In the 1910s the material link between being a “good worker” and being a “good citizen” was specifically highlighted in a festival sponsored by Henry Ford: “A giant pot was built outside the gates of his factory. Into this pot danced groups of gaily-dressed immigrants dancing and singing their native songs. From the other side of the pot emerged a single stream of Americans dressed alike in the contemporary standard dress and singing the national anthem. As the tarantellas and the polkas at last faded away only the rising strains of the national anthem could be heard as all the immigrants finally emerged. The enormous pressures which created this vast transformation amounted almost to forced conversion” (Gelderman, cited in Palumbo-Liu 1999: 27). Ford’s festival took the multicultural metaphor of the melting pot as theater, demonstrating elite desire for the eradication of markers of cultural difference and celebrating the emergence of new Americans. We could interpret this festival as a historical precedent to the kind of cultural celebrations that are prevalent in Toronto today, though they employ a different metaphor: the salad bowl. This multicultural reworking of the melting pot is meant to celebrate cultural differences as a mix of distinct ingredients that complement each other but are not required to merge. The salad bowl comparison is more insidious because it suggests cultural acceptance, while in practice only sanctioning (and even producing) certain forms of cultural difference, a point discussed by authors such as Bhattacharjee (1992) and further explored in chapter 4. In contemporary Toronto, a radical alterity becomes the order of the day.
Ford’s hygiene regimes may appear an archaic vestige of the past, but such civilizing programs are alive and well in the contemporary lives of unemployed immigrants to Toronto. This has meant the production of an appropriate citizen-worker in which the body as perceived by others is deeply implicated in one’s ability to work. If in the Fordist context a worker was subject to a particular moral code, in the context of post-Fordist Toronto, a working body should be erased of all markers of Otherness: bodily odors, ethnic clothing (including the hijab), and foreign names. However, as the sanitized sensorium indicates, this reality exists in conjunction with ever-present public cultural festivals that purport to celebrate difference, which demonstrates that smells and ethnic clothes that are incommensurable on the job market are only contextually offensive. This contextual acceptance demonstrates two different sides of multicultural practice in Toronto.

This chapter explores how this practice of multiculturalism operates as a process of racialization, producing bodies as irrevocably Other through sensorial regimes. Jodi Melamed (2011) describes racialization as “a process that constitutes differential relations of human value and valuelessness according to specific material circumstances and geopolitical conditions while appearing to be (and being) a rationally inevitable normative system that merely sorts human beings into categories of difference” (2). Thus, racialization, or multiculturalism in this context, ascribes different levels of value to certain bodies and, further, “naturalizes the privileges of those who benefit from present socioeconomic arrangements and makes the dispossessions of those cut off from wealth and institutional power appear fair” (2). Thus, the process of racialization naturalizes power.

Within multiculturalism, race logics are embedded with liberal practices and thus include the recognition, toleration, and celebration of contextual sensorial difference as well as its marginalization and even expulsion from the labor market. The two sites explored in this chapter demonstrate a state-sanctioned sensorial form of governance, illustrating how the sanitized sensorium operates as a disciplinary tool. The sanitized sensorium reveals the ways that, in contrast to the rhetoric of “a nation built on difference,” multicultural practice in Canada denies difference with regard to immigrant bodies while simultaneously recognizing that very difference in contextually specific sites. Both government and popular discussions in Canada on multiculturalism (through sources ranging from media accounts to government policy) describe a relinquishing of cultural imperialism and a celebration of “multi-ness,” as demonstrated by cultural festivals or other
public celebrations. This rhetoric is betrayed by the fact that neoliberal governance (in the form of government-funded, privately run settlement agencies) institutes certain ideals of bodily comportment on immigrants by attempting to teach them how to dress and act. This is an imposition of Canadian dominant culture; it is cultural imperialism in practice, and results in a form of racialization that has wide-ranging effects. Returning to the classroom for the last time, this chapter focuses on the sensorial aspects of these encounters between instructors and students. Sensorial regimes contained within the sanitized sensorium dictate bodily comportment and practice that are critical not only to belonging in the multicultural nation-state, but also to survival. Failure to present one’s body appropriately results in exclusion from economic and late capitalist projects, leading to partial inclusion at best and at worst economic exploitation.

Sensorial regimes are a critical component of modernizing projects, as modernity itself produces racial knowledge. Rather than simply disciplining the alien Other, or eradicating racialized differences, critically important is the fact that modern projects also work to produce selective forms of racialized, sensorial alterity, disciplining Other subjects into a minoritized space. As Edward Said famously argues in *Orientalism*, these Westernized notions of self and Other produce not only ideas of the Other as savage and wild, but also simultaneously ideas of the self as civilized. Thus these contradictory strains of multicultural practice have dual effects, marking the racialized Other while simultaneously positioning the West as enlightened and civilized. When racialized women are compelled to perform different kinds of sensorial practices in dual contexts conditional to their belonging, these performances themselves become a constant reminder of their partial inclusion.

Taken together, these scenes of abjection and the threat of radical alterity provide the backdrop for a kind of empire of the senses in which the politics of smells, sights, and sounds have become not only a means of Othing, but of colonial expansion and nation-building. Paying attention to the daily affective attachments people have to sensorial phenomena and to the perceived affront to the senses, this chapter weaves together these contradictory state practices—the simultaneous erasure and recognition (or production) of differences as inscribed on the bodies of immigrant women—in order to analyze multicultural practice as a form of racialization. The multicultural project as experienced in urban Toronto—a city of tremendous racial, ethnic, and religious difference—calls for a particular
set of expectations, demands, and negotiations regarding citizenship. There are multiple actors involved in the making of multicultural praxis: state workers, nonprofit workers, the public, the media, immigrant women of color, and self-described immigrant community leaders. Here I focus on the interweaving of these categories of people, publics, and representations.

**Complicating Multiculturalism**

Multiculturalism in Canada is a contentious thing. In October 2015, leading up to an election that would overturn Stephen Harper’s conservative government, then immigration minister Chris Alexander and Minister for the Status of Women Kellie Leitch proposed measures to stop “Barbaric Cultural Practices Against Women and Girls,” saying that Canada should have a “Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Practices Act” and that if re-elected, the government would institute an RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) task force and tip line for those wanting to report barbaric acts. In practice, the Barbaric Practices Act, as the public is calling it, consists of amendments to the Immigration Act and Criminal Code that already made such acts illegal, including polygamy, forced child marriage, and so-called honor killings. So what this new act would do is effectively link for the public these crimes with some essentialized notion of Muslim culture.¹

These concerns around barbaric Muslim acts are linked to recent comments by former Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who used the phrase “old stock Canadians” in discussing refugee policy in a public debate. He said he would offer to bring more refugees than Canada has historically, but that there are limits: “We do not offer them a better health-care plan than the ordinary Canadian can receive. . . . I think that’s something that new and old stock Canadians can agree with.” When later asked about what he meant, he said, “It’s supported by Canadians who are themselves immigrants, it’s supported by the rest of us—by Canadians who have been the descendants of immigrants for one or more generations.”² For Harper, an old-stock Canadian is one who was born in Canada and whose parents were born in Canada, effectively producing an essentialized notion of citizenship and of who belongs. The language of “Barbaric Acts” and “Old-Stock Canadians” echoes (and not too subtly) Orientalist constructions of the Other defined in contrast to an enlightened old-stock Canadian.

These kinds of debates signal the challenges posed to the practice of multiculturalism in Canada, a practice that has been subject to critique
since its implementation as federal policy. Its early supporters and canonical writers in the field, such as Charles Taylor (1994) and Will Kymlicka (1995), describe multiculturalism as a progressive form of liberalism in the Canadian context. Others have addressed whether or not liberalism as a doctrine is compatible with multiculturalism, leading some to argue whether multiculturalism is the problem, or if the real issue is in essentialist understandings of cultural diversity (Abu-Laban 2002). Vered Amit-Talai (1996) argues that the symbolic effectiveness of multiculturalism in Canada arises from its ambiguity, in which “vague ideas” of ethnic and cultural pluralism are conflated with civil rights, social justice, and government policy to create a symbolic bundle that is “as politically charged as it is indeterminate” (90). In October 2010, an editorial in the Canadian national newspaper the Globe and Mail (2010) argued that national discourse around minority culture should eliminate mention of multiculturalism and focus instead on “the concept of citizenship.” Rather than promote a multicultural society, they suggested that national discourse should promote individual membership as a Canadian citizen. Thus, multiculturalism in Canada and elsewhere has already been under scrutiny as the most effective means of dealing with racial and ethnic diversity. Indeed, I found that contradictions between the state’s rhetoric of multiculturalism and the impact of its practices emerge in moments of friction among state bodies, civil society, and aspiring citizens. Looking closely at these points of conflict can reveal how multicultural policy arises through concrete social practices, and how aspiring citizens translate these policies into their everyday lives. The range of conflicts and interactions among governmental agency workers, immigration counselors, and immigrant women in Toronto demonstrates the changing nature of multiculturalism and citizenship in contemporary Canada.

Within Canadian multicultural policy there is an implicit approach to race that both produces and enacts racial hierarchies. If all Canadian cultures are equal to one another except one, then what remains at the core of Canadian multiculturalism is an English (or white) subject. As Talal Asad (1993) argues, what becomes “crucial for [multicultural] government is not homogeneity versus difference as such but its authority to define crucial homogeneities and differences” (111). Slavoj Žižek (1997) takes up this question of multiculturalism and racism when he writes, “Multiculturalism is a disavowed, inverted, self-referential form of racism, a ‘racism with a distance’—it ‘respects’ the Other’s identity, conceiving the Other as a self-enclosed ‘authentic’ community toward which he, the multiculturalist,
maintains a distance rendered possible by his privileged universal position” (44). This equation of multiculturalism with racism critically draws attention to the issue of proximity so that cultural difference is to be respected, even tolerated, but from a distance. This toleration, this form of respect serves to mask racism and race-based discrimination. Race matters, and any national project must use race even if it disavows it (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991). These theoretical discussions have taken on real-world significance in Canada, where the terms and context of multiculturalism have been hotly contested."

The presumption that Canada is post-racial because of its commitment to multiculturalism was recently challenged by a report released from the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which examined the Canadian state’s compliance with international law concerning racial equality. While it acknowledged positive measures in place, the committee highlighted a number of concerns impacting racial and ethnic communities in Canada: increasing socioeconomic gaps determined by race; racial profiling, including that of Black Canadians by police; the overrepresentation of Black and Indigenous people in the prison system; and the discrimination Black and Indigenous people encounter in the criminal justice system. In fact, Black men in Toronto are three times more likely to be stopped by police. These facts were most recently supported by a *Maclean’s* article that suggested, “Canada’s race problem? It’s even worse than America’s,” comparing the material conditions of the Black community in the United States to that of the Indigenous population in Canada. The author argues, “Our Fergusons are hidden deep in the bush, accessible only by chartered float plane,” given that 49 percent of Indigenous people live on reserves in remote parts of the country and make up less than 1 percent of the total population of the Greater Toronto area. Further, half of Canada’s Indigenous children live in states of poverty, 64 percent of them in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Indigenous youth suffer at greater rates than nonindigenous youth; they are seven times more likely to be murdered and five times more likely to die of suicide. One in three young people in police custody is Indigenous. While multicultural rhetoric denies social inequality, it is evident in the treatment of those considered Other.

The challenges to multiculturalism in these varied cultural contexts signal a kind of “crisis of multiculturalism,” one that is often blamed in the contemporary era on what has come to be considered the “Muslim problem,” a term used to describe a perceived radicalization of homegrown Muslim
youth, those of the second generation who have participated in a range of events including the “Toronto 18,” caught in 2006, and the 2015 joining of ISIS by three British Pakistani girls. The problem has been described as one of unassimilated minorities, and so these discussions are often accompanied by a call for a return to assimilation. This crisis of multiculturalism is not due to the presence of unassimilated minorities, but rather to the ways that difference is controlled, managed, and contained through liberal multicultural practices that create competing narratives of citizenship, which further alienate already marginalized aspiring citizens. So in this case, the widespread unemployment of skilled immigrant workers is not a multicultural problem of unincorporated immigrants; it is not a problem of the “savage,” uncontainable Other. It is, in fact, a crisis of whiteness.

In conjunction with these theories, anthropologists have studied the politics of recognition in diverse societies. Elizabeth Povinelli (2002) has written extensively on late liberalism in the Australian context, focusing on the impasse of liberal conventions of law and policy revealed in the interface with indigenous worlds, what she has called “liberal settler multiculturalism.” This articulation of the management and control of populations is distinct from postcolonialism (as in the work of Franz Fanon or the Subaltern Studies Collective): “Colonial domination worked by inspiring in colonized subjects a desire to identify with their colonizers,” while, in contrast, “multicultural domination seems to work . . . by inspiring subaltern and minority subjects to identify with the impossible object of an authentic self-identity” (Povinelli 2002: 6). Instead of recognition, this has led to calls for a radical form of difference.

These questions of recognition have also been explored in the Canadian context in reference to Indigenous communities. Glen Coulthard (2007) has written about how self-determination efforts by Indigenous people in Canada have been recast as questions of “recognition,” a process that, he asserts, simply reifies colonial power. Audra Simpson (2014) has provocatively recast this question of recognition in her study of the Mohawks of Kahnawà:ke, an Indigenous community that insists on self-governance and refuses Canadian or American citizenship. Her work explores this as a politics of refusal, instead of a politics of recognition. These theories of settler colonialism, which describe the displacement of Indigenous people by a colonial occupation, are conceptually and politically critical for comprehending racial and ethnic difference because they acknowledge that ongoing immigration results in the continued settlement of occupied land and the colonization of Indigenous people. At the
same time, however, the scholarship simultaneously marks points of shared experiences and possibilities for coalition building between marginalized immigrants and colonized Indigenous peoples. But it is important to not equate these two phenomena, which would lead to rendering Indigenous populations as simply another ethnic group.

Finally, critical in this discussion is the fact that multiculturalism is a gendered phenomenon. This chapter draws explicit attention to the violence inflicted by the multicultural state in the name of civilizing immigrant women. Such a civilizing mission seeks to eradicate not only cultural difference, but also markers of Otherness inscribed on immigrant women’s bodies. The state emphasizes culture and cultural explanations to rationalize the foreign-trained worker problem, thus obscuring the racial and gendered nature of capitalist exploitation. Exploring the gendered logics of institutional structures demonstrates how culturally inscribed ideas about the Muslim woman are translated in the intimate interface between immigrant women and the state. This work thus reveals how these ideas and practices attempt to make Muslim immigrant women’s bodies legible to the neoliberal, multicultural state, which ultimately does violence to them.

Sanitizing the Other

One of the settlement-services centers I worked with in downtown Toronto conducted a project called “No Hijab Is Permitted Here.” In discussing the project with Amal, a member of the organization from Somalia whose expertise was in helping Muslim women find work, she told me they found that having a Muslim name had become a real barrier. “While professional organizations are gatekeepers,” she said, “there is a real difference between visible Muslim women [meaning those who wore a hijab] and non-visible Muslim women.” As part of the project, they had done focus groups in which Muslim women shared their difficulties in accessing the job market: “We felt we needed to document these problems.” She admitted that even for her, the results were shocking. In the experiment they attempted to control for everything except the hijab, so they sent pairs of women of similar nationality, age, and height out with comparable résumés to see what would happen. Participants in the study attempted to seek employment in manufacturing, sales, and service sectors because these were considered common employment opportunities for women whose skills and education are not accredited. Experiences ranged from those wear-
ing the hijab not being given application forms, to those without the hijab being given extra application forms for their friends. This study highlights the failure of the practice of multiculturalism in Toronto, signaling that racialized difference continues to result in economic exclusion. Rather than addressing this issue directly, settlement-services agencies govern new immigrants, domesticating their bodies for legibility in Canada.

Also crucial in this discussion are understandings of the relationship between the ideology of the state (here, multiculturalism) and the kinds of affect produced and regulated in its name. Ann Stoler (2002) has examined the connection between the “broad-scale dynamics” of colonial rule and the intimate spaces in which such forms of governance are enacted. Drawing on the work of Foucault, she suggests that these intimate spaces demonstrate what might be called the “microphysics of colonial rule,” within which she locates the “affective grid of colonial politics” (7). Elizabeth Povinelli (2002) has examined Australian liberal multiculturalism as an ideology and practice of governance and a form of “everyday affective association and identification” (6) to explore the corporeal politics of Australian multiculturalism. Following Stoler and Povinelli, I examine the practice of multicultural governance in which intimate forms of embodiment are subject to regulation and control.

Settlement services in Toronto govern through a range of techniques—including affect, which is significant both politically and epistemologically. Stoler (2002) has written about the range of bodily affects implicated in colonial rule, from Javanese nursemaids being instructed to “hold their charges away from their bodies so that the infants would not smell of their sweat” (6), to Dutch children being forbidden to play with the children of servants for fear that they would begin “babbling and thinking in Javanese” (6). These instances were part of the project of rule in the colonies and were part of the colonial state’s investment in “the education of desire.” In the case of multiculturalism and the body, and the immigrant body in particular, the question of smell is of particular import. Smells express concepts of Oneness and Otherness and contribute to establishing bipolarities of smell, such as the evil odors of evil spirits versus the good odors of good spirits, or how men should smell strong while women should smell gentle (Classen 1993; Synnott 1991; both as cited in Low 2005). Discussions of immigration and smell have focused on the ways that smells have marginalized immigrant bodies; indeed, the smell of cooking on the body is a mark of Otherness.

In the context of the contemporary multicultural state, the immigrant body is constructed as the carrier of all that is undesirable and thus must be
cleansed in the name of modern citizenship, which is crucial in the project of rule. Contrary to the notion that multicultural paradigms do not require particular modes of embodiment and self-presentation, in Toronto bodily praxis was predicated on a racialized ideal of what it means to participate in the public sphere. Citizenship is based on embodied practice in which certain bodies are subject to particular kinds of regulation and control. As Povinelli (2002) argues, “Liberalism is harmful not only when it fails to live up to its ideals, but when it approaches them” (13). Thus, in settlement-services classrooms, it is by enacting a form of care, through sensorial pedagogies, that liberal practice does harm to immigrant women.

Women’s unemployment is managed at the level of the everyday through instructions on training their bodies and affects for legibility. As discussed in chapter 1, settlement-services workshops assumed a particular kind of unemployed subjectivity that, as I will elaborate on more here, needs to be erased of its sensorial difference. These intimate modes of governance demonstrate deeply held assumptions or conditions within the practice of multiculturalism in Canada in which sight and smell shape the limits of acceptability. The following classroom encounter exemplifies this limit. Dana, the instructor, was from a large, well-established international association that conducts nonprofit work. She was a white woman in her mid-forties, with short, white hair and a tall, lanky frame. She introduced herself to us, but did not ask the same of her audience. When I later interviewed Dana about how she came to give these trainings, she described a trajectory that was common among all but one of the workshop coordinators I spoke with: she was born and raised in Canada and had entered the workforce after her children had gone away to college. When I asked her about the instruction and how she decided on the content of the workshops, she said she would gauge her audience’s needs after meeting them. While she had a uniform syllabus for all the workshops, she made changes depending on who was in attendance, which is a significant detail. Although smell was highlighted when teaching women from the subcontinent, the instructions were markedly different when participants were primarily from Europe. With non–South Asian audiences, facilitators did focus on bodily comportment involving gestures, but never on smell or ethnic dress.

The theme for that day’s class was “Business Etiquette,” and the room was packed with twenty women. Dana began with a remark that signaled her assumptions about class and education. She recommended that all participants at some point go to another local agency that offers English as a
Second Language classes, as well as academic tutoring up to grade-twelve level. One audience member, indignant and upset, said, “Literate women here work alongside the illiterate women.” Dana had not realized that her audience was composed mainly of fluent English speakers who were highly skilled in specialized professions in Pakistan.

Dana emphasized, “It doesn’t matter what you did in your home country. You’re in Canada now.” When thinking about clothing, she suggested, job seekers should consider their surroundings; she focused particularly on advising the participants—none of whom was wearing a headscarf at the workshop—not to dress “traditionally.” “You need to consider how they perceive you. You need to fit,” she said, adding, “10 percent of what interviewers consider is ‘fit’ in the workplace,” effectively suggesting, if you wear a headscarf, you are never going to get work. Dana stressed, “You always need to look good, even if you’re just dropping off a résumé.” She suggested, “Don’t wear too much make-up, don’t wear too much perfume, and make sure your clothes are clean and don’t have any distinctive smell. . . .” But her voice trailed off as she considered the implications of her suggestion—that these professional women would attend job interviews smelling “distinctive,” and that such marked difference would become a hindrance to their employment. She further suggested, “Dress plainly, so you don’t distract the employer from what we’re saying, yet dress formally, don’t wear sunglasses, and do not take your children to your job interview.” Of note here is Dana’s use of “we,” referencing a racial and national community that excluded her audience.

She continued by saying about job applications, “We can’t always understand your names, so please print clearly, or if you can, change your name, get a nickname if it’s hard to pronounce.” When questioned about dressing formally, she suggested participants “go out and see what people are wearing, dress plainly, be up-to-date, but dress modern.” This directive necessarily puts the supposedly traditional practices these immigrant women held in Pakistan in direct opposition to constructed modern practices required of them in Toronto. This configuration not only renders Pakistani norms (in this case, what they wear) as archaic, but also creates a temporal relationship between traditional practices “in the past” and modern practices “in the future,” reproducing a teleology of progress that marches toward the West. She reiterated, “Always be sure to shower first—you want to smell clean and not like Indian food, or masala, or foods that are foreign to us. You want to present yourself as clean and professional.” Her emphases suggested to her audience that, at present, they were neither clean nor professional.
Dana then played a ubiquitous video called “First Impressions,” which I had to watch in many of these workshops. A smiling man appears, dressed in a business suit headed for his first interview. A voiceover explains, “Success in an interview is 45 percent packaging, 35 percent responsiveness, and 10 percent experience. Interviewers will know whether they like you in the first seven seconds.” Cut to a Latina woman named Rita, wearing bright makeup and revealing clothing, arriving for an office interview with her children. The receptionist looks at her with distaste. The voiceover reminds the viewer, “Be nice to gatekeepers, such as secretaries and administrators. They have a lot of control.” Rita is rude. In another scene, a Chinese businessman named Chang has also paid too little attention to his appearance. He reaches out to shake the hand of his interviewer, who responds with a frown at Chang’s limp handshake. Chang then bows, and offers his business card by holding two different corners with both his hands. Chang fails at his efforts to produce small talk and he sits on the edge of his chair, rather than in the middle. He also takes coffee, which he immediately spills. The voiceover says never to take coffee. Ultimately, Rita fails to find work. Chang, however, is considered successful, according to the video’s narrator, because he managed to find a six-month contract. Next, a large animated face appears on the screen, detailing the mechanics of vocalization, including where to place one’s tongue in one’s mouth, as it is markedly different for native speakers of different languages (in these instances, Mandarin and Spanish). The voiceover suggests, “Focus on hearing the correct number of syllables and sounds in order to learn which ones to stress the way a native speaker would.” The faceless narrator advises, “Choose a Canadian nickname, like Mike, or Mary. It’ll make it easier.”

When the video was over, Dana reviewed some key elements, emphasizing behavior: “During an interview you need to be confident, make eye contact, [but] don’t be too over-confident—you need to have a good attitude, don’t be too pushy.” Many of the participants expressed shock and horror when the video revealed that interviewers will decide whether they like you within the first seven seconds of meeting. But the video’s message was clear: Chang and Rita struggled in their job search because they do not have the appropriate bodily comportment to make it past the first seven seconds, not to mention the first interview. The video provides a highly gendered account of what the two did wrong, with Rita’s mistakes emphasizing her role as a mother, her clothing, and her sexuality, and Chang’s focusing on his inability to perform masculinized American business culture with his limp handshake.
and deferent bow. Both are illustrated as haphazard and clumsy. The entire class burst into laughter when the video described Chang as “successful” after he managed to acquire a short-term contract, rather than a full-time job.

At the end of the lecture, the participants loudly discussed the fact that Dana’s “business etiquette” consisted of instructions on how to dress, speak, and act. This emphasis on comportment provoked indignation from many. One participant, Naseem, said to me that she had come across many workshop participants who were not working in their fields. “They learn how to shake hands, but nothing else!” she said. Many voiced their concerns about the specificity of body language and clothing over job placement. When I later had the opportunity to speak to Zeba about her experience in the workshop, she highlighted the issue of smell. “Why do they think I smell bad? It is just food. They eat Indian food at the shopping center!” Zeba immediately homed in on the hypocrisy of the workshop leaders, and indeed the larger Canadian public, which accepts the smells of an exotic South Asia and participates in its consumption in one context but not in another. As the workshop illuminated, smell is particularly significant in the moral construction of self and Other, and part of the process of racialization. It functions as a medium through which judgments are made concerning raced, classed, and gendered Others. As a process of Othering, the act of perceiving the odor or smell of an individual defines both the self and the Other through difference (Low 2005).

Smell is implicated in a social and moral order tied to the prevailing ideology of multiculturalism in Toronto and is an important part of the process of racialization. Or, put another way, smells can racialize. Classen, Howes, and Synnott (1994) have argued that the sense of smell has been excluded from the realm of reason, associated instead with savagery. Rinaldo Walcott (2003) has examined the ways that the “food odors” of Somali residents in a primarily white condominium in Toronto were imagined to be an “affront to ‘Canadian ways of living’” and were used to mark them as outsiders (126). This is a civilizing mission of a particular sort, distinct from colonial projects that aimed to turn natives into white gentlemen (and -women). The similarities lie in the production of a national, or even global, professional worker whose sanitized body is interchangeable and universal, and is intimately tied to social class and upward mobility. Workers in the global market are called upon to demonstrate, to borrow a phrase from Koichi Iwabuchi (2002), the sweet scent of Asian modernity—which in this case is no scent at all.
That Dana instructed the women not to smell like South Asian food points to how smell is also particularly gendered in this context. The smell of food reminds people that these “foreign-trained professionals” also cook, invoking images of the domestic arena and women’s unpaid work. As in this and nearly all of the workshops I attended, instruction was directed toward their “South Asian-ness,” such that smell and appearance become intertwined with cultural and bodily difference. While mediated by the senses, the inclusion and exclusion of Pakistani women in Canada’s public sphere is about being, in the words of Mary Douglas (2002), out of place. It is not only about “smelly bodies,” but about the idea of smelly bodies. The issue of smell defines how a Canadian (or national) body should be: the national body does not smell—or, more accurately, smells in such a way that the very odor disappears. It is not an issue of not smelling, but of smelling “like us,” with the attending assumption that “we” have no smell. “We” are neutral.

Scholarly work has explored the role of the senses, and smell in particular, in the making of the social body. Low (2006) highlights the connections between smell and morality, whereby “smell as a social medium is intertwined with issues of olfactory acceptance and hence social and moral approval” (608). Rather than focusing on the body as such, I am interested in the body as a social medium by which sensory phenomena are affectively registered and translated into social ideas not only of belonging but also of morality and good citizenship. Smells have also been representative of immigrant communities’ inability to assimilate. Manalansan (2006) has described a tension in the interpretation of immigrant odors, in which the smells are either conditional (i.e., they can be removed) or they adhere to the body, thus justifying the removal of the bodies themselves. Employing Kristeva’s notion of abjection, Hyde (2006) has further argued that the expulsion of “odorous Others” is a means by which polities maintain their status. What I seek to contribute to these important works is an examination of the ways that the “smell” of South Asia is a means of both exclusion and inclusion, and the ways the liberal multicultural state manages such sensorial phenomena as an important part of the process of “immigrant integration.”

Bodily smell has been intimately tied to class and modernity. As Classen, Howes, and Synnott (1994) write, “Smell has been marginalized because it is felt to threaten the abstract and impersonal regime of modernity by virtue of its radical interiority, its boundary-transgressing propensities and its emotional potency” (5). George Orwell claimed the “‘real secret’ of class distinctions in the West could be summed up in four frightful words...
“The Lower classes smell,” further suggesting that “race hatred, religious hatred, differences of education, of temperament, can all be overcome, ‘but physical repulsion cannot,’ whence the persistence of class distinctions” (Orwell quoted in Classen et al. 1994: 8). Orwell astutely draws a connection between olfaction and the symbolic representation of socioeconomic status, real or perceived. However, it is not something intrinsic to smell itself that codifies meaning; rather, these meanings are socially and culturally produced. Thus, any food smell, even a distinctly North American one like that of hamburgers for instance, if detected on the body of a South Asian may signal Otherness because of the perception that they already represent alterity, that they already and always, smell bad.

In the contemporary era, the whole body, not just its smell, becomes a site of engagement with the production of citizenship and modern subjectivity. Nayan Shah (2001) has written eloquently on the centrality of the relationship between immigration, citizenship, and the body to symbolic practices of inclusion and exclusion. Shah traces the ways that concerns about the Chinese were central to “the social classifications of racial danger, difference, and subordination” (5). The idea of cleanliness, or the uncleanliness of immigrant bodies, has been imagined not only to be a threat to social cohesion, but also in fact a literal threat to the health of (white) citizens. State practices of instituting order on seemingly disorderly subjects are central to the modern project.

The marking of immigrant bodies was made particularly evident in the case of Razia, who participated in a workshop geared toward foreign-trained professionals from diverse fields. Razia had been living in Toronto for a year and a half, and had been a practicing lawyer in Pakistan for five years before immigrating. In order to be re-accredited as a lawyer, she learned she would have to begin her education again. While holding several survival jobs, such as making kebabs at an Indian restaurant and cashiering at Walmart, she attended a range of unemployment workshops that did not teach her how to become employed as a lawyer. She regularly wore a scarf around her neck, and while some employers in various survival jobs were accepting of it, unemployment workshop leaders suggested she stop wearing it. Razia was not wearing anything resembling Pakistani clothing or representing “the Muslim veil.” With a tone of disgust, she told me, “I got it at the Dufferin mall. Why do they think it’s Pakistani? Because I’m Pakistani?” The scarf she wore was marked as a “Pakistani scarf” because a Pakistani was wearing it; smells and bodily adornments became marked as different because of the
wearer, which points to the ways that this process is always doomed to fail. Even though she did what was required of her and attempted to erase traces of minority culture from her body, what she wears and how she smells will always be marked Other because of the color of her skin.

Another leader of an unemployment workshop for South Asian women went one step further by describing the hijab as dangerous. She illustrated this point by using the example of a woman who was encouraged not to wear her hijab for an interview at a home for the developmentally disabled, since one of the patients could pull at the scarf and strangle her. She did not, however, identify necklaces or dangling earrings as similarly dangerous; the hijab became emblematic not only of tradition and the past, but of something that could now choke or strangle them. This workshop leader inadvertently provided a materialist explanation for a metaphorical problem. The wearer of the hijab presents a kind of cultural Other that injures its wearer through the perception that she is inassimilable, dangerous, and threatening—all at once. Such Otherness is uncontainable and irreconcilable with the modern project of producing model citizen-workers.

Being directed not to wear the hijab was repeated in every workshop I attended in which Pakistani women were present—regardless of whether any were wearing one. It is important to note that at least in Toronto, it is not typical for Pakistani women to wear the hijab; however, the hijab and shalwar cameeze suits are popularly understood as traditional forms of bodily adornment in contrast to the modern dress associated with appropriate secular womanhood. These kinds of moments illustrate the ways secular modes of governance explicitly direct Pakistani women on how to move and how to dress. While it is true that the hijab has a particularly contentious position as not only a cultural, but also a contested religious signifier, for my purposes here the point is simply about the marking of Otherness in all its varied semiotic forms, and the equation of such marks of Otherness with unemployment. There is a large body of scholarly work concerning Muslim women and dress, in particular veiling and bodily comportment as well as the relationship of veiling to inhabiting an appropriately pious subject (e.g., Fernando 2010; Mahmood 2001). Here I include practices such as wearing the hijab as a form of racialized difference (particularly after 9/11), and so when nonprofit workers suggest the limiting of such clothing practices, they invoke the refashioning of immigrant bodies and promote a particular kind of racialized secular body.
As authors such as Miriam Ticktin (2008) have described, the state ultimately decides what national and religious performances entail; so, for instance, wearing the hijab is fixed “as a coerced act from which [Muslim] women must be saved” (84). As Sherene Razack (2001) has argued in the case of South Asian women in Canada, women are given the choice of either attending to cultural differences and being stereotyped as Other, or of ignoring cultural differences and reifying the idea of the universal, liberal, individual subject. As the example of settlement services demonstrates, modernizing projects aimed at immigrant integration relocate systemic issues of unemployment to a problem of the body: “Don’t wear the hijab if you want to get a job.”

Through the training workshops, immigrants are taught a kind of cultural habitus for legibility in the public sphere (here, the working world) in Toronto; but these practices reveal the ways multicultural claims of universality are in fact conditional. In this sense, it is a process that is doomed to failure since these women will never overcome the obstacle of their raced and racialized bodies. These unemployment workshops present a white Canadian subject who is invisible and who participants are supposed to strive to embody—the other markers (clothing, comportment, bodily smells) are simply ways of not naming the actual fact of their foreignness. This kind of Othering cannot be explicitly articulated as such and instead becomes a question of food, music, and clothing.

Although Dana was a well-meaning presenter, an attempt to erase difference seeps into her account—not despite her helping immigrant women, but because of it. Beyond the immediate intentions of the workshop leaders, however, it is indeed possible that if women showed up to a job interview smelling like foreign foods, they would never achieve inclusion in the formal economy. The problem thus transcends the space of the workshop.

This phenomenon illuminates multiple publics, among them the job market and the cultural festival, in which the smell of food on the body of a woman, for example, is understood in two diametrically opposing ways. In the context of the job market, the smell of South Asian food on the body suggests that these foreign women cook foreign food at home; but during cultural festivals, the smell of generic South Asian food reminds Canadian consumers of the exotic lands where these foods originate. This distinction suggests that in its embodied form, South Asian food smells repugnant; yet in a disembodied form, it is appealing. The smell of food on an immigrant
body can be described or understood as private, and therefore dangerous and threatening to the multicultural nation in one respect, and alternately treated as a public, commodified, accessible form of pleasure for white Canadian consumption of the other. Thus, the meanings of different smells do not only vary cross-culturally but also contextually. Sara Ahmed (2000) argues, “Ethnicity becomes a spice or taste that can be consumed, that can be incorporated in the life of the one who moves between (eating) places. Differences that can be consumed are the ones that are valued: difference is valued insofar as it can be incorporated into, not only the nation space, but also the individual body. . . . By implication, differences that cannot be assimilated into the nation or body through the process of consumption have no value” (117–18, emphasis in original). Between these different contexts, the look and smell of citizenship change.

Sensing Citizenship

The senses convey meaning. “They [the senses] are operators, which make it possible to convey the isomorphic character of all binary systems of contrasts connected with the senses, and therefore to express, as a totality, a set of equivalences connecting life and death, vegetable foods and cannibalism, putrefaction and imputrescibility, softness and hardness, silence and noise” (Levi-Strauss 1964 quoted in Sutton 2010: 210). Here Lévi-Strauss conveys the contradictions the senses can embody and project. To his list, I would add “the self and other.” The senses, then, convey messages about the social world. Turning to the sanitized sensorium, competing social meanings can then be ascribed to the same sensorial phenomena to signify belonging and non-belonging depending on context. Between the site of the classroom and the cultural festival, the conditions of belonging shift. For instance, rendered in terms of the sensory pleasures of an exotic South Asia, foreign smells become part of an acceptable model of difference: “I am tolerant; that food smells really good.” In the cultural festival, such smells become cultural commodities, rather than liabilities. The broader implication here pertains to the contradiction at the heart of multiculturalism: Be different, but only in certain contexts. Multicultural practice in this context specifically calls for foreignness, exoticness, and smelling “different.” Foods that are “foreign,” marked “bad” in the context of job searches where difference is to be mitigated, are now marked delicious when difference is to be embraced. Such “ethnic” identifiers like food, music, and clothing inform the sanitized
sensorium and help to construct people’s perceptions of what it means to be South Asian, and by extension, just how “South Asian” one can be and still qualify for inclusion into Canadian society. The management of difference does not go undisputed, however. In the next chapter I will focus on the agency of the Pakistani women I interviewed as they fashion alternative models of the self by resisting norms, values, and constructions of appropriate citizenship around the category “South Asian.” But first, it is important to highlight the contradictions between the sanitization that happens in the space of the workshops and the public face of multiculturalism because of the distinct roles immigrant women have in these different contexts: as flexible workers in one and as displays of multicultural Canada’s inclusivity in the other.

In 2001, the space for a South Asian cultural festival was created by the demise of Desh Pardesh (DP), a multidisciplinary arts festival that functioned as a venue for underrepresented and marginalized groups within Toronto’s South Asian diasporic community to participate in public culture. DP was a lesbian- and gay-positive, feminist, anti-racist, anti-imperialist, and anti-caste organization that operated from 1989 to 2001. It was originally conceived as “Salaam Toronto!” and was administered by Khush (a collective of South Asian gay men in Toronto) as an alternative space for South Asian diasporics. The DP festival was funded by academic institutions, media and film boards, and government-sponsored grants for LGBTQ organizations; however, the festival and its administrative body closed due to a financial crisis in 2001 (Desh Pardesh, 2007). Its demise left a vacuum, leading other segments of the South Asian community to turn to the government for more formalized recognition of the community.

On December 14, 2001, the government of Ontario declared May South Asian Heritage Month under the South Asian Heritage Act of 2001. Throughout that year, parts of the Ontario community had agitated to establish an Indian Arrival and Heritage Month, but the government rejected the name to avoid confusion with laws pertaining to Indigenous populations—a point I take up in more detail in chapter 4. Since then, the federal government in Ottawa has hosted celebrations throughout the country, the largest of which is on Parliament Hill. Members of all levels of government participate in South Asian Heritage Month, making public appearances and giving speeches that encourage “diversity.” For instance, in recent years, representatives such as then Minister of Citizenship, Immigration, and Multiculturalism Jason Kenney, have attended. In a speech at
DesiFest, the event that closed the South Asian Heritage Month activities in 2008, Kenney said:

Our core Canadian values are democracy, freedom, human rights, and the rule of law. The more than 200,000 people who come to Canada annually from every corner of the world embrace these values, adding an often indefinable element to our sense of who we are. . . . It’s great to witness such a committed and dedicated group of people who clearly see links between their Canadian citizenship, their civic participation, and their commitment to maintaining a connection with their cultural heritage. . . . Canada has an enviable record of integrating newcomers by encouraging their full participation in our society. One of the cornerstones of our pluralistic society is that all citizens benefit from equality under the law, regardless of their cultural or religious background.

As this quote demonstrates, the government is deeply invested—not only financially but also ideologically—in the promotion of “diversity,” and more specifically to South Asian Heritage Month. 18

Many people consider this monthlong celebration to be part of the success story of Canadian multiculturalism because of the recognition it provides minority subjects. However, while political philosophers Charles Taylor (1994) and Will Kymlicka (1995) have written that multiculturalism in the Canadian context is a progressive kind of liberalism, critics such as Yasmeen Abu-Laban (2002) have argued that the central problem with it lies in the essentialist understandings of cultural diversity it promotes. Talal Asad (1993) asserts that while “difference is certainly a crucial issue at the level of the law’s treatment of individual citizens (the bearers of rights and duties), it is also relevant to the individual’s desire to have and to maintain a collective identity” (262). Further, David Theo Goldberg (2002) has argued that the multicultural state is inherently a racial state, writing that the “apparatuses and technologies employed by modern states have served variously to fashion, modify, and reify the terms of racial expression, as well as racist exclusions and subjugation” (4). Multicultural policy was designed with the central concern of managing racial and ethnic difference by creating categories (census and legislative), thus becoming a population-based management tool that controls and contains the bodies of citizens and subjects.

As a census category for both a visible minority group and an ethnic origin, “South Asian” signifies a unified community, despite the actual diversity
of its “members” in diaspora. For example, in a report titled “South Asians in Canada: Unity through Diversity,” a study developed by Statistics Canada in partnership with the Department of Canadian Heritage, the authors claim: “The South Asian community is one of the most diverse visible minority groups. . . . And yet, the South Asian community is one of the most unified when it comes to the value they attach to family interaction, the maintenance of social networks within their cultural group, and the preservation of ethnic customs, traditions and heritage languages” (Tran, Kaddatz, and Allard 2005). Interestingly, all of these characteristics are always used to define and describe the impossibility of their full incorporation (refusal to shed ethnic customs, language, and group-based identification).

The flagship event of the South Asian community in Toronto takes place in August in the form of a cultural festival called “Masala! Mehndi! Masti!” (MMM), which official materials translate as “Spices, Hennah, and Fun.” (A number of my interviewees stressed that they thought it was peculiar to use the term “Masti,” as they understood it as a derogatory term for girls who do “bad things.”) As I walked through MMM one year, I noticed that the small section of tables for nonprofit groups were eclipsed by stages of South Asian dance performances, Indian food stands, and stalls selling jewelry.

Abhishek Mathur and Jyoti Rana created MMM in 2001 in the wake of the death of Desh Pardesh. In an interview with Meena, a member of a nonprofit organization involved with MMM, she said that while DP dealt with political issues, she felt that MMM represented “status quo Bollywood.” Local community activists miss DP, believing that it was more a political venue than one for entertainment. Despite resistance from members of the activist community, MMM has been a tremendous success. Attendance between 2001 and 2008 grew from 25,000 to 100,000. The event is held at Harbourfront every year and typically consists of a three-day summer festival with dance performances, comedy, art, photography, mehndi parlors, food stalls, and cooking demonstrations. There was also a midnight yoga session by an organization called Yogapalooza.

This particular year MMM was very well attended, with approximately 60,000 people participating. It prominently featured two commoditized elements always associated with South Asia in these festivals—food and clothing. The food section was under a tent away from the main building and adjacent to the outdoor marketplace. Many popular restaurants from “Little India” had set up stalls to sell food. Mango lassi was sold everywhere as a popular, imagined authentic South Asian drink, alongside butter chicken
and samosas. Of significance is not just the fact that Indian food was being sold, but also the type, with each stand specializing in generic fare that could be purchased at any food-court restaurant in any mall. Similarly, the garments for sale represented a popular notion of South Asia—one that arises out of film, television, and media representations of the country. There were numerous stalls that featured Indian sari fabrics, heavy gold and silver jewelry, lighter cotton fabric tunics, and leather slippers. In conversations with the vendors, I learned that the buyers here were most often tourists who wanted to purchase an authentic piece of India, thus revealing that these particular commodities also signify very different meanings depending on who wears them.

Another area of clothing sales differed greatly from that understood to be traditional dress, including silk-screened T-shirts and “Canadian” clothing fashioned by Indian designers. The T-shirts had Indian-themed patterns printed on them, with the intended market being young, hip South Asian women who attend the festival. These clothing stalls, fashioned by local young Indian women designers, enable a similar type of commodity purchase. In this case, the fashionable, often second-generation South Asian woman, although she may feel more entitled, is also purchasing a piece of culture in the way the tourist might.

Cultural festivals emerge as a type of sensorium in which subjects are supposed to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate moments to display their Otherness. In the context of the cultural festival, particular kinds of differences are admired and appreciated as signs of an authentic South Asia. During South Asian Heritage Month, dance performances, arts exhibits, and food stalls (predominantly Indian) take the celebration of culture out into the city streets. The local Little India on Gerard Street closes down several times during the month for food fairs. At every event I attended, long lines of South Asians and non–South Asians alike would form around the food stalls. Because the goal of these festivals is outreach to the larger community, there is often a large percentage of non–South Asians in attendance. Over the years as I waited patiently in line at various South Asian festivals for my mango lassi, I overheard a number of conversations between non–South Asians remarking on how delicious the food smelled and how exotic it all was.

The focus on South Asian food also draws attention to another aspect of the sensorium, that of taste. In this sense, taste takes on a double meaning, signaling the sensation of food on the tongue, but also appropriateness and cultural capital. The sensorium is a sensuous experience taking into account
tastes and culture. As Bourdieu (1984) has argued, cultural capital denotes social distinction, which mediates belonging and non-belonging. “Taste,” then, translates the literal smells of South Asian food into the metaphorical realm of cultural capital and social distinction. Taste becomes an aesthetic, such that social class and belonging are mediated by one’s cultural practices, habits, and performances.

These markers of taste are not only experienced and performed by immigrant women, but also by non–South Asian Canadian visitors to these festivals and by extension by the multicultural state itself. That is, non–South Asians gain cultural capital and distinction in the context of a multicultural state by their participation in authentic performances of minority culture. Demonstrating not only tolerance for cultural difference, but also contextualized pleasure, becomes a kind of social distinction and cultural capital for non–South Asians. By extension, the multicultural state also gains cultural capital by permitting these kinds of performances of minority culture, as a sensuous experience of difference. For instance, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations praised Canada for this practice, stating: “Every summer, Canada celebrates its multicultural reality with numerous festivals. These festivals bring together a rich diversity of cultural heritages, represented by ethnic and community groups living together in Canada.”

These cultural performances benefit the state on the international stage, as they directly contribute to Canada’s reputation as multicultural and inclusive. Therefore, acceptable difference and cultural capital for both the producer of difference (here, South Asian women) and the consumer (multicultural Canada) are intimately connected.

The smells of South Asian food signal the consumption of South Asian commodities and culture, which themselves are fine for local food courts and cultural festivals, but inappropriate in the context of work. These kinds of phenomena signal the ways the smells of an imagined South Asia are only situationally repugnant. There is the “quotidian dilemma” of cooking smells representing both cultural heritage and the means through which minorities are “Othered” (Manalansan 2006). Smells, unlike offensive bodies, cannot be contained; as such, the focus on offensive odors highlights an anxiety over managing refugee bodies in public space (Ong 2003). The Toronto example contributes to these important works in illustrating how South Asian food smells and forms of embodied difference also become a means of inclusion and beneficial cultural commodification. Here, I build on a long critique of liberal multiculturalism that the only forms of acceptable difference consist of “food, music, and language” (e.g., Fish 1997; Žižek 1997).
There is an inherent power differential in multiculturalism, with some having the power to determine inclusion and exclusion and others who must remain subject to such judgments. Žižek (1997) critiques the rhetoric of multiculturalism by arguing that respect for the Other is merely illusory. “Liberal tolerance” merely condones some practices of “the Other,” such as celebrating ethnic cuisine, while denouncing divergent cultural practices under the umbrella of “fundamentalism.” He writes, “The ‘real Other’ is by definition ‘patriarchal,’ ‘violent,’ never the Other of ethereal wisdom and charming customs” (37), further suggesting that multicultural logic is an inherently classed discourse in which global elites are favored; their superiority is maintained through their claims to respecting different cultures, thus creating a patronizing Eurocentrism. While critics of multiculturalism are correct in the context of the multicultural festival, multiculturalism does something different when it comes to demands on the body to qualify for work. Immigrants must perform these differing forms of embodied citizenship—the sensory, the visceral—to become legible, but these two contexts do not exist in isolation, but rather are intrinsically interwoven and central to the practice of multiculturalism.

One secondary example of a cultural festival that illustrates this contradiction in multicultural practice is the Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) public Eid prayer. While not the only Eid celebration in Toronto, every year on the Muslim holiday, the Muslim Association of Canada hosts a prayer meeting at a CNE convention center in which close to 15,000 Toronto-area Muslims participate. It is advertised as an invitation to “join this grand celebration that has become a fabric of Ontario’s heritage and Toronto’s multicultural mosaic.” A large, plain building, the CNE is normally deserted during the winter, but on that day, the streets are filled with people. Little girls wearing patent-leather shoes and frilly dresses run around together in groups. Families struggle to stay together amidst the crowds trying to enter the buildings. There is a point just before the entrance where families divide, men entering one door and women another. Small children, especially boys, throw tantrums at the audacity of being separated from their fathers and the indignity of having to sit in the women’s section. Women pray in the second half of the hall, while men pray in the first. People carefully lay out large cloths, or small prayer mats, and try to stay shoulder to shoulder, lest the devil get in between them, as I was told over and over and which resonated with my own religious upbringing in Toronto. At the back of the prayer hall, in the spirit of a festival, there are small carnival rides for
children: a Ferris wheel, a carousel, and games. Along the right side, tables are set up to sell all manner of desserts, as well as prayer books, Islamic educational tools, and Muslim baby-name books.

One year, former Toronto mayor Mel Lastman was there to give a speech. Everyone was excited. Lastman is a small man with a large head of silver-grey hair, short in stature, and very loud. His speech was concise, focusing on how well-adjusted and hard-working “you” and “your” children are, the “you” referring to the Toronto Muslim community. “You should be proud.” I looked around, expecting to find expressions of horror or distaste, but was met instead with pleased expressions at his characterizations of Muslims in Toronto. The former mayor’s speech, with its hearkening to the “model minority,” is indicative of the core contradiction in Canadian multiculturalism. While multicultural practice in Canada allows for the erasure of certain types of difference, it is also invested in recognizing (even producing) other kinds of difference in the name of creating a Canadian national identity imagined to be predicated on inclusion. The same markers of bodily difference celebrated in multicultural sites, however, are denigrated in the context of the job search. This is indicative of another way that immigrant bodies have become central to the making—not undermining—of national identity, and how they are a crucial site to witness the implementation of the sanitized sensorium.

Through the example of Toronto’s settlement services, I have sought to examine emergent contradictions in Canadian multicultural policies and new forms of governance, to examine how social inequalities are managed in liberal democratic contexts. Neoliberal forms of governance aimed at South Asian immigrant integration result in the disciplining of immigrant bodies by illustrating obstacles to their successful transition to full participation via the formal economy. However, as the example of the South Asian festival suggests, other practices within the Canadian regime of multiculturalism tend to reinforce those same differences. Thus, these various attempts at “inclusion” produced by different modalities of state governance have unintended, contradictory effects. Here, these contradictory forms of interpellation—the attempts to simultaneously erase and celebrate (read produce) differences—result in the further marginalization and alienation of immigrant subjects.

As I have argued in this chapter, the look and smell of South Asia are markers of both inclusion and exclusion. This is evidenced by the different contextual value of the smell of an exotic South Asian festival versus a repugnant South Asian body on the job market, or the wearing of what
is understood to be traditional dress in a cultural festival versus on a job interview. Smell serves as a marker of Otherness, but its meaning varies contextually. The practice of multiculturalism reveals an implicit process of moralizing that takes place through the politics of multiculturalism in Canada and is enacted through the senses. This moralizing process simultaneously attempts to celebrate, produce, and erase differences inscribed on the bodies of immigrant women through what I have suggested is a sensorial regime. The partial inclusion of immigrant bodies into public national life has been widely discussed by social theorists. Here, I have drawn attention to the sensory dimension of multicultural politics, and to a terrain of multicultural practice, in order to understand the conditions of citizenship enabled by this model. This pedagogical tendency in the settlement-services sector is not coincidental or to be chalked up to a few bad instructors. The sheer number of times I heard highly skilled women instructed to take off their headscarves, change their names, and bathe indicates this is a systemic problem of the modernist project in which there is only one way to be a model citizen-worker—and that is to be “like us.”

The sanitized sensorium primes both the greater Canadian public and Pakistani immigrant women themselves to engage a multicultural public through sensorial regimes. In Toronto the sights, sounds, and smells of immigrant bodies produce in different contexts contrasting narratives of citizenship and multicultural belonging. These sensory conditions contain the possibility of inclusion, and yet the constant reminder of their Otherness. However, performing within the sanitized sensorium has the capacity for subversion, as well. For instance, eye contact takes on new meaning from within the sanitized sensorium. Rather than only signifying masculinized business culture, eye contact signals both facing white culture and being seen by it. The moment of contact generates an affective encounter between self and Other that produces both in that moment. That is, through a colonialist lens, or from the perspective of the colonizer, the Other is viewed and categorized as more and less aberrant for inclusion. Through a subversive lens, or from the perspective of the racialized, the Other views back, bearing witness to the trial it is subjected to, similarly gauging what is necessary for not only inclusion, but also survival. The next two chapters explore how women react to these sensorial regimes and conditions for cultural citizenship—how they look back. Taking on the affective and sensorial experiences of racialization, the next chapter examines the consequences of the creation of the multicultural category “South Asian.”