households. They stated that they have always seen their husbands as equal partners and have always shared income and responsibilities with them without any kind of delineations along gender lines even when they were living in Africa; so whoever is available to do household chores, goes ahead and does it. Two of the women described their household as not "typical African" in relation to gender because their households do not operate along traditional family lines. Despite this assertion, most of them indicated that they do most of the cooking.

Mafutamboti's husband was living by himself in Canada before she got married and joined him in Canada. According to her, her husband was used to doing household chores which he does now without any complaints, and they both work paid jobs to contribute economically to the family. She added that although her husband claims he would have participated in household chores even if they were in Africa, she is still not sure because "it's not African for a man to be doing things like cleaning...that is more a woman thing." Sally explains the reason for this dynamics in her household:

> I mean it's just; we have been living this sort of western life style for sometime... Normally it's just the two of us. And so we do our stuff normally together...maybe because of education and of course also this sort of modern, you can call them that, families of people who live in, my husband lived in Europe for around 15 years so he is really different. And I mean he can help in the household work and everything.

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The remaining three women also attributed this kind of relation to education and also as a result of migration. Christine, who feels her husband is fine with household work arrangements, says that because a single income cannot maintain her family, she is engaged in paid work to support her husband financially, so they have to find ways of meeting each other half way if their relationship is to work.

These statements describe some of the research participants' powerful sense of how men's educational background and exposure to different life-styles and ideas as a result of migration, may have contributed to their greater involvement in household and domestic duties. But this is not always true in all circumstances. Hondagneu-Sotelo has found out that cultural ideals about gender and spousal relations that were held at the point of origin may influence the outcomes of the changing balance of power upon migration (1999:568). The findings in this research support this claim: respondents indicated overall that adherence to patriarchal ideologies cause tension over performance of household chores when both spouses are in the labour force full time.

Most of the women admitted that basically they do almost everything in terms of chores in the household because that is what their culture dictates and that is how they have been brought up. Mary, who is married to a white Canadian, pointed out that even though there are no assigned roles between her and her husband along gender lines, she still feels it is more in her nature than it is in her husband's nature to do domestic chores "The kitchen is not for my husband. But if he wants to come and help, that is good for me." Sally explains that household chores according to her culture have nothing to do with men, "it's always the role of a woman in my culture...and it's unquestionable."

Brigitte attributed her husband's inability to help with household chores to his royal up-

bringing:

> ...the tribe that he comes from, he is a prince. He comes from the descendents of that
> tribe "empire so and so" and so he used to be served by the slaves and by all the
> wives from the king. So he never did any chores or anything at home. Everything
> was done by the mother or the slaves, everything. So it's very hard for him to change
> that mentality and start work at home, it's very, very hard for him...

This confirms Musisi and Turrittin's (1995) assertion that the African man in a "tradition

of many [African] cultures" poses as "King of the castle and his wife and children, must

abide by his often arbitrary will." Joy emphasized that having her culture behind her as a

married woman from Africa, is really difficult for her. As a professional woman, she

contributes to the monetary aspect of household, and at the same time feels responsible

for the household chores. She feels there is no way around that unless she wants a

divorce. Priscilla, who works as a professor, had this to say:

Priscilla:
> Back home like the roles are set and you come home and you have to cook even
> though you are tired. The man will be reading and watching TV and here when you
> are tired, sometimes you feel like the man should take care of himself, but they
> expect you to serve them like you were doing at home and that is one of the things
> that I find difficult but I tell myself that when I signed my contract, I was home and
> that was the implication, so it okay, so I just do it.

Interviewer:
> And what is this contract?

Priscilla:
> The marriage contract [laughs] Yeah when I signed the marriage contract he was at
> home and so that was what I was doing so I will do what I can here. Sometimes you
> have to take your context and do what you think will bring peace to the marriage.

The above excerpt, challenges Armstrong and Armstrong's (1978:63) assertion that

women are often unaware of the job requirement when they sign the marriage contract.

Priscilla, like most other immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa, was fully aware of

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the job that goes with the marriage contract since the terms of the contract are spelt out categorically, more often than not, in most traditional African societies. Fortunately, or unfortunately, the dilemmas that confront most of these women in juggling multiple responsibilities without extra support in the advanced capitalist Canadian society make them aware of the inequalities embedded in this contract. Hence, most women tend to demand change in the norms and practices that subordinate them, but their demands are curbed by fear that they will disrupt the conjugal unit (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1999).

In spite of this lurking fear, most of the women in the study exhibited, in practice, more egalitarian gender relations in the household division of labour. The majority of the women admitted that in as much as they contribute economically to the up-keep of their households, their husbands still expected them to do all the household chores. Yet, they also indicated that they use their agency to negotiate ad hoc the terms of gender roles within the household. In an attempt to get their husbands more involved in household chores, some of the women said they are often accused by their husbands of imitating Canadian women which brings about a lot of conflicts. Jessica used her "fifty, fifty" concept, to explain her situation:

Jessica:
But then one thing that I think most African women go through here, one of the challenges is that when we were home most times our mothers take care of the house and everything and the men are the breadwinners, but when you come here because of the way this society is, both of you become breadwinners, yet they want you to take care of the domestic chores. But when it comes to the money, it's [fifty, fifty]. So we too, we are saying that when it comes to the domestic chores too, it should be [fifty, fifty] not [ninety, ten].

Interviewer:
And do you try to implement that in your home?

Jessica:
Sometimes it's a struggle, it ends up in a fight but you keep trying...And then one

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thing that is very common with African men here is that, oh as for women as soon as they come here they start behaving like Canadian women. I'm not behaving like a Canadian woman. I'm just behaving the way situations have forced me to behave...

The above excerpt is indicative of how participating in the labour market, serves as a basis for more egalitarian relationships within the household for some women in this study. As a result, the inability of these women to get access to paid work can have a significant influence on their bargaining power in the household. Having access to paid work may help some of the women to reshape the content of African gendered cultural norms, to reflect their own enhanced status by using some African traditional cultures with feminist principles. Thus, work for some women is more than making a wage; it increases these women's bargaining power in the family (Tastsoglou and Miedema, 2005).

While it may be argued that immigrant women may build for themselves new roles and new political spaces, it is also clear that some women may transfer patriarchal structures from their countries of origin and reaffirm them in their new homelands, leaving gender relations within such families essentially unchanged (Yeoh and Willis, 2000:156; Grieco and Boyd, 1998:26). Peggy, who envisions her employment as a temporary venture necessary until her husband finds paid work, admitted that African cultural norms do not permit her husband to engage in household duties like cooking and doing laundry. According to her, her pursuit of paid work occurs out of necessity given the family's present economic circumstances, but she will leave the paid work force when these circumstances change, and her husband finally starts working.

Peggy's narrative reflects how her involvement in paid work is more of an expression of vulnerability than an indication of her strength within the home and market place. This

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is because, the African traditional culture, to which she has been socialized, assumes that only one decision maker (a male), exists, whose preferences form the basis of the welfare of the household (Adam et al, 2003:34). Nevertheless, Peggy is able to maintain this kind of patriarchal ideology, because the help she receives from kin has not totally collapsed yet. She receives help from her two older daughters in going about her household chores, so maintaining this culture (unequal distribution of household labour), in the meantime, is not a problem for her. Nevertheless, as Kibria (1990) has stated, as long as women keep the fire of patriarchy burning, women's bargaining power and options will be weakened since women will continue to remain dependent on men.

Conflict between African and Canadian Cultures

When raising the issue of African cultures versus Canadian cultures in terms of gender roles, all the women were of the view that there is cultural conflict. Their narratives indicated that almost all African cultures assume that the economic and domestic responsibilities are for men and women respectively, but the majority of the African women felt it might be the vice versa in the dominant Canadian culture. Ezra, for instance, commented that there are no gender roles in Canadian families because she assumes there are what she calls "strict timetables" in the Canadian homes where responsibilities including child care are equally shared among couples. Findings on unpaid work among Canadian women, on the other hand, indicate that Ezra's concept of equal responsibilities in Canadian homes is more of a myth than reality. Taking the 1996 Census of Canada (the first Canadian census to report on unpaid work) into consideration, 17 percent of women reported spending between 30 to 59 hours a week on

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unpaid work in the home, with only 8 percent of men reporting spending the same number of hours on unpaid work (Statistics Canada, 1998). Research conducted by Ronald Colman also brings out the inequalities in terms of gender roles that exist in Nova Scotian homes. According to his research, Nova Scotian women spend almost three times as much time as men on cooking and washing dishes, and approximately seven times as much time as men on cleaning and doing laundry in the home (Colman, 1998). This kind of inequality was also reflected in Joy's accounts. According to her, in her day to day interactions with her Canadian friends, she realizes that white Canadian women also take on unequal share of domestic responsibility:

> It's just depends who the person is, whether he wants to do it or not. I have my
> friends here, we have the same problems. They are white, they come to work,
> they go home, and they are doing all the chores, you know what I mean. So it's
> gender roles. It's still binding because we are women.

Joy's statement gives a vivid picture of the similarities the Canadian and African societies have in terms of familial work norms that apply to women in both societies, but the fact still remains that these gendered norms are more entrenched in Africa than in Canada. This is so because, unlike Canada, where race and class privileges (Kitson, 2004), together with uniform family laws (Cossman, 2002:169), may not openly support patriarchal ideologies, most sub-Saharan African societies have traditional social and legal customary setups and norms to condition their members to accept patriarchal practices (Dolphyne, 1991:15). This helps me to emphasis the point that although all women, including Canadians and Africans, experience disadvantage based on their gender, not all women are oppressed equally; race, class and cultural difference, are the dividing lines. The cultural conflict impacts directly on my research participants because, in as much as most of the women see their relative position in Canada as a source of

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female empowerment and agency, their male counterparts, on the other hand, see them as challenging their male authority and this brings about a lot of conflict within African-Canadian households (Kitson, 2004).

Changes since Moving to Canada

Fourteen of the women stated that they feel they have changed since they moved to Canada. The most recurring theme was that they feel they have become more aware of their surroundings and have discovered more of their capacities than before, which makes them feel very strong. Jessica, who feels people just look at her and underestimate her because of her skin colour, asserted that she has learnt to be strong and stand up for herself in order for people not to take her for granted. Some mentioned that they have changed in their way of thinking about a lot of issues including what a woman can do beyond being a mother and a wife, and they attributed this change to migration. Christine feels she has become innovative in a way that challenges her own view about the nature of her contribution to both her family and the society in general. As stated by Raghuram and Kofman (2004:17), some women, through migration, are able to subvert patriarchal norms within their country of origin and this is the kind of change Tinuke has experienced. She now allows her husband to do household chores which according to her, she would not have allowed him to do, due to societal pressures, if they were still in her home country. Brigitte was also naive when she first immigrated to Canada, but now she can express her views on issues concerning her own household in such a way that she never could have done if she was still back in her home country:

> I feel now most strong and I can talk to my husband. He doesn't like me to challenge him in some of the things because at home it is just that what he says is what I have

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to do. But here, I have to tell him no. We can discuss the things together, we can do things together and that is a big change because it's something I was not able to do before, but now I can. I feel I have the right to say something; I have the right to really tell him what I feel and what I want but most of the time it brings conflict between us because he says that I don't respect him anymore because I challenge him in certain things, that my way of thinking is more Canadian than I used to be African...

Ezra, who is handicapped, compared her country of origin (which, according to her, limits opportunities for the disabled) to Canada. She highlighted the opportunities that Canadian society offers to the disabled, which she feels has helped her to gain back her self confidence. She looks forward to causing a great change in the lives of the disabled, if she ever returns to her country of origin in Africa.

Gamey and Sally on the other hand expressed negative changes they have noticed since they migrated. Gamey, who migrated under the refugee resettlement program, feels she has lost her independence by not being able to work enough hours to meet her own needs but instead, waits every month on the Canadian government to send her resettlement allowance. Sally also feels less confident in herself and in her qualifications because of the devaluation of her academic credentials and foreign work experience, which is making it difficult for her to get access to paid employment:

> Well maybe I just retain less confidence in myself and in my qualifications, I mean I have never in my whole life, never gone to an interview and not hired. Yes whenever I go to an interview, I am hired immediately. But here in Canada, no. I have been to so many interviews and I'm never hired; you have that feeling that you are less than others, it is just conveyed to you but when you compete with them, you always lose.

My research findings have shown that migration outcomes are highly uneven and shifting in quality, as migration can have either positive, negative or neutral outcomes on the status of female migrants (Kibria, 1990:22; Grieco and Boyd, 1998:25; Hongdagneu-Sotelo, 1999:600). In this sense, migration can result in improved status for some women in certain spheres and losses for others, or it can leave situations unchanged.

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Maintaining African Cultures

With the exception of Joy who admitted that she is confused as to what culture is, and therefore, believes she has her own culture, which is neither African nor Canadian, the rest of the women admitted that they strive to maintain their culture. Some participants mentioned preparing their ethnic foods and socializing with people from the same countries, as ways that they maintain a sense of their culture. The area most talked about is the teaching of local dialect/language and the African way of disciplining children. Even the women, who are not yet mothers, anticipate doing the same when they eventually start having children. With a very strong sense of attachment to their cultural roots, some of the women exemplified the extensive work and the constant struggle they go through, inculcating their culture into their children. According to Anita, the Canadian society tells her children one thing and she, having her African cultural values behind her, tells her children another thing:

> ...the older one has no problem with it but the younger one now understands more than she speaks and she has forgotten how to write the Arabic, our native language. And for me that was very hard to take in and I think I began to become very defensive. And she saw that as more control over her rather than my anxiousness and concern to keep our culture alive. But I think she broke away from that culture seeing it again as very controlling and preferred to be with her young Canadian friends. But maintaining the culture was extremely difficult.

The findings show that children of participants appear to have wholeheartedly embraced and adapted to the Canadian way of life as against the African way of life. On the other hand, their mothers seem to maintain a hybrid culture by focusing on what they consider to be the good aspects of the Canadian culture and the African culture, since according to them, there is no one culture that is perfect. Instilling this balance into

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children has been an issue of gender since it is one of the challenges women face in a biracial environment, as part of their unpaid labour in the private sphere (Tsolidis, 2003).

Women's Unpaid Work in the Community

Immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa contribute a disproportionate share of unpaid labour, not just in their private homes but in the community as well. While a growing number of immigrant women are part of the paid workforce in Canada, many also participate in their communities through formal volunteer activities (Baines, 2004).

Thirteen of the women have been involved in some form of volunteer work. Most of the women are involved or had been involved in more than one form of volunteer work. Joy mentioned that volunteer work is one aspect of culture she "grabbed" when she got to Canada. Sally, who is still finding it difficult getting access to paid employment, said volunteer work, is one form of work in which she has been most successful. Despite having to attend interviews, receiving acceptance in volunteer work has not been difficult.

With some of the women, their volunteer work arises from a desire to affiliate with people within their own ethnic communities (Tastsoglou and Miedema, 2003:206), and therefore they render various services such as welcoming and helping to integrate new immigrants and also getting connected with people within their own communities. Others, too, volunteered based on their religious affiliations by playing various roles in their own churches, such as Sunday school teachers and youth counsellors. Gamey is a leader of the welcoming committee of a group in her community and as part of her role,

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she welcomes new immigrants who come from her country. She gave an insight into what she does:

> I often go to the airport when someone is coming. I go to pick the person up. If the person is coming in the morning, that day I don't go to school. If the person is coming in the evening, I don't go to work. I have to wait and welcome the person from the airport, take the person to the hotel or sometimes take the person to the house where they will be. I have to be paying them regular visits...

Some of the women also volunteered with various service providing institutions such as daycare centres, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB), the Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA), among others, based on their individual interest. According to the women in this category, they did this to compensate for either their inability to find paid work or to use this avenue as a means of acquiring "Canadian work experience" so that they will be more marketable when looking for paid employment. Ezra who had difficulty in getting into paid employment because of her disability mentioned that volunteer work has been her main stronghold. Although it was not paid, she believes that it gave her the satisfaction of knowing that she could be useful and make a difference in the lives of other people. Brigitte and Namu who had the aspiration of working in Canada as an early childhood educator and a teacher respectively, also volunteered with their children's school in the hope that they would be able to acquire some Canadian experience. Namu, like several of the research participants, expressed how combining volunteer work in the name of Canadian experience, together with their responsibility for most of the unpaid traditional household labour, presents an enormous challenge, which makes integration into the labour market harder for this group of immigrant women:

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...So I said if I volunteer that will help me because that was when somebody told us that volunteering has a meaning here. So I volunteered at my kid's school, I was teaching...I did it because I wanted something on my resume and I knew that was in line with my field. Meanwhile I went to school taking two courses...

Only three of the women mentioned that their involvement in volunteer work has been as a result of their paid work, or school work, which mandated them to be involved in community activities. For example, Priscilla mentioned that service to the community is one of the requirements for promotion at her current workplace.

Among the few women who mentioned that they have not been involved in any volunteer work, two mentioned that they have not done so because they do not think the voluntary organizations are adequately campaigning for volunteers. The other two, including Christine, who has a baby, also mentioned that their present paid work schedules leave them with no time for volunteer work:

basically because of time because time is limited and also having a small child it's hard because there is nobody to leave your baby with and child care, childcare is expensive here so I choose to stay with the baby than leave the baby to pay somebody.

This again brings in the question of gender, race and class. In as much as it can be argued that volunteer work can be a way to improve employment prospects as this can serve as an avenue for immigrant women to gain Canadian work experience (Tastsoglou and Miedema, 2003), in a capitalist state like Canada where families have become increasingly dependent on the paid work of both parents, how many women, like Christine, can afford to do this work for free, on top of their unpaid domestic work where they hardly receive assistance from their male partners?

Volunteer work can impact paid work both positively and negatively. For most of the women, the experience was positive. Mary, who is from a francophone African country, explained that volunteering in activities organized by her church, offered her the

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opportunity to meet with and talk with more people to overcome her shyness due to her cultural background, and also to increase her vocabulary in the English language; this, in turn helped her in securing employment. Brigitte also said her volunteer work experience was good because that was the only way she could open herself up to better jobs. Volunteer work gave Joy good links to meet people and to network, and when she put her volunteer experience on her resume, her present employer felt she was a great asset. Volunteer work again helped four of the women in the sample in securing their paid jobs because according to three of them, their volunteer work turned into short term employment contracts with the very organizations for which they had volunteered. Sally, who benefited from such sort term employment contract, feels that the people she worked with are her only reference in Canada when applying for paid jobs. Unfortunately, since most of these short term contract jobs were located in the "multicultural industry," transferring such work experience into "mainstream" jobs, was not easy. As explained by Tastsoglou and Miedema (2000:82), this difficulty cannot be validated on the grounds of education, because on average, research participants, had high educational attainment.

Most of the women said they are careful in managing their time so that their voluntary work does not conflict with their paid employment or other family responsibilities. This group of women said they either engage in volunteer activities on their day off, or during their lunch break from paid work so it does not necessarily conflict with their paid work. On the other hand, Priscilla, whose children have dubbed her "Miss meetings" because she was involved in multiple voluntary organizations, said that this affected her promotion. That is, she spent so much time doing volunteer work

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instead of concentrating on activities in line with her paid work, that, this could have cost her the promotion she needs.

The lived realities of these research participants are indicative of the triple burden most women from sub-Saharan Africa bear. Because they are engaged in paid work, domestic work as well as volunteer work in the community, this according to Baines (2004:25), decreases the amount of energy these women have for other forms of organizing for resistance and political action which may have a broader social consequence. However, eleven of the women mentioned that they are members of ethno-cultural groups, representing their countries of origin. All the eleven respondents said they are also members of ADAM (African Diaspora Association of the Maritimes), a newly formed umbrella organization, with the mission of highlighting matters affecting African immigrants in Nova Scotia.

Summary

My analysis in this chapter identifies and describes general patterns of paid and unpaid work, performed by immigrant women in this study. For the most part, the chapter focused on unpaid work activities in the home, although there is a short section on volunteer work. It became evident in the discussion that unpaid work is crucial to understanding the paid work experiences of women from sub-Saharan Africa as women and men from Africa are not positioned equally. The absence of kin support for immigrant women intensifies the unpaid work that they undertake in the home. Again, neo-liberal policies and practices accompanied by cuts in social spending on child care, have made it difficult especially for women with children to fully participate in the labour

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force. Such inequalities cannot be taken for granted because the economic need from extended families at home, places an overwhelming additional pressure on immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa to join the labour force. For most of the women, participating in ethno-cultural organizations representing their political interest, is a symbolic way of conveying their realities against the patriarchal and capitalist forces that stand to maintain them in positions of subordination.

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Chapter 6

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The individual and multiple effects of gender, race and class on the labour market integration of immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa have been well established in this study. Findings indicate that immigrant selection policies and settlement practices that structure in turn the Canadian labour market have largely focused on men, rendering women's legal position dependent on a male breadwinner in the process. This has led to the economic marginalization of immigrant women in general, but more so, of those from sub-Saharan Africa in the Canadian labour market. The inequalities experienced by immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa in the Canadian labour market are not only related to immigrant selection and settlement policies, but are also related to much broader issues of social exclusion based on historical structures of gender and racial discrimination. This has been clearly the case in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where systematic discriminatory practices in employment are historical factors and present day realities that have determined the patterns of incorporation of immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa into the Canadian labour market. Labour market inequalities are attributed to racially discriminatory practices, characterized in our days by the following:

> ➢ devaluation of international educational credentials and work experience;

> ➢ the use of accent to deny employment;

> ➢ labour market segregation (race and gender);

> ➢ over-representation in low income jobs or underemployment of women from sub-Saharan Africa.

Historical racial and gender discrimination in employment, combined with neo-liberal restructuring and poor market conditions in Nova Scotia, have disproportionately consigned immigrant women, in general, and those from sub-Saharan Africa, specifically, to low paying, part-time, temporary and insecure employment, under poor working conditions. These conditions have led to the vulnerability and lower social economic status of most women from sub-Saharan Africa, forcing many in the process to look for and move to other settlement locations in search of better economic conditions. Again, unequal gender relations affected by patriarchal African cultures, extra burden of volunteer work, and antagonism (hostility) with Black Nova Scotians, make labour market integration extra harder for immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa.

Statistics tell us that 70% of immigrants who come to Nova Scotia end up leaving Nova Scotia because they do not feel welcome (Chronicle Herald, June 2005). But this has important implications for the economic life of Nova Scotia, a province which faces a serious problem of aging population, decreasing birth rate and an economy that is increasingly dependent on a highly skilled workforce (Akbari and Mandale, 2005). The prosperity of the economy will depend, to a large extent, on the ability to attract and retain new immigrants to Nova Scotia. Hence, it is worth stressing that immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa's presence have important implications for the life of the province. Contrary to the stereotypical image of Blacks that seems to persist in the province, most immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa are highly skilled and bring with them a host of talents, different perspective, linguistic diversity and perhaps a global view that may add value to the Atlantic province (Nova Scotia Department of Education, 2004).

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People who have the courage to leave their home countries are the kind of self starters that Nova Scotians can trust that they will be able to contribute from the moment they get here. Given a level playing field, immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa could make valuable social and economic contributions to this Atlantic province. But before this can be realized, more has to be done to keep them here. They need jobs and they need to feel welcome. Policies and support programs have to be guided by principles of fairness and inclusiveness and be responsive to the needs of, and structural barriers facing, immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa living in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Participants in this research expressed their frustration in the number of questionnaires that have gone out and how much has been said about Nova Scotia's vision of attracting immigrants. But they feel that every time the question comes up, rather than going to the old files to address the issue, the government starts something new. This leads them to conclude that the government is not genuinely concerned about immigrants and their issues. According to them, research per se is not bad, but the issues which keep coming up in these studies, are not so new and now is the time for action.

Based on these concerns, participants of this study, made the following helpful suggestions:

❖ Immigration consultants in sending countries should be instructed to provide realistic and accurate information about Canadian labour conditions to prospective immigrants. Too many immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa come with unrealistic expectations and hope for economic success, but their experiences have proved that many of their hopes are not realized.

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❖ Lack of available settlement information to immigrant women should be addressed. For example, a realistic guide to Nova Scotia labour market, its nature, strengths, and weaknesses, can be developed for Immigration officers and settlement organizations to distribute at airports as well as newcomer centres when new immigrants arrive. Information websites will equally be helpful.

❖ Better, more effective outreach to immigrant women specifically should be set up. Timely information sessions about available resources (settlement programs, employment workshops etc.) should be organized when new immigrants come into the province because most immigrant women come in and they do not even know where to turn to for help. Special efforts should be made to allow different groups of immigrant women to participate, in that the resources might be there, but if the information is not reaching the people, then it is not affecting the people that it is suppose to impact.

❖ Provision of services such as employment counselling, job search workshops and language classes should be gender-sensitive, and take into consideration time-lines created by women's care-giving responsibilities.

❖ The government should follow up by addressing immigrants' qualifications in a structured manner. Immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa urgently wish to work in their fields of study and therefore crucial assessment services

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to fast- track recertification of foreign educational credentials is needed. Bridging training programmes is another viable option.

❖ Immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa who arrive in Halifax with already arranged employment, or those working in their chosen careers, need systematic workplace internships and mentoring. They need the cultural orientation, support and accurate information to form realistic expectations of what they can hope to achieve in the workplace.

❖ Immigrant women, in general, and those from sub-Saharan Africa in particular, require more education on volunteer work, because some of them do not understand volunteer work and why they do it. This way it will not only enable them to avoid pitfalls but also understand and take advantage of the opportunities volunteer work offers, for example in terms of familiarizing themselves with a Canadian work environment.

❖ Placement opportunities should be setup such that they can evole into permanent positions with employers. This will provide immigrant women the chance to have hands on training with institutions in which they feel comfortable working. In turn, the money earned can gain them some leverage to pay for part-time courses. This way, they can attain Canadian experience and compete with other Canadians and aspire to obtain/access the jobs for which they are suitably qualified.

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❖ The government should increase the federal minimum wage and move towards providing a living wage.

❖ The government needs to acknowledge the fact that wage earners come in two genders and be prepared to provide working mothers with universally accessible day care system that will be supportive of economic equality and working mothers' well-being as parents.

❖ The provincial and federal government must agree to extend the amount of time refugees may be allowed to work in Nova Scotia during the resettlement period. This will help them earn some income to save towards their independence from settlement allowances. It will also help them to establish more roots in the community to boast their chances of gaining stronger ties to further increase their likelihood of settling in Nova Scotia.

Based on my analysis of secondary literature, and primary data gleaned from the women in my study, three priority issues: i) public education; ii) recognition of foreign educational credentials; and iii) visible minority women's involvement in broadly based politics need to be addressed if immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa are to have smooth integration into the labour market in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

First of all, I would recommend that public education and awareness campaigns be mounted in Halifax through the use of the media to raise awareness in communities about immigration and its benefits. This will dispel the myth that immigrants in general and

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those from sub-Saharan Africa in particular, take jobs from local workers or they end up on welfare and are a drain on the economy. Furthermore, public stereotypes in relation to Africa/Africans need to be dispelled. Elizabeth, one of the participants explained:

> "What most of them know about Africa is what they see in Tarzan Movies and some actually believe that we live on trees. They need to understand that there is a world outside of Nova Scotia, outside of Canada, and it is a world that is as valid as theirs."

Nova Scotians need this kind of education and need to understand that immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa might be here because they might have economic or political problems in their countries of origin, but this does not make them less capable of contributing to the good of the province and the country as a whole.

Some employers also continue to see their workforce as homogenous in spite of the multi-cultural make up of the Atlantic province; hence, policies and programs should be aimed at educating employers about the values of a diverse work force, which is necessary in reducing employment discrimination and barriers that limit access to professions. Diversity training must be organized for front-line workers who are the first points of contact for many immigrants and for employers to develop more inclusive and diverse workplaces. It is disturbing to learn that local employers choose not to hire immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa, irrespective of their educational background, because they have an accent. From the findings of this research, the problem immigrant women from sub-Saharan encounter is not about finding appropriate jobs, but it is about them not being hired for these positions. Canadians who are less qualified are hired over them, therefore employers need the education to understand that speaking with an accent does not mean that the person cannot communicate and write in English. An accent only means that the person knows more than one language. The government as an employer

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has to set the prime example by developing programs to hire immigrants as provincial government employees because there are so many skilled immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa who have experience in government work.

Again, there is the need for accelerated integration of immigrant women into the labour market. This requires assistance through a broad range of policies, including the recognition of foreign work experience, and more expedient recognition of foreign credentials. The most important factor for retraining immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa is removing barriers that limit access to employment. There is, therefore, the need for a systematic approach to overcome the structural barriers that immigrant women face in finding employment and settling within their chosen communities. The government needs to harmonize the certification that professional immigrant women, in general, and those from sub-Saharan Africa, in particular, come into the province with, and work as a partner with assessment services, professional associations, employers and training institutions to allow immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa to work in their chosen fields. It is unfortunate that none of the four Atlantic Provinces (Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island) have mandated credential assessment services to evaluate international educational qualifications. Immigrants have to travel all the way to Toronto, Montréal, Edmonton, Burnaby or Manitoba to receive such services (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2003a:18).

The immigrants' degrees from sub-Saharan Africa have to be recognized and be seen just as valid as those obtained by Canadian institutions. In fields like medicine, when you are a foreign graduate it is extremely difficult to gain entry to the profession. Regardless of assessments, you have to go through the gate-keeping mechanisms of the

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medical associations, the professional lobbying and gate-keeping bodies. But those are the details that would need to be worked through and dealt with if there were a framework which recognized the validity of the degrees in the first instance. A board would look into those accreditations, and evaluate them and recognize them and give immigrant women training in those areas that are culturally specific to Canada, so that within a short time, they would be able to practice in their professions. During the process of immigration, immigration officers currently take the time to check, for instance, criminal records; there could also be a way that the validity of degrees, in terms of the accreditation of the universities immigrants attended, could also be accessed. This has been done in Australia where immigrants are allowed to undergo a pre-immigration assessment of the qualifications they are bringing into the country and therefore skilled workers arrive in Australia already licensed and ready to work (Hagopian, 2003:5). This way, there could be something like a bridging program for six months, instead of professionals going back to school and starting from scratch in order to work in their chosen occupations.

The Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA) and the Nova Scotia Department of Education (2003) have studied, through a series of individual interviews and focus groups which involve newcomers and user groups, whether a credential assessment service located in Atlantic Canada would be of benefit to immigrants to the region. However, no positive outcome has been realized yet. An establishment of an accreditation body can be a move in the right direction to serve as a guide to help immigrant women seeking employment.

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Above all, immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa's best efforts in fighting the employment discrimination they face, is to get together with other African Nova Scotians and other Canadian women's groups because although the unemployment and underemployment issues affect women from sub-Saharan Africa the most, they also affect other women in the labour market. In uniting, they can have a decisive and unified voice.

African women's (including both immigrants and indigenous Blacks) involvement in unions and politics is a key factor to have a stronger lobbying voice in taking action to address the issues of underemployment and underpaid work which affects both groups. It can not be over stated that there are differences (See chapter five for details) but such differences should not prohibit the two groups from seeing connections that can bring them together in a united front. Thus, they can develop ways to promote their interest as a whole in order to create a critical mass and have an impact, instead of competing. Seeing and acknowledging both groups as one body is the only way blacks can have an identity and a voice because there is power in numbers. To stress how educated immigrant women in my sample understand the importance of political participation, eleven (69%) of them participated in various types of ethno-religious and ethno-cultural community organizations as well as advocacy-oriented community organizations.

The ethno-religious and ethno-cultural based community organizations, organize in order to address the interests of specific ethno-cultural groups, and most of these groups are opened to both genders. Some of the existing and active ethno-cultural groups this research identified, that represent the interest of contemporary African immigrants in Nova Scotia are: the Ethiopian Community Association, Nigerian Association of Nova

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Scotia, Sierra Leonean Association, Ghanaian Friendship Association, Liberian Association, Ugandan Association, Zimbabwean Association, Eritrean Association and the Sudan Association of Nova Scotia. African Nova Scotians, on the other hand, have ethno-cultural associations like the Black Loyalist Heritage Society, North End Community Health Association, and Watershed Association Development, representing their interest.

The advocacy-oriented community organizations, respond proactively to oppressive realities, and articulate concerns about racist and sexist discrimination into active resistance (Ralston, 2006:177). Although most of the organizations in this category are open to both African Nova Scotians and contemporary African immigrants, significant evidence exists to indicate that, each of these groups are dominated by either African Nova Scotians or contemporary African immigrants. Three of such groups identified are the United African Canadian Women's Association, the Health Association of African Canadians (HAAC) and the African Diaspora Association of the Maritimes (ADAM). Unlike the latter, which is mixed, the first two groups are gender sensitive and seek the interest of African Women, to promote an African community with equitable opportunities, in order to realize its full potential.

In conclusion, I will say that Canadians, overall, must learn to respect differences and enjoy the wealth of knowledge and insight that differences and diversity bring, as this leads to innovation. "Nova Scotians" in particular pride themselves on their hospitality and welcoming atmosphere. However, as this study attests, this is not the reality for many newcomers, especially for women from sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, the challenge that remains is for all Canadians to live up to the true meaning of democratic citizenship,

social justice, equity and fairness to Africans and immigrants in general, in order to retain newcomers.

For all women, there should be a more recognition of the double and triple day and a broader conception of the interface of work in the home, in the paid workforce and in the community. And for immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa in particular, barriers for access to employment must be removed to make them feel part of the community, since they have the capacity to make valuable social and economic contributions to the Atlantic region. This requires identifying deeply rooted, multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. It is my hope that this thesis represents a concrete step on such a path.

Appendix A: MAP & LIST OF THE (42) NATIONS OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA
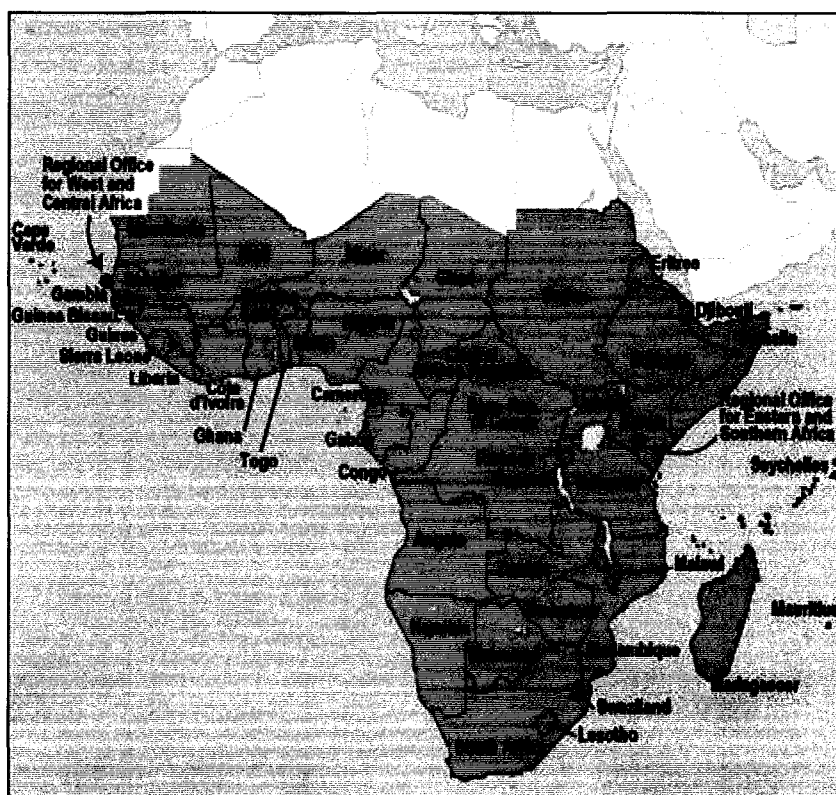
http://www.idrc.ca/uploads/user-S/11184166631Map_-_Africa_LRG.jpg

West Africa	Central Africa	East Africa
Benin	Democratic Republic of Congo	Kenya
Burkina Faso	Republic of Congo	Tanzania
Cameroon	Rwanda	Uganda
Chad	Central African Republic	Djibouti
Côte d'Ivoire	Burundi	Eritrea
Equatorial Guinea		Ethiopia
Gabon	**Southern Africa**	Somalia (Somaliland)
The Gambia	Angola	
Ghana	Botswana	**Northern Africa**
Guinea	Lesotho	Sudan
Guinea-Bissau	Malawi	
Liberia	Mozambique	
Mali	Namibia	
Mauritania	South Africa	
Niger	Swaziland	
Nigeria	Zambia	
Senegal	Zimbabwe	
Sierra Leone		
Togo		

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Appendix B: PROJECT INFORMATION

Labour Market Integration Experiences of Immigrant Women from Sub-Saharan Africa

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PROJECT INFORMATION

This research attempts to find out about the labour market integration experiences of immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa, as they go through resettlement in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Since labour market integration experiences differ for differential categories of immigrants, I am interested in hearing from sub-Saharan African immigrant women about their experiences in the labour market, and the impact such experiences have had on their resettlement in Halifax. The research will also explore the interface of work with family and with volunteer community involvement in the lives of these women.

In interviews with immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa, I will attempt to discover what helps or impedes their labour market integration and analyze the institutional structures constructing and perpetuating them as the "other" in Canadian society. Recommendations to ease the labour market integration experiences of immigrant women in general and those from sub-Saharan Africa in particular will be sought. The interview guide was designed based on informal conversations I have had with immigrant women as well as general information from the literature on immigrant women.

This research is in fulfilment of the thesis requirement for my M.A. degree in the Inter-university Women's Studies Program at Saint Mary's University. Although I will be the only one who will have access to the original tapes, transcripts and other identifying information, I will analyze the data gathered and discuss the research findings and recommendations with my supervisor, Dr. Evangelia Tastsoglou, and my thesis committee.

The research will follow the Ethical Guidelines of the Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board. These guidelines are based on the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans.*

The Researcher:

Amanda Topen, Women's Studies Program, Saint Mary's University, Halifax,
 Email: akuatopen@yahoo.com Tel: (902) 441-1649

Supervisor:

Dr. Evangelia Tastsoglou. Department of Sociology/Criminology, Saint Mary's University.
Email: evie.tastsoglou@smu.ca   Tel: (902) 420-5884

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Appendix C: <u>INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE</u>

Labour Market Integration Experiences of Immigrant Women from sub-Saharan Africa.

Researcher: Amanda Topen

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

(1) Project Description:

This research aims at finding out about the labour market integration experiences of immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa as they go about resettling in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The research will also explore the interface of paid work with family and paid work with volunteer activity in the lives of African women.

Through interviews with immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa, I will attempt to discover what helps or impedes their labour market integration and analyze the institutional structures constructing and perpetuating them as the "other" in the Canadian society. Recommendations to ease labour market integration of immigrant women in general and those from sub-Saharan Africa in particular will be sought.

(2) Invitation to Participate In Interviews with Immigrant Women from Sub-Saharan Africa:

I would like to invite you to participate in this research project exploring your experiences in the labour market as an immigrant woman from sub-Saharan Africa in Canada. I am an international student from Africa myself. The content of this interview will be strictly confidential and your identity will remain anonymous to anyone with the exception of the principal researcher. The aim of the interview is to understand your experiences in the labour market and the impact they had on your resettlement in Halifax. Since labour market integration is greatly affected by family circumstances and to an extent volunteer community involvement, I am also interested in hearing from you, about your experiences in handling both paid work and family as an African immigrant woman and about your community involvement.

Should you agree to take part in the study, you will be asked to fill out a socio-demographic information sheet and participate in an interview that will typically last about an hour. Your participation is completely voluntary. You may refuse to answer any particular question or withdraw from the study at any point without consequence. Your anonymity and the confidentiality of the information you provide will be ensured. It is anticipated that the social scientific community and government policy makers can use the results of the reseach to design services that will enable immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa to achieve more equitable economic and labour market integration. This will help address some of the problems facing African immigrant women at various levels in the Atlantic Region. Your co-operation will be very much appreciated.

THANK YOU.

Appendix D: <u>INFORMED CONSENT FORM</u>

Labour Market Integration Experiences of Immigrant Women from Sub-Saharan Africa

[Amanda Topen]

Women's Studies Program, Saint Mary's University
Halifax, NS B3N 2Z5
Phone #902-441-1649; e-mail address: akuatopen@yahoo.com

I would like to invite you to participate in this research project exploring your labour market integration experiences as an immigrant woman from sub-Saharan Africa in Canada. This research attempts to find out what helps or impedes the labour force participation of immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa, as they go through resettlement in Halifax. Since labour market integration experiences differ for differential categories of immigrants, I am interested in hearing from you as an African immigrant woman about your experiences in the labour force, and the impact they have had on your resettlement in Halifax. I will also be interested in hearing from you about your experiences as an African immigrant woman in handling paid work, family, and volunteer community involvement.

It is my hope that participation in the study will provide you with the opportunity to discuss your experiences in the paid labour force in a confidential and secure environment. Another benefit is that it will enable you to contribute to a better understanding of labour market integration experiences of immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa. On the other hand, there is a small risk involved in the discussion of experiences which you may find uncomfortable. You are assured that you need only give information that you feel comfortable with and which you feel is relevant to the aims of the research.

Your participation is completely voluntary and you may refuse to answer any particular question or withdraw from the study at any point without consequence. Your agreement or refusal to participate will in no way affect your ability to stay in Canada or have any other negative consequence. I am under the ethical obligation as a researcher to keep the information gathered from the interviews confidential and to protect your anonymity. Pseudonyms will be used to ensure that your real identity will remain anonymous and your place of work confidential. To further protect individual identities, this consent form will be sealed in an envelope and stored separately at the researcher's home. No contact lists will be maintained after the interviews are completed, with the exception of the names / addresses of participants who have requested a copy of the transcript or a summary of the research findings. These names will be kept on a separate list without any connection to the actual information provided during the interview.

Should you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to fill out a socio-demographic information sheet and participate in an interview that will typically last

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about an hour. The interview will take place in a location of your choosing at a time convenient to you. The semi-structured interviews will be tape-recorded with your permission and the tapes transcribed. Field notes, audio tapes and transcripts will be kept in a secured place in my room under lock and key and disposed of one year after defending my thesis. Once the thesis has been submitted and accepted, you will receive a summary of the findings, if you so request.

If you have any questions, please contact the interviewer, Amanda Topen, at telephone # 902-441-1649 or e-mail: akuatopen@yahoo.com.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Dr. John Young, Chair, Research Ethics Board at ethics@smu.ca. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Evangelia Tastsoglou at evie.tastsoglou@smu.ca or by telephone at (902) 420-5884 regarding any information about the research project.

By signing this consent form, you are indicating that you fully understand the above information and agree to participate in this study.

Participant's Signature: _____   **Date:** _____

Consent for audio-taping: _____   **Date:** _____

Researcher's Signature: _____   **Date:** _____

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Appendix E: <u>INTERVIEW QUESTIONS</u>

<u>LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION EXPERIENCES OF IMMMIGRANT WOMEN FROM SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA</u>

<u>PRE-MIGRATION</u>

1) What was your reason for migrating? Did you receive any support? *[Probe: Where? How?]* Did you have any prior knowledge of Canada before migrating? *[Probe: housing, working conditions etc.]* What was the source of this information? How did you feel leaving your country of origin in Africa?

<u>THE ACT OF MIGRATION</u>

2) Please tell me about your immigration application process. Were there any arrangements in place to enable you to work in Canada? Was Halifax your first place to live in Canada?

<u>POST-MIGRATION</u>

<u>Job search encounters</u>
3) Please tell me about your experience looking for work in Canada. How long did it take you to find your first job? What kind of work was it? How long did it take for you to get a job that is commensurate with your qualifications? What were the challenges you had to overcome in order to get a job? What did you do in order to overcome these challenges? How did the mainstream institutions respond to your employment needs? What has been your relationship with and experience of the existing indigenous Black community in Nova Scotia?

<u>Work place encounters</u>
4) Could you please tell me about your employment history, both in Canada and before (i.e. jobs you have held, where, for how long)? Are you presently working according to your qualifications? Please, tell me about your experience at your current workplace. In your opinion, what are the challenges / barriers and/or opportunities at the workplace of being an African woman? How have you responded / are you responding to them? What does your spouse do? Is your spouse working according to his qualifications?

<u>Home encounters</u>
5) Who does your family in Canada consist of? Do you have any other family? *[Probe: Who? Where?]* Can you relate to me what a typical day is like for you? Who does what chores in your household? Who has what kinds of responsibilities? Have you experienced any conflict between the African culture of your country of origin and the Canadian culture in terms of gender roles? Do you strive to maintain your culture? Do you feel you have changed in any way since you moved to Canada? If yes, in what way(s)?

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Voluntary Work in the Community
6) Have you ever been involved in any volunteer work in the community? Can you relate to me your experience with that voluntary service and how it affected your paid work?

Suggestions/Recommendations
7) Could you suggest ways you think could help integrate immigrant women in general and those from Sub-Saharan Africa specific into the labour market? Please feel free to make comments on issues which are important to you but were not covered by the questions.

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Appendix F: <u>CODING SCHEME</u>

LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION EXPERIENCES OF IMMMIGRANT WOMEN FROM SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

<u>Coding Scheme</u>

1) **Pre-Migration**   I. Reasons for migrating   II. Received any support (a. Where; b. How). III. Prior knowledge of Canada (a. housing; b. working conditions; c. other). IV. Source of information? V. feeling of leaving Africa

2) **The Act of Migration**   I. Immigration application process. II. Arrangements to enable you to work. III. Halifax - first place to live

3) **Post-Migration**

   A. *Job search encounters.* I. Experience looking for work. II. How long to find first job. III. Kind of work. IV. Job to commensurate with qualifications. V. Challenges to get a job. VI. How challenges were overcome. VII. Response from mainstream institutions.

   B. *Work place encounters.* I. Employment history, both in Canada and before (a. jobs you have held; b. where; c. for how long). II. Work according to qualifications. III. Experience at current workplace. IV. Challenges / barriers at the workplace. V. Opportunities at the workplace. VI. Response to opportunities/ challenges VII. What does your spouse do? VIII. Spouse work according to qualifications.

   C. *Home encounters.* I. Family in Canada. II. Any other family. (a. who; b. where). III. Typical day. IV. Who does what chores? V. Who has what responsibilities? VI. Experience in unpaid and paid work. VII. Conflict b/t African and Canadian culture VIII. Strive to maintain culture. IX. Changes since you moved to Canada.

   D. *Voluntary Work in the Community.* I. Involvement in volunteer work. II. Voluntary service affecting paid work? III. Experience with Black community. IV. Ways for Africans to come together.

   E. *Suggestions/Recommendations.* I. Integrate immigrant women into labour market. II. General comments.

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