CHAPTER ONE

BODIES AND BUREAUCRACIES

Moving to Ontario is one of the most important choices you will ever make. Ontario is a land of opportunity. It is a prosperous, democratic society built by the hard work of generations of immigrants. We hope that you will decide to make Ontario your new home. Our people are our greatest asset, and we welcome the talent and energy that newcomers bring to our province. In return, we offer opportunities and a quality of life that are second to none.—GLOBAL EXPERIENCE ONTARIO

Canada has the highest educated taxi drivers in the world.—INTERVIEW WITH FAISAL, president of a Pakistani-Canadian organization for businessmen

Khudija had been called to the front of the class by June, the instructor, and was told to sit as if she were at a job interview. June looked at her and said, “Always dress in plain clothes and in plain colors,” which Khudija was wearing. An audience member called out that she needed to be more relaxed. Khudija shifted in her seat. June began calling out various instructions in the style of a drill sergeant: “Never put your bag on the table because it’s not your table—put it on the floor, it’s a sign of respect.” Khudija fidgeted with her bag before putting it at her feet. June continued focusing on what Khudija was doing wrong. “It’s alright to put your arm on the table, but don’t lean on it; there is no right or wrong, but just don’t be too forward; women can cross their legs, but don’t switch crossing them too often, and don’t tap your feet; be on time, get there early, take off your jacket because your appearance is very important; prepare your language, do not translate in your head; use simple sentences; have a firm handshake; change your
name if it’s hard to pronounce; be aware of nonverbal behavior; don’t wear bright colors, and keep your traditional dress at home.” Another member of the class called out, “It’s like being a robot.”

When class was dismissed, the participants shuffled out for lunch, but Khudija stayed and began eating her sandwich at the table. I didn’t want to intrude, so I gathered my belongings and started to leave. “You know what they need to do?” she said suddenly. I turned around and asked, “No, what?” “The government needs to tell us we need to go through cycles [meaning that assimilation or integration takes time], and embassies back home should guide us better. I came to Canada because Canada said they wanted engineers. Here I am without a job.” Despite the workshop’s advertised focus of helping foreign-trained engineers find jobs, none of the instruction had considered the role of professional regulating bodies, how to get one’s foreign credentials recognized, or even how to retrain for a different job in engineering. As Khudija and I learned that day, finding work meant learning what to wear and how to move one’s body. These seminar instructors seem to imply that bodies can be rehabilitated—albeit piecemeal—by removing the shalwar cameeze, taking a shower, rehearsing an effective seven-second first impression, and making eye contact.

Khudija seemed small in that big room. The classroom had all the referents of institutional architecture and style—a brownish façade, polyester and metal chairs, large functional tables, and a blackboard. Khudija was in her thirties and had migrated alone from Karachi under the skilled-worker class. She had been living with her parents in Pakistan and was unsure if she wanted to get married; instead, she chose a life abroad as a potential escape from their expectations. But life in Toronto was not what she had expected. Despite being a professional engineer, she was working full-time at a large theme park on the border of the Greater Toronto area selling fast food. Further demoralizing to her was that the government had required her to prove she had $10,000 before she could enter the country, which left her feeling exploited. She explained, “To get a license [as an engineer] you need one year [of] experience in Canada; to get experience you need a license. The PEO [Professional Engineers of Ontario] requires engineers to apply for a license, and if you don’t have experience you take four courses at $800 each plus $200 for the exam. I was invited to come here. Australia, New Zealand, Canada all have half-page ads in papers.” Khudija’s entry into the Canadian workforce had been tumultuous. Two different times she accepted work for which she was paid under the table, meaning it was
undocumented; the first time was for a public transportation company conducting research and the second time it was teaching computer programs to engineers. In both cases they accepted her work but ultimately did not pay her, and she found herself with no recourse because all payment arrangements were to be under the table. Khudija was a victim of precarious employment and increasing “flexibility” in global labor regimes (Harvey 1990). While she may have qualified for welfare, she told me, “I don’t want government funds. I want to work.” Later she admitted, “It’s hard for me to think of myself as unemployed. Every day I get up and I have nothing to do.”

In numerous conversations with Torontonians approaching this issue from different angles—government agents, nonprofit workers, activists, journalists, and everyday citizens—the foreign-trained-professionals problem is universally understood as a problem of bureaucracy. For instance, one afternoon in August I was invited to the home of Kate, a local nonprofit worker and activist who had collaborated with a local employment-equity organization to author a document on flexible labor. She was also part of a study that examined the racial politics of hiring practices for temporary work agencies. They found that some local employers were trying to get temporary agencies to send them candidates with specific racial characteristics; in other words, they wanted white workers. As we sat in her backyard garden sipping lemonade, Kate pegged the unemployment of skilled immigrant workers as a problem that starts with the bureaucratic lack of coordination between the federal government’s management of immigration and the provincial government’s management of labor. Immigrants are funneled into settlement services, where they often find they need to be retrained because regulatory bodies, which control access to licensed professions, will not accept their foreign credentials. This bureaucratic miscommunication results in many taking survival jobs. This narrative, first told to me by Kate, was one I heard repeatedly and was provided as an almost self-evident explanation of how this could happen. These people, the story goes, were tragically caught in bureaucratic entanglements.

Over time I came to interpret this narrative of bureaucratic inefficiency as symbolic of the struggle to understand the role of government in the context of the rolling back of the welfare state. In these accounts, bureaucracy is impersonal and painfully rational. Foreign-trained professionals are mere casualties of this efficiency. Rather than addressing these bureaucratic shortcomings, the government has further intensified the bureaucratic matrix by funneling money into settlement-services agencies, which treat.
unemployment as a problem of the body and attempt to remold foreign bodies into modern global workers. The body is stripped bare to the skin, whereby its color, adornments, and movements mark the condition of one’s belonging—and this happens when people are at their most vulnerable.

In this context, classrooms are the site of affective encounters between strange bodies and those who serve as gatekeepers of inclusion, illuminating the legacy of colonialism and the failures of the multicultural project. As Sara Ahmed suggests, “Through strange encounters, the figure of the ‘stranger’ is produced, not as that which we fail to recognize, but as that which we have already recognized as ‘a stranger.’ . . . The alien stranger is hence, not beyond human, but a mechanism for allowing us to face that which we have already designated as the beyond” (2000: 3; original emphasis). The rehabilitation of the immigrant body is based on the fantasy projection of an ideal worker who is to be constructed in the space of these workshops, where what constitutes appropriate bodily comportment for women is a racialized and gendered imagining of a global worker. Here we see the reinscription of Orientalist and colonial conceptions of a wild Other in need of domestication. I use the word “domestication” rather than “disciplining” because it references the taming of something wild, a kind of breaking in, like the training of a pet. To domesticate something is to make it housebroken, with broken being the operative word, involving the breaking down and rebuilding of bodies in the name of modernity and progress. From the seat of sensation, immigrant women’s bodies are measured, deciphered, and codified as part of the metric of belonging.

Government-funded workshops are a critical site for racializing immigrant bodies as those refusing to conform to global economic standards. In the context of the global market, Pakistanis are decent workers as long as they stay in Pakistan; as immigrants to Toronto, they are matter out of place. These racial projects always and already see markers of race as problematic, and in these contexts, race is read as an obstacle regardless of skills. On the ground, culture or racialized difference is still an obstacle in a skilled immigrant worker’s search for employment in Canada. Thus, culture and racialized bodily difference become barriers to full inclusion in the multicultural nation-state, which is predicated on accepting cultural difference. This is not simply a critique of multiculturalism—that Canada is not multicultural enough—but rather a demonstration of the contradiction that lies at the heart of multiculturalism when it operates as it is supposed to. In practice, multiculturalism concerns questions of food, music, and clothing,
but not economic integration. This process leaves untouched not only social inequities in Canadian society, but deep-rooted inequalities in global capitalism.

These processes of domestication, these strange encounters, have a fundamental flaw: they are doomed to fail. Regardless of whether Pakistani women change their names, clothes, or smells, there are systemic barriers to their unemployment; some are easier to see, such as the nonrecognition of their foreign credentials, and some are less apparent, such as the inherent racism in discriminatory hiring practices. While racist imaginings of the ideal worker are still prevalent in contemporary Canada, as illustrated by Kate’s study, these concerns are never explicitly addressed at the level of the everyday. As Kate illustrated, the most discussed explanation of the persistence of the foreign-trained-professionals problem is that of bureaucratic entanglements. These popular narratives, however, do not link bureaucratic functioning with racist ideologies. This chapter works to do just that by juxtaposing transformations in governance with their real-life implications in places like settlement-services agencies, painting a picture of the material and ideological barriers foreign-trained professionals face. I begin by explaining the bureaucratic matrix in place, including shifts in immigration policy as they pertain to labor and the role of regulatory bodies as gatekeepers. I then take a close look at the changing nature of work as expectations shift toward models of flexibility and adaptability in late capitalism, which themselves undergird transformations in immigration policy. Within that context, I situate and examine the practices of settlement services agencies as sites of strange encounters. Ultimately, we see how bureaucracy in Canada is not neutral, rational, or hygienic, but rather bureaucratic practice is a performance of neutrality and rationality. When faced with the irrationality of Other bodies, the constructedness of this performance becomes apparent and throws into stark relief the contradictions between multicultural policy and practice.

**Bureaucratic Entanglements**

Zubeidah is the person I had the most contact with in the field. She was my ally and friend. She was a counselor at the Center and in contrast to the unemployment workshop leaders, she understood the particular challenges and obstacles her clients faced. Her expertise was in one on one counseling. When we met she had been in Toronto for four years and had
yet to feel established. Her husband had applied for entry hoping for a better life for the family, and ultimately left behind his job as an engineer in Pakistan. Before moving to Canada, Zubeidah ran a charity school for the underprivileged, worked in fundraising, and volunteered at a women’s organization. She told me that she had a different picture of Canada before arriving. She thought it would be “a life without worries,” but that they could always change their mind and go back if it did not work out. The process of immigration took two years, which is relatively fast compared to the average of six. Ultimately, she told me, it was the political situation that compelled them to leave Pakistan permanently, though she was reluctant to go into detail, perhaps wanting to leave the past in the past. For the first eight months her husband was unemployed and heard repeatedly that he was overqualified and possessed no Canadian experience, an exclusionary tactic that makes it almost impossible for new immigrants to establish themselves. One needs Canadian experience to find a job, but one needs a job to get Canadian experience.

Zubeidah said she felt disappointed in Canada because her life had completely changed. Her husband was working in sales and telemarketing to make ends meet, but still hoping one day to be able to return to engineering. Because of their financial difficulties in the first few years, she worked at Walmart as a sales associate in cosmetics and jewelry during the day, while her husband’s job in telemarketing had him working at night. When she worked for Walmart she would leave home at 7:30 AM and get back by 6 PM, while her husband worked from 3 PM to 1 AM, which only allowed them to communicate through phone calls and notes. In my conversations with Zubeidah it was clear that different axes of identity including race, gender, class, and religion exacerbated her feelings of marginalization and increasing precarity. She said, “We felt things that all newcomers feel, only, at the time we thought it was just us, but now I know that all newcomers feel these things.” They felt frustrated, desperate, and not fully established, waiting and hoping for better opportunities to materialize.

As Zubeidah’s situation illustrates, contrary to a teleology of progress and improvement endemic to global processes, things have actually gotten substantially worse for skilled immigrant workers. Until 1980, new immigrants earned approximately 80 percent of the wage of a Canadian-born worker (Grady 2009: 28). Foreign-trained doctors and engineers arriving in the 1980s were more likely to find work in their professions than those arriving in the 1990s. For instance, a foreign-trained doctor arriving before
1980 had a 92 percent chance of working in medicine (not necessarily as a doctor) in Canada, but only 55 percent had that chance in 2001. Only 26 percent of foreign-trained engineers currently work as engineers (Boyd and Schellenberg 2008: 4, 5, 6). The trend is overwhelmingly one of decline.

In order to understand the downward mobility of foreign-trained professionals, it is important to situate this moment in longer histories of Canadian immigration policies, which over time have both helped and hindered transnational labor migration while also encouraging models of flexibility and adaptability.¹ In 1967, Canada introduced the points system in order to relieve the burdens of sponsored immigration, which resulted in the targeting of highly skilled and educated immigrants. The new system afforded immigrants points on a scale that marked their ability to “fit in” in Canada.² Since the 1970s, immigration to Canada from Asia, the Middle East, South America, and Africa has increased dramatically. Over time, the criteria under the points system have changed, as has the focus on occupational needs for skilled workers in the economy. In the 1967 model, the occupational categories comprised demand for one’s occupation and a pre-arranged employment offer totaled twenty-five out of the possible 100 points. These criteria have shifted toward models of adaptability, as outlined below. Until the mid-1980s, Ottawa had been permitted to regulate immigration based on economic growth or decline in Canada. At that point, Brian Mulroney’s government reformed immigration, resulting in increased immigration levels. His government kept the family-reunification class open in order to win votes from minority populations, but added the investor stream³ for those with a net personal worth of more than $500,000 (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002).

Throughout that decade, the Canadian government allocated funding for a number of “settlement services” aimed at integrating Canada’s immigrant, ethnic, and minority groups. Around this time, multicultural policy came into practice, which changed the framework for immigrant integration in Toronto. In addition to Indigenous people and the notion of the two “found- ing nations” (British and French), new cultural groups began to make claims on the multicultural state (Abu-Laban 2004). Thus, multiculturalism was developing at the same time that the welfare state was unraveling, but it was an ineffective solution to the material changes in citizens’ lives.

During the 1990s, the postwar Keynesian welfare state dissolved and brought a shift from short-term changes to a more long-term understanding of economic growth.⁴ The government of Canada’s Liberal Party of Jean
Chretien, who served as prime minister from 1993–2003, created a new age of immigration by shifting toward neoliberal logics of integration and immigrant self-sufficiency (Abu-Laban 2004). Reinforced by the events of September 11, 2001, immigration policy was defined by three factors: the promotion of immigrant integration, attracting self-sufficient immigrants, and increased border security. While integration is a term that predates Chretien’s government, it became a crucial hallmark of his mandate.5

In the 1990s, the government allowed more skilled workers to enter the country in an attempt to improve labor-market performance. The source countries for immigration also changed, as did language and work experience, resulting in a dramatic deterioration of the success of immigrant workers (Grady 2009). Increased immigration from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East (i.e., more nonwhite immigrants), and the less successful integration of those new immigrants, exacerbated the issue of legibility and drew attention to the practice of multiculturalism, in which inclusion did not seem to include economic integration for racialized people. Rather than acknowledging structural problems, the state put the responsibility on the individual worker to be entrepreneurial so that her individual failure was not seen as a failure of multicultural integration. Rhetorics of flexibility and adaptability in immigration policy have also been critical to the increasing marginalization of foreign-trained workers. A crucial shift that dramatically impacted the foreign-trained-professionals problem occurred in 1993, when the points system was modified to emphasize education over specific job skills; this shift was called the “human capital” approach, in contrast to the “occupational needs” approach, which finds immigrants to fill particular job needs (Grady 2009). Also privileged in the human-capital model is the ability of well-educated immigrants to adapt to the changing environment. Instead of points being allocated on the basis of profession, potential immigrants are now assessed in terms of their adaptability.

According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the “Adaptability Factor” was introduced in 2002 with the intention of affording points for personal features that may enhance one’s ability to become successfully established in Canada, such as a partner’s education, previous work in Canada, previous study in Canada, or arranged employment (Immigration and Refugee Protection Act 2002). Instead of points awarded on the basis of education or profession, now new immigrants would be assessed in terms of adaptability. However, in practice many immigrants who proved their potential to adapt were never given the opportunity to work in their field.
While the human-capital model has been used in Canada, in other countries skilled migrants arrive for specific types of work, and those with skills that are in high demand are given preference (Keung 2008). Under the current Canadian system, there is no correlation between the points system, the need for an immigrant’s skills in the current job market, and the chance that Canadian employers and the professional regulatory bodies will recognize the immigrant’s credentials. These issues are exacerbated by the fact that there are three levels of bureaucracy that affect immigrants, yet none work together.

First, through a division of the federal government called Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the federal government manages immigration with stringent rules and high costs for admitting migrants. At this federal level, responsibilities are divided between this department and Human Resources and Social Development Canada. The first handles selection and settlement, while the latter is responsible for the labor market in general, though not specifically the labor of immigrants. Therefore, there is no federal department that handles the integration of immigrants into the labor market (Alboim and McIsaac 2007).

At the provincial level, the government manages job and language training. But because there is little communication between the federal and provincial governments, immigrants are recruited without a sense of provincial needs. In addition, there are approximately 400 self-regulated professional and trade regulatory bodies—thirty-five in Ontario—that set entry and training requirements, determine standards, and decide on the information they need to assess qualifications and credentials. Each regulatory body in Ontario is responsible for determining whether candidates may enter particular professions. As Kate and others believe, miscommunication between bureaucrats at different levels of government spins a web of bureaucratic entanglements in which individuals get caught.

Finally, at the municipal or local level, there is the intricate network of settlement services. The result is a model of governance in which both non-profit governmental organizations and charitable organizations step in to fill the gaps left by the decline of the welfare state. Responsibility for the settlement of new immigrants now lies with state-funded, privately run organizations that have the task of integration—itself a politically charged concept utilized in government policy. Further, this practice of governance demonstrates a disjuncture between the rhetoric, policy, and daily practice of multiculturalism in Canada, which promises universal inclusion and yet marginalizes new immigrants.
Thus, the unemployment and underemployment of skilled immigrant workers in Toronto is sustained and naturalized at the intersection of different modes of governance and attitudes about race. Currently, there is a neoliberal scenario in which the state is still very much present: Canadian ideals of multiculturalism (including of openness to immigrants and cultural inclusion) still shape some parts of Canada’s immigration policies, but these coexist with contradictory labor policies. This inconsistency creates the conditions within which immigrants can enter the country and try to find work, but then realize that once they arrive any failures at acculturation are understood as private and personal. Regulatory bodies have a deeply problematic role here; though they hold a disproportionate amount of control over the process, they are, themselves, unregulated. Thus, barriers to their employment, such as discriminatory practices by regulatory bodies that are detailed below, become recast as an individual failure and leave people like Zubeidah and her husband in a holding pattern waiting for something to materialize. In this system, the presumption is that employment is granted through a system of meritocracy, which ignores the material (nonrecognition of their credentials) and ideological (racism) barriers immigrants seeking work may face.

*Regulating Professions*

I met Sana at the same engineering session where I met Khudija. Sana firmly believed that only local engineers get internships because companies only want those locally trained. “The only useful part of these workshops,” she asserted, “is the résumé component.” She felt that if someone was taking a course in a settlement-services agency, that person should qualify for employment through federal labor programs, or that it would be more useful for them to update their knowledge of professional software programs instead of learning how to shake hands. She revealed to me that she had recently stopped friends from migrating to Canada. In fact, she admitted, “I was told not to come, too—they don’t need skilled labor here, you just immigrate for low-level jobs. If they want people for cashiers, they should recruit these people.” Sana had worked for a multinational corporation in Pakistan, but this experience did not count in Canada, so she had begun taking equivalency courses at the University of Toronto. She said, “The courses at U of T are the same as I took back home. WES [World Education Services] has their own equivalency; everyone has their own equivalency.
What’s the use if there’s no standard? They just want to take money from you.” While the majority of skilled workers who apply for jobs are trained for regulated professions, the regulating process is as frustrating and mysterious to new immigrants as it is to the nonprofit workers charged with the task of helping them through it.

In order to work in one of the regulated professions in Ontario, skilled immigrant workers are required to submit their credentials to provincial regulatory bodies to be licensed. To acquire such recognition, they are often required to take further courses, like Sana was doing, complete exams, and work under supervision for a set amount of time. Approximately 20 percent of the Canadian workforce consists of regulated professions, yet regulations vary among provinces and professions. According to the government of Ontario, that means that “professions themselves set their own standards and register members of the profession.” There is no universal definition for a self-regulated profession, yet the government of Ontario has given thirty-five regulatory bodies the authority to approve who can practice in certain fields. Those regulatory bodies serve as gatekeepers to professions such as dental surgery, nursing, optometry, midwifery, occupational therapy, architecture, law, social work, and teaching. Twenty-two of them are in healthcare. The regulatory bodies vary considerably in size, capacity, and methodology; some conduct academic and other assessments internally, while others rely on national bodies to assess qualifications. Often there are no specific provisions on how to address the credentials of foreign-trained professionals.

The shift to adaptability in immigration policy—from particular professions to transferable skills—has made credentialing even more difficult. There is no single government agency or department (at the provincial or federal level) that deals with accreditation, and there is no universal system in place to evaluate foreign credentials. Further, they often do not have the knowledge or experience to deal with educational systems in other countries (Zaman 2006). The issues with accreditation that I identified involve skill utilization on the labor market, recognition of foreign credentials, integration of skills, and discrimination. Vague terms circulate throughout the credentialing process, such as “ensuring a candidate’s education is equivalent” or “substantially equivalent” or “comparable to Canadian trained” (Ontario Immigration 2005b).

Engineering is one of the few fields that has been well researched. It has the largest group of immigrant professionals waiting to become licensed,
and exemplifies the difficulties new immigrants encounter when dealing with regulatory bodies. The Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, a professional advocacy organization, reported over 40,000 foreign-trained engineers in Ontario between 1996 and 2002.\(^{11}\) Since 1937, the Professional Engineers of Ontario (PEO) has had exclusive rights to license engineers to practice in Ontario. This self-governing association is the largest engineering regulatory body in Canada, with more than 66,000 licensed members. The PEO has the power to develop prerequisites (including training and experience criteria) as well as establish a code of ethics for all engineers in Ontario, a final criterion being that they must be “of good character and reputation” as determined by the PEO (Girard and Bauder 2007: 41–42).\(^{12}\)

As early as 1989, a provincial task force determined that access to regulated professions in Ontario was unfair and unequal, stemming from the fact that academic credentials and work experience were devalued, exclusionary tactics were being used, unnecessary testing was required, and requirements were constantly changing (Cumming et al. 1989). In response, the Ontario government contracted an independent organization, World Education Services (WES), to assess credentials, which were more often that not described as useless by the women with whom I spoke. As Sana pointed out, the results were not always accepted by different employers, who insisted on their own assessments. I spoke with Dennis, a representative of WES, to get another perspective on the service.

There are currently three organizations designated by the Canadian government that can assess foreign credentials: Comparative Education Service at the University of Toronto School of Continuing Studies, International Credential Assessment Service of Canada, and World Education Services. I focus on the latter because it was the one most often used by the women with whom I spoke and the one almost exclusively recommended by the workshops in which I participated. WES is a nonprofit agency founded in 1974 in the United States and has been in Canada since 2000. It is designated by the minister of Citizenship and Immigration Canada to provide assessments of foreign education and credentials. Each assessment costs $180 or $280 for those wanting a course-by-course analysis, which WES requires for education licensing and regulation.\(^{13}\) When I asked Dennis how people hear about WES, he said, “Outside of Ontario, we’re referred to by Visa offices.” It was difficult to get Dennis to explain their credentialing process. In response to questions, he would continually hand me another brochure describing a different aspect of their service. For example, WES will consider
whether the degree-granting institution in one’s home country is recognized by the Ministry of Education in that person’s home country. If not, the report that WES produces to assess one’s credentials will be written differently. According to Dennis, “For example, considering a bachelor of civil engineering from China, what were the admission requirements? Exams taken, high school finished? But it varies from institution to institution. When it comes to evaluation, it’s not based on course matching, if you’re missing one course, [that] doesn’t mean you can’t get the equivalent; we look into the scope of programs, the depth of programs. We give equivalency when we can find similar programs of study in the Canadian system.” The widespread problem is that their findings are not accepted everywhere, effectively making them of little value.

Each time an evaluation occurs, it is a subjective review of an individual’s credentials—and of the individual herself, particularly noted in the fact that the final criterion by which engineers (among those in other professions) are accredited is that they must be “of good character and reputation,” an inherently subjective assessment. When Sana arrived in Canada, she found that recruiters would not even accept her résumé. She had recently attended a job fair organized by a settlement-services agency, but she said it was “a waste of time for engineers,” as not a single engineering firm attended. “Why can’t we work here?” she asked. The Canadian multicultural rhetoric of adaptability and transferability comes into stark relief through the discrepancy between the system as envisioned and the real-life actions of the people responsible for implementing it. Transferability implies the ability to transfer skills, credentials, and accomplishments from one cultural context to another. What occurs, however, is a global hierarchy of class and accomplishment in which skills and achievements cultivated in a different cultural context are rendered not just inadequate, but incommensurable in Toronto.14

An example from the Center demonstrates the bureaucratic obstacles concerning regulatory bodies that these women encounter. One day early in July I attended a workshop on teaching qualifications, more specifically what a group of South Asian women could do with foreign teacher training. There were two representatives from the Ontario College of Teachers, which regulates the profession. One of the attendees that day, Uma, had been working as a teacher in India for eighteen years and was upset at the prospect of paying $10,000 more for training. To teach in Ontario, at the time of my fieldwork, one needed at least a three-year university degree and one year of teacher training. There were approximately fourteen
requirements that people needed to fulfill in order to have their foreign credentials evaluated. During the workshop there was a debate over the need for official documents from institutions where one received their training. Uma argued that it is difficult to get documents from India, which is why she paid the embassy a large amount of money to have her documents translated and stamped with an official seal before migrating. Zubeidah, in her role as counselor, added that an adverse political situation may also make it difficult to get documents mailed out of a country. The two presenters asserted that there was no flexibility in this policy. After they left, the participants spoke with frustration about how it would take about two years to get those kinds of documents from India or Pakistan. The Ontario College of Teachers charged $409 for evaluations, $100 of which was the membership fee to the organization, which is not refunded if an application is rejected. When I asked the representative about that, she assured me that the women would get a tax break, which to her was a substantial benefit. There was little understanding of the injury these roadblocks created. A tax break would not offer someone back her time or resources if she were to be denied, let alone remunerate her for the loss of wages during that time.

The regulating bodies operate with a logic of bureaucratic efficiency that fails to take into account the everyday obstacles people can encounter and the urgency of their situations. Part of the bureaucratic present consists of rationalizing logics that are inconsistent with real-world realities. The fact that it would take two years to get documents sent from India or Pakistan is incommensurate with bureaucratic logics in place to understand them as foreign workers. Hage (2009) theorizes that there is an “existential mobility,” the “sense that one is going somewhere,” that is a feature of the contemporary moment. “Even when the bus does not come, even when people are feeling stuck in a queue that is not moving, they heroically keep on queuing. And this is self-reproducing: the more one waits and invests in waiting, the more reluctant one is to stop waiting.” Thus, Hage points to the way people must bargain with themselves and with larger social forces at play to justify their life choices. The more time one puts in, the more likely one is to put more in—a phenomenon I witnessed in the space of settlement centers, as women came in day after day to work on résumés, send them to potential employers, and attend workshops and social gatherings. Always and ever present in their minds was their unemployment and the wait for something to materialize. Workers participate in this waiting, and different modalities of governance work in tandem to discipline subjects in
this task. The two years it might take to get documents mailed from Pakistan or India is inconsequential to regulating bodies, but that length of wait time has the effect of slowing the settlement process, using up savings, and forcing workers into temporary, contingent labor.

The systematic mistreatment and devaluation of immigrant women workers is overlooked because of the ways neoliberal logics individualize success or failure on the job market, which are actually indicative of state failures under late capitalism, but which do not erase racial politics that came before. Instead of addressing social inequality, the Adaptability Factor in Canadian immigration policy calls for the increasing flexibility of workers. The imperative to be a “flexible worker” (and the failure to perform as one) becomes a site of individualized failure. This kind of performance, or willingness to be flexible, while being central to contemporary configurations of work, has historical precedents.

Adapting to Late Capitalism

The discourse of adaptability-as-flexibility has famously been theorized as a condition of postmodernity endemic to transformations in labor, from the factory to flexible accumulation. David Harvey’s (1990) work on flexibility is widely used in anthropological theory to understand the changing nature of work since the 1970s. Characterized by “flexibility with respect to labor processes, labor markets, products, and patterns of consumption,” flexible accumulation, in Harvey’s terms, arose in contrast to the rigidities of Fordism (Harvey 1990: 147). Fordism refers to a system of labor exemplified by the emergence of factory-line assembly labor as a system of mass production. While it took hold in the post–World War II period (from the late 1940s to 1960), its roots were in Henry Ford’s early-1900s Dearborn, Michigan, assembly plant. There, Ford developed a system that deskill labor so that the people who performed it could be interchangeable. Workers had to be socialized into this form of labor, which required long hours of tedious movements. For their work, laborers would receive a middle-class income to be able to live a middle-class lifestyle (Lewellen 2002). This system transformed through the intensification of the circulation of capital and goods across national boundaries and is what Harvey calls flexible accumulation. Some have articulated this transition as one in response to the rigidities of Fordism. For example, Emily Martin (1994) has written of this transition: “Gone is the linear work sequence of the moving assembly line, its
machinery dedicated to mass production and mass marketing. Instead, the organization is a fleeting, fluid network of alliances, a highly decoupled and dynamic form with great organizational flexibility” (209). Flexible accumulation “is characterized by the emergence of entirely new sectors of production, new ways of providing financial services, new markets, and above all, greatly intensified rates of commercial, technological, and organizational innovation” (209). This flexibility moved beyond the circulation of capital and goods and led to transformations in the nature of labor itself.

As discourses of flexible labor regimes suggest, flexibility in the new global economy calls for accepting temporary, contract, or part-time work for low wages, no benefits, no sick leave, no pension, and no insurance. According to Henry and Franzway (1993), flexibility refers to a number of different practices (some potentially competing): financial flexibility (wages); numerical flexibility (hours, workloads, or numbers of workers); and functional flexibility (multi-skilling and broad-banding). The area of numerical flexibility has posed the most problems for women workers and for unions, as it is associated with casual, part-time, and nontraditional working arrangements. Almost all labor battles of the 1990s focused not on wage issues, but on the enforced casualization of labor (e.g., the United Postal Service workers’ stand against “part-time America”) (Klein 2000). Corporate logic is increasingly geared toward a reserve of part-time, temporary, and freelance workers. Production is increasingly relegated to contractors, but clerks are still used to sell products at points of purchase. This corporate logic has been successful in delegitimating clerks as workers in need of job security, livable wages, and benefits. Retail and service employees are infantilized as those earning pocket money over those relying on paychecks. In the United States, service and retail work now account for at least 75 percent of total employment and Walmart is the largest private employer in the United States. Many of the same corporations not offering livable wages to their clerks are also the same corporations that do business in export processing zones (areas that are sealed from local governments, where goods are manufactured with no import or export duties), reducing their obligations to workers at both the production and service ends. In Canada, one third of part-time workers want but cannot find full-time work. The part-time classification is often a technicality, such that workers are kept just under the forty-hour mark so companies do not have to pay overtime benefits or even guarantee full-time hours.
Women have suffered the impact of global transformations, as they have become the model flexible worker. On the global market, precarity emerges through various practices that promote adaptability and result in making women into cheap workers. Anthropologists have problematized the ways multinational corporations have incorporated women as a reserve pool of labor (Fernandez-Kelly 1983; Ong 1987). As Freeman (2000) argues, “Why and how women’s labor comes to be defined as cheap is, in fact, a complex process in which gender is created, contested, and refashioned in particular, culturally specific ways. Women are no more ‘naturally’ cheap labor than they are ‘naturally’ docile or nimble fingered relative to men” (106). Thus, the devaluation of women’s work is a result of social and cultural practices that systematically devalue women themselves.

There is a significant body of literature on women in increasingly feminized labor regimes, ranging from care work as nannies or nurses to the service industry, due to what is understood to be women’s inherent patience and motherly abilities (Boris and Parreñas 2010; Calliste 1993; Das Gupta 2009; Flynn 2009). Women are understood to be perfect for work in underpaid and undervalued offices as part-time, temporary, or casual workers. Seen as wives and mothers, their work is not considered a priority in their lives, but instead is a way to supplement the income of their husbands or provide pocket money. Professional immigrant women enter survival jobs that they will likely never leave—an adaptation that appears to be aberrant but is actually intrinsic to the racial regime that deskills workers. This turn toward adaptable labor regimes exists within a neoliberal logic of self-care, so that not only is responsibility for success relegated to the individual (with little risk to governmental processes), but it is to blame for what is perceived as the immigrant’s own inability to succeed. Immigrant women also face additional financial and time constraints, such as supporting their families while paying to upgrade their skills (Zaman 2006), what Hochschild (2012) has called “the second shift.” Thus flexibility in this process means waiting; tolerating bureaucracy; and adapting to little work, few benefits, and inequitable treatment, all of which ultimately leads to precarity. A lived experience illustrates the frustration of these demands to be flexible.

One cold afternoon I went to meet Saima, a particularly disheartened participant from one of the many unemployment workshops I attended. Her story is indicative of those of other women I met through centers for foreign-trained professionals. Saima was a pharmacist from Karachi who
had earned her Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy from the University of Sindh in Hyderabad. She had a raspy voice and was in her mid-thirties. When we met, she had been unemployed for three years while she actively searched for work, sending her résumé to any and all organizations that seemed possible. She had even decided to return to school and had received her diploma as a pharmacy technician. She was very talkative and outspoken about her experiences looking for a job, at times becoming passionate about them. She asserted, “I have the education, and experience, and yet no one will hire me.” She now believes that “in Canada you have to complain about your problems openly or everyone will think you are all right,” an affective sensibility she was uncomfortable with, accustomed as she was to keeping her problems to herself.

Saima had moved to Toronto alone as a single applicant. She waited at length in Pakistan for a visa, which was followed by the rush to get to Canada and find work immediately upon arrival. She had not returned to Pakistan to visit since she left. She said she would visit one day, but would never live there again because she considered it to be politically unstable. Saima had spoken to me as if I was a bureaucrat until she learned that my mother is Pakistani, at which point she began talking to me more like a friend and less like a government worker. She said it “feels like Indians and Pakistanis don’t stick together in Canada—they’re scared, we need unity.” Although she said she feels Canada is her country, she believes “they don’t like our people,” pointing to the systemic and sustained racial discrimination she felt. She went on to say, “I was independent in Pakistan. It doesn’t feel good here because I don’t have a job.” She, like Zubeida, expressed feelings of boredom and of having nothing to do, seemingly waiting for work to materialize. She asked me if her experience was similar to those of other women, and when I told her that yes, sadly, her experiences did resonate with others, she seemed almost relieved.

Most of the women I met participated in numerous workshops at a range of different settlement-services agencies. I found, somewhat surprisingly, that the inability to find work after participating in these workshops did not necessarily mean that participants found them unhelpful. For instance, Saima vacillated between blaming Toronto for her struggles and blaming herself. She attended numerous workshops in settlement-services agencies, but rather than blaming their content or the bureaucracy of regulatory bodies, she argued that she was not prepared enough and that she should have studied more. She seemed to be internalizing her inability to
get a job. This sentiment was echoed repeatedly by women who felt that their qualifications did not matter as much as how they presented themselves as middle-class Canadians. “There’s diversity here,” Saima said, “but in a sense of dress, people don’t accept you. I only wear shalwar and cover my head at home.”

Foreign-trained professionals are disciplined to the rhythms of late capitalism, which unevenly distributes what were once imagined to be rights and entitlements, and are taught to inhabit precarity as a regular feature of social life. Thus, these kinds of classes maintain deep inequities in global capitalism by enabling the prospering of some to the detriment of others. An attention to the everyday encounters with governmental and non-governmental agencies illustrates the mundane ways that such calls for adaptability are sustained, stretching out one’s sense of time in diaspora, trapped in a purgatorial bureaucratic matrix that strips people of their former identities as professional workers and refashions them into downwardly mobile subjects.

Saima’s narrative illustrates the complicated dynamic of time and space in processes of migration. Saima is in a state of waiting, feeling like she is doing everything she can on a day-to-day basis, with little result. Saima was frustrated, unhappy, and vulnerable to these global transformations in the meaning and exercise of work. Her waiting is representative of enduring unequal relations of power in late capitalism, which has reconfigured her from a successful pharmacist to an unemployed woman of color, a downward mobility made possible by immigration practices and seeming bureaucratic error, and yet treated as a result of her Otherness. She once imagined herself to be a mobile worker, but found herself stuck in time, a flexible subject at the mercy of bureaucracy. As she waits she is made only too aware of disparate power relations that reproduce her social location. In this context of calls for increasing flexibility or adaptability, bureaucracy and new modes of governance have intensified to take up the challenges of a devolving welfare state.

**Settling Bodies**

On a trip to Toronto in February 2010, I saw countless advertisements in subways announcing government-funded employment services. A new set of advertisements had appeared that were seemingly directed toward Canadian employers—advertisements about hiring foreign-trained women
workers, but not speaking with or to them. In the most popular advertise-
ment, colorful images of women’s faces sat above text that read, “You could
look all over the world to find star employees. Or you could look at your
employees from all over the world.” The smaller text read, “Internationally
trained businesswomen are a valuable resource, yet often overlooked in the
workplace. . . . This Program is designed to help them overcome the cultural
challenges they face in Canadian business and turn them into powerhouse
employees.” The voices of women disappear completely in these advertise-
ments, as business and government interests converge regarding how best
to use these women and their skills. In fine print, the ad had a logo for the
province of Ontario, under which was written that this program of skills
training was funded by the provincial and federal government.

Rather than address bureaucratic shortcomings having to do with for-
eign accreditation or the practices of regulatory bodies, the bureaucratic
matrix in Toronto has become intensified. A major transformation in
Canadian society in the 1990s was the formation of the “shadow state”
(Mitchell 2004), referring to the increasing scope and power of voluntary
organizations located between the state and its citizens. These shadow-state
institutions, such as settlement services, are rapidly increasing, as is the de-
gree of control they have over the space between the state and its citizens.
In Toronto, settlement services have historically been constituted through
voluntary self-help organizations focused on ethnic and religious catego-
ries. The government used the pre-existing settlement-service infrastruc-
ture at the community level in order to channel funding to private providers
(Siemiatycki et al. 2003).

These institutions are not particular to Canada, but are found in many
different cultural contexts. In India there has been the emergence of
“gongos,” or governmental non-governmental agencies, charged with the
task of women’s empowerment (Sharma 2008). Similarly, Rose (1996a) has
described the “quango-ization” of the state, referring to quasi-autonomous
non-governmental organizations. Quangos have proliferated to take over
numerous governmental activities such as regulatory, planning, and (crucial
in this discussion) educative functions (Rose 1996a: 56). Instead of decreas-
ing government involvement, the growth of these organizations introduces
a new mode of governance marked by the creation of mechanisms that
operate on their own.

The growth of the shadow state in Canada has been accompanied by a
redefinition of the role of the state and its obligations in providing welfare.
This neoliberal turn corresponded with a decline in direct social services provided by the government as the state began to contract services to institutions. The government of former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney (1984–1993) used this model to limit the role of the Canadian welfare state dramatically, while still maintaining legitimacy despite a direct decline in social services (Mitchell 2001: 167). Borrowing from former U.S. President Ronald Reagan, Mulroney and the Progressive Conservative Party used the liberal rhetoric of freedom and choice to mark this shift in the way services were provided. Mirroring the British Conservative Party Manifesto of 1979, the new state proclaimed, “In the community, we must do more to help people to help themselves and the family to look after their own. We must also encourage the voluntary movement and self-help groups acting in partnership with statutory services” (Mitchell 2001: 167). The rhetoric of “freedom” and “individual choice” entered the Canadian vernacular of social services as citizens were instructed to help themselves. On the ground, government resources have been funneled into settlement services to resolve the problem of unemployment, rather than directly addressing issues related to the credentialing process or the structural problems inherent in immigration policy.

Market logic has been extended to key state functions, such that even if direct services have not been contracted out, state bodies are organized around an enterprise model. Risk becomes the problem not of the state but of the individual, who is now “the entrepreneur of his or her own ‘firm,’” meaning individuals are responsible for governing themselves (Gupta and Ferguson 2002: 989). Liberal democracies provide examples of neoliberal forms of governmentality in which power is decentered so that citizens will participate in their own self-governance. Michel Foucault (1991) theorized the concept of “governmentality” to refer to the processes through which the conduct of a population is governed. This involves not only the state in the form of institutions, agencies, and their accompanying discourses, but also techniques of self-regulation and discipline. Within modes of liberal governance, there is a critical connection between the government of the state and the governance of the self. I follow Gupta and Ferguson’s (2002) assertion that governmentality explores mechanisms of government that “cut across domains that we would regard as separate: the state, civil society, the family, down to the intimate details of what we regard as personal life” (989).

Two policy shifts occurred in 1995 that changed the ways social services are administered in Ontario, one at the federal and one at the provincial
level; in effect, these changes delegate responsibility to lower levels of government (Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants 2008). First, former Prime Minister Jean Chretien’s government transferred responsibility for settlement to the provincial governments via a “settlement renewal” process, and second, the Progressive Conservative government of Ontario dramatically reduced funding to settlement services, relegating responsibility to provincial and municipal governments (Richmond 1996). Since 1995 the majority of Ontario settlement services have been administered through purchase-of-service agreements, primarily between the Ontario government and nonprofit organizations; Citizenship and Immigration Canada only provides funding to a few settlement services through the Ontario Administration of Settlement and Integration Service (Richmond and Shields 2004). This transfer of responsibility to the private sector was formalized in the early 2000s.15

Settlement services are primary sites in which new immigrants attempt to become settled and acclimatized; they are even advertised to new immigrants at customs and immigration upon arrival at Pearson International Airport in Toronto. Women repeatedly told me about how they were quickly funneled into settlement services as the acceptable (and expected) next step in their immigration process. These services include employment workshops, language training, interpretation and translation services, housing services, and legal services. Broadly conceived, there are now two types of settlement services: large agencies that provide multiple services, and smaller settlement services that often target specific ethnic or religious identities. There are more than one hundred of these small settlement-service agencies, including Family Services for South Asians, the Portuguese Community Women’s Centre, and the Welfare Center for Muslims. In Toronto, I visited all the South Asian and Muslim organizations available, interviewing nonprofit workers as well as women who came into the centers, and made it a priority to seek out and participate in all the unemployment workshops. There were three types—those that lasted months, those that lasted a few weeks, and those that lasted a few days—and I participated in many of each. I attended workshops that were geared toward specific professions as well as those for immigrants from particular countries. While I visited all of these agencies during the course of my time in Toronto, I spent a lot of time at the Center.

As I critique the shadow state in the form of these agencies, it is important to say that while any analysis of the contemporary state must contend
with questions of bureaucracy and neoliberalism, as Julia Elyachar (2012) argues, “neoliberalism has become a shorthand way of signaling all that is wrong in the ethnographic present” (76). Rather than offer a simple critique of bureaucracy and the neoliberal state, I want to engage with these forms of governance by asking empirical questions about the specific geographical, political, and historical configuration of neoliberalism and its particular effects. So while some macro critiques of neoliberalism (e.g., Barry, Osborne, and Rose 1996) tend to imagine bodies in universal modes (such as white and male), here I take up questions of multiculturalism, race, and gender in the making of subjects. In this context, though the specter of the state looms large, the responsibility for becoming settled, and becoming Canadian, now lies with the individual and her body.

**Racialized Otherness Is a Deficiency to Be Trained Away**

During fieldwork, I discovered that what underlies transformations in the governance and the nature of work is the production of a particular kind of laboring body. In the space of these workshops, immigrant women are trained to be modern, flexible workers and to erase traces of their Otherness to be marketable on the global stage. What flexibility means in this context is the production of a flexible body. Instructions regarding dress codes and bodily practice (including a range of factors from hygiene to eye contact) direct the question of unemployment away from systemic disjunctures (e.g., immigration policy changes, bureaucratic miscommunication, and discriminatory hiring practices) and present them as containable within individualized logics of self-improvement and domestication, seemingly suggesting that it will all work out if one adheres to the directive to learn how to be culturally appropriate, which effectively recolonizes the bodies of immigrant women.

One such workshop, through the Job-Search Training (JST) program, illustrates this. The program houses workshops for ethnically diverse audiences consisting of both men and women who were skilled immigrant workers in a variety of professions. JST was run through a local center housed in a community college and was started after the center was approached by a government body called Human Resources Development Canada. Although the program is government-funded and -initiated, the content is entirely determined by the workers at the center. JST has a four-week program and a four-day program; the goal is for the latter to be a workshop
that can be presented at a number of different centers throughout the city. Stacey, the project manager, described the four-week workshop as a more intense version of the four-day workshop. Both are meant to cover accreditation and certification, cultural expectations in the workplace (including inappropriate behavior), employment standards, and networking. The four-week workshop was held Monday to Friday from 9 AM to 3 PM with a maximum of twenty pupils. The four-day workshop is three hours a day and takes twenty-five students. Participants are mainly engineers, teachers, and lawyers, and included both men and women.

The account I offer below was from day three of a four-week workshop that was unexpectedly low in enrollment, at only fifteen participants, roughly evenly divided between men and women; the majority were South Asian, with two Mexican women and one Iranian man. The leader, Sharon, started with “Cultural Expectations” and encouraged us to think about what kinds of skills and expectations we would want if we hired someone. Her list included the following: be respectful, work in a team, have a positive attitude, work under pressure, be punctual (which she added was one of the most difficult issues for foreign-trained professionals not used to Canadian standards of time management), be independent, adhere to dress codes, and be flexible. This need to be flexible is, as I describe above, a result of transformations in governance and policy that have made it almost impossible to be recognized as a skilled worker, and yet in practice is projected onto the bodies of immigrant women. This call for a race-neutral bodily and cultural practice also highlights the ways that racism is perhaps implicitly understood to be part of the problem (and one that transcends transformations in governance), and yet this form of instruction is never taught as anti-racism training. Rather, it is about how to manage oneself to best avoid discrimination.

The participants furiously took notes as Sharon immediately launched into another list—this one concerning the interview in particular. “You must express confidence,” she stressed. “Be prepared, be able to discuss your skills, watch your behavior, and be sure to make eye contact, even though it may not be part of your culture.” In response to a question by a woman about dress, Sharon suggested, “It’s always better to overdress than under-dress.” Another woman raised the question of eye contact: “When you deal with older people in our culture, you don’t look them in the eye. It’s disrespectful.” Sharon quickly responded, “Here, eye contact is a sign of respect. It gives people attention; it lets them know that you’re listening.
It makes you seem credible and sincere.” With these instructions Sharon illustrated that “home country” conventions must be cast aside in the performance of a confident global worker, who must express respect, attention, credibility, sincerity, and the appearance that one is listening. The control of one’s body, dress, and culture is critical in the immigrant rehabilitation or domestication project. That immigrants must be taught these qualities suggests that they do not possess them. They will be judged inadequate until they demonstrate their domestication and effectively reposition themselves in terms of their relationship to culture.

Sharon was a white Canadian woman secure in her own articulations of business culture and confidence, which were presented as self-evident truths even though they were entrenched in whiteness and masculinity. Her positioning was made apparent to me in another workshop in which the leader was not a white woman (one of only two I encountered, and the only one who was an immigrant woman of color) and had a different attitude toward eye contact and affect. Liana was a Filipina woman leading a workshop for engineers. She was articulating the same issue of confidence and eye contact when a woman participant asked the same question about eye contact signaling disrespect in her cultural experience. Rather than sweep aside her concerns, Liana revealed that she shared this woman’s hesitation because of her own upbringing outside of Canada. Her strategy was to find a spot on an interlocutor’s forehead and focus there instead of making eye contact, which fulfilled the conventions of masculinized business culture while allowing her to maintain her own ideals of respect and bodily practice.

In understanding this sensorial mode of governance, it is important to note that it is not carried out by faceless agents of the state, but rather by authorities who, as Aihwa Ong (2003) argues, “translate the problematics of government into everyday operations” (16). For instance, Liana’s sensitivity to her students’ concerns demonstrates that while she is an authority, she brings her own experiences and attitudes to the way she exercises it. Nikolas Rose calls these authorities “experts of subjectivity” who “trans-figure existentialist questions … and the meaning of suffering into technical problems about the most effective ways of managing malfunction and improving ‘quality of life’” (cited in Ong 2003: 16), as Liana did through her suggestions around the practice of eye contact. Her cultural training resonated with her students, which allowed her to problem-solve this cultural dilemma. Further, Ong argues, such actors “translate dominant discourses
into micropractices that allocate, classify, categorize, and formalize categories of the human . . . then try to mold their subjects into exemplars of the desirable categories” (17). Thus, while the interpretations, particular instructions, and beliefs of workshop leaders were subjective, they did overwhelmingly manage to reproduce particular ideologies and practices concerning whiteness and masculinity, which were presented as “neutrality.” That moment in Liana’s workshop was the only time I witnessed an immigrant woman’s subjective experience of culture and practice taken seriously, and not cast aside as a cultural tradition to be overcome.

The logic of the workshops also seems to suggest that people are unemployed by choice. One can choose to change one’s name, clothes, body, and self to find a job in Canada, or one can keep those things—essentially markers of racialized difference and culture—and remain unemployed. At the level of everyday life, the choice is to hold onto race and bodily difference and forsake employment or to become more Canadian (i.e. race-neutral) and thus more employable. Further, the kinds of choices participants are asked to make almost exclusively deal with their bodies—how to smell, what to wear, and how to move. These kinds of choices erase the fact that their unemployment is also part of a systemic problem of the misrecognition of foreign qualifications and miscommunication between different levels of Canadian government.

In their approach to training, settlement services suggest that the possibility of full belonging—or first-class citizenship—in the form of employment and financial stability is primarily contingent upon one’s ability to perform a kind of cultural flexibility and what might be considered a race-neutral bodily practice. But in reality, for foreign-trained professionals, as demonstrated here, professional work is essentially a structural impossibility. What settlement-services workers would say to me privately, but would never convey to the women they were trying to assist, was that it was highly unlikely that they would ever work in their fields again. In practice, these workshop leaders assumed a particular kind of unemployed subjectivity. Considering that the participating women were both skilled and unemployed, the workshop leaders assumed that there must be some other problem. The points system of immigration prioritized professional skills, and yet workers are somehow unemployable once they arrive. The problem of their unemployment was not understood to be located in labor markets or the regulation of professional labor, but in their bodies, which were marked as too culturally different for inclusion in the public sphere of employment.
and which had to be remolded as global citizen-workers. The responsibility for unemployment was placed on these women’s bodies—they smelled bad and looked different; in other words, they presented a form of racialized Otherness that was a detriment to their employability. This unemployment of foreign-trained professionals is built into different levels of governance and seeps into every area of government, but at the level of the everyday it is articulated as a personal failure to perform the modern, flexible, global worker.

Yet, this question of responsibility for one’s own racialized difference is interesting in this context because it presumes the possibility of race-neutral bodily practice. In actuality, this is not race-neutral at all. Rather, direct eye contact, how to cross one’s legs, having a firm handshake, and wearing dark neutral clothing all represent a particular kind of worker predicated on white, North American male business culture. Presenting these performances as race-neutral sets women up for failure and once again demonstrates that this process is an impossibility because immigrant women will never be able to overcome their racialized Otherness.

The participants also misunderstood or were misinformed regarding the goals of the workshops. Though the stated purpose of the workshops is to assist new immigrants in acquiring the tools (e.g., résumé writing or networking skills) to find work on their own, many participants thought the workshops would ultimately place them in jobs. It is critical here that the participants interacted with the workshops as though they were extensions of the state. Women often described recruitment for the workshops as part of their immigration process. These centers represent a form of governance that is prevalent in contemporary Toronto and is indeed crucial to managing immigrant populations, but it is not their responsibility to find anyone work. Therefore, a center is not held accountable for the rates at which participants manage to find employment. While, as we have seen, the welfare state has been declining in Canada (Coulter 2009; Mitchell 2004), the character of the state is distinct from that of other neoliberal contexts in reference to immigrant populations because of Canada’s institutionalized commitment to multiculturalism. Canadian multiculturalism posits an equality that cuts across racial and ethnic boundaries, but unemployment workshops demonstrate the existence of an unmarked category of belonging. These practices produce marginalized citizens and political subjects within changing forms of governance. The (neo)liberal multicultural state becomes a detriment to the lives of immigrant and minority women
because it equates questions of human security (including food, shelter, employment) with questions of responsibility, choice, and the incommensurability of their bodies and work.

These workplace ideologies place the burden of knowing how to perform on the worker, and by the time the Canadian state steps in with advice about clothing and comportment, the women have, to a large extent, already failed to perform as required for the global economy. So important is this performance that the professional degrees once used to certify these women as experts now become secondary to their skills as expert performers of the model flexible citizen-worker, as judged by potential employers and the government. It follows, then, that the kinds of instructions given to these women workers varied according to the tasks they were expected to perform. The next chapter takes up this question in more detail, focusing on training for foreign nurses and healthcare workers in which the pedagogical emphasis on controlling one’s affects and emotions reveals racialized notions of gender and care.