FOREIGN CREDENTIALS, DOMESTIC DISPARITIES: A STUDY OF SKILLED IMMIGRANTS UNEVEN INTEGRATION TO LABOUR MARKET THROUGH THE LENS OF CRITICAL RACE THEORY & POLITICAL ECONOMY IN CANADA

by

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Dalhousie University is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq. We are all Treaty people.

DEDICATION PAGE

This thesis is dedicated to my incredible mother, Rafiqun Nahar, whose love and belief in me have been the foundation of my life. Your unwavering support and guidance have shaped who I am today; I am forever grateful for that.

To my loving wife, Nabila Kabir, whose strength and dedication have been my constant support. You have cared for our family gracefully, allowing me to focus on my work. Without your encouragement, this journey would not have been possible.

And to my sweet two years old daughter, Elnaaz Bint Shahid, the smartest kid, whose laughter, presence and smile bring light to my every day. You inspire me to work harder and to build a better future for you. Your presence is my greatest motivation.

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ABSTRACT

Immigration in Canada has historically been shaped by racial capitalism, particularly in terms of how immigrant labour is used and valued. Immigrants are hired for low-wage jobs and are subjected to poor working conditions, which benefit employers seeking to maximize profits. This qualitative study examined the expectations and challenges experienced by mainly racialized, highly skilled, and educated immigrants, predominantly South Asians, while trying to integrate into the Nova Scotian workforce, focusing on Halifax Regional Municipality. This project engages Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Political Economy (PE) frameworks to investigate the role of systemic racism and economic structures in the process of de-skilling and re-skilling immigrants. These factors typically result in these individuals being forced into precarious, low-paying retail and food services positions. While revealing the impact of racial capitalism on their professional opportunities and mental health, the results bring invaluable insights into the policy and practical suggestions to foster more inclusive employment practices in Nova Scotia.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

PE	Political Economy
CRT	Critical Race Theory
EE	Express Entry
UTM	University of Toronto Mississauga
STATSCAN	Statistics Canada
BIPOC	Black, Indigenous, and people of colour
EEA	Employment Equity Act
CAPA	Choice of Partnership Approach
PNP	Provincial Nominee Program
TCPS	Tri-Council Policy Statement
TFWP	Temporary Foreign Worker Program
CEC	Canadian Experience Class
FSWP	Federal Skilled Worker Program
FSTP	Federal Skilled Trades Program
CRS	Comprehensive Ranking System
IRCC	Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada
NS	Nova Scotia
IRPA	Immigration and Refugee Protection Act
CIC	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
IT	Information Technology
MSC	Master of Science
NGO	Non-government Organization
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
ECA	Educational Credential Assessment
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
CBA	Canadian Bar Association
PIIDPA	Personal Information International Disclosure Protection Act

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Canada's interest in and efforts to attract highly qualified immigrants seeking new opportunities prompts specific concerns when read against the experiences of newcomers attempting to find employment aligned with their training and educational background. This project applies the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Political Economy (PE) to examine the experiences of highly trained immigrants in Nova Scotia, with a particular focus on their de-skilling and re-skilling, the impact of their foreign qualifications on their career paths, and their eventual integration into entry-level, low-waged, and precarious labour markets in retail and quick service sectors. This study uses a qualitative approach to gain a detailed picture of the difficulties skilled immigrants encounter, reading these against the promises made by the Canadian state and, in turn, the expectations these migrants arrive in Nova Scotia with. While earlier literature focuses on immigrants employed precariously across a range of settings, there is a lack of specific research focused on high-skilled immigrants in low-waged sectors and even less considering how this de- or re-skilling is emblematic of racial capitalism in Nova Scotia and Canada, more broadly. This research redresses this, drawing on in-depth interviews with highly skilled immigrants and applying the lens of CRT and PE to provide insight into how racial capitalism operates to the detriment of newcomers in the province, how it affects their career prospects, working environment, and in turn, ability to realize future goals for the future. It also provides critical insight into the implications of labour market exclusion on immigrant mental health and well-being. Finally, it offers a series of practical recommendations for policy and decision-makers, employers, and immigrant

support groups striving to establish fair and inclusive workplaces in Canada and just immigration systems.

While this study resists an approach that would reduce migrants to their economic contributions, there exists essential literature demonstrating and quantifying those contributions, particularly in receiving countries with aging populations and labour shortages. For example, Ware, Fortin, and Paradis (2010) found that immigrants who arrived under the Immigrant Investor Program contribute approximately $1.9 to $2 billion annually to the Canadian economy. In addition, immigrants and migrants play a substantial role in the global economy, as evidenced by the $440 billion in remittances exchanged between host and home countries (World Bank 2011). Offering this as one of its primary rationales for encouraging and facilitating migration, one of the central tenets of Canada's immigration policy is that those with high levels of education and professional experience are the best candidates for permanent residency (Li, 2003). And yet, although individuals who enter under the point system typically have university credentials, a study by the UTM Sociology Department in 2021 reveals a growing trend of precarious employment among Canadian immigrants. Furthermore, 16.7% of these immigrants held advanced degrees such as master's or doctorate degrees. According to Statistics Canada 2017, this percentage is significantly higher than among the Canadian-born population; also, in 2016, when the national average was 48.4% of people aged 25 years and over having a post-secondary degree, South Asian immigrants held 52.1%. Still, Canadian employers often downplay the importance of foreign degrees and work experience, making it difficult for qualified immigrants to find work (Basran and Zong, 1998; Li, 2003).

In turn, immigrants consistently find themselves in jobs that do not recognize or compensate them for these credentials in precarious sectors. In addition to scholarship pointing to the prevalence of deskilling amongst high-skilled immigrants, the literature also reveals that the work immigrants, regardless of skill and training, can typically secure is in sectors where precarity and low wages are the norm. More generally, scholars have observed increased precarious employment, which involves part-time, temporary, and contract work, and traditional full-time direct employment for many workers (Pupo and Thomas, 2010). Precarious forms of employment have limited social benefits and statutory entitlements, job insecurity, low wages, and a higher risk of ill health (Vosko, 2006). While a growing number of workers find themselves faced with these conditions, they are most common in sectors with high numbers of women, racialized workers, and migrants of varying status. As a result, despite possessing significant financial advantages upon arrival and high levels of training, immigrants who come to Canada can only secure work in these sectors and encounter tremendous economic uncertainty. This happens for a wide range of professions, but it is most clearly revealed in the case of physicians, engineers, and accountants. Despite their qualifications, these professionals face enormous inequity when finding employment. (James, 2010). While regulatory measures have been developed to address these trends, as discussed by Marsden in 2011, their effectiveness is limited due to inadequate enforcement and a lack of improved opportunities for obtaining and extending status in Canada. A number of scholars have also pointed to the extent to which immigration policy itself exacerbates these conditions, maintaining the vulnerability of immigrant workers, including those with permanent residency status (Vosko and Thomas, 2014).

StatsCan (2022) revealed that the country acknowledged a tremendous population growth rate compared to the rest of other G7 nations between 2016 and 2021. Even though the pandemic hit was equal to other countries, Canada's population boom in 2020 was still the highest among other G7 countries. If we compare the Maritimes and territories with other provinces, the population had a faster rate of growth, which was a huge shift from the previous eight decades. The majority of recent economic immigrants in Nova Scotia (66.4%), New Brunswick (63.7%), Yukon (62.9%), the Northwest Territories (56.8%), and Newfoundland and Labrador (53.3%) were provincial nominees.

Yet the economic precarity in the Maritimes puts additional stress on immigrants and leads them to leave the province for other bigger cities outside of Nova Scotia, like Toronto, Montreal, or Vancouver. StatsCan (2022) also noted that one-third to one-half of those who immigrate to the Maritimes move to another province within five years of their arrival.

An in-depth qualitative study, this thesis interrogates the labour market experiences and outcomes of immigrant and migrant workers, and more specifically, the experiences of high-skilled South Asian origin newcomers in food services and retail, through the combined lens of racial capitalism, Critical Race Theory and Political Economy in Canada. There is a huge dearth of literature on South Asians, for instance, Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan, but there is little literature on Chinese or black communities. Statscan (2024) showed that among the total immigrants who landed in Canada, South Asians made the highest number from January 2022 to March 2024.

Immigrants from South Asia to Canada possess distinct cultural traditions and beliefs that separate them from other immigrant groups. Many South Asian immigrants,

as opposed to Chinese and other Southeast Asian counterparts, often hold to cultural and spiritual customs more closely associated with the Middle East. The values and beliefs of the many South Asian populations cannot be adequately reflected in study results when South Asian cultures are lumped together with "Asian" cultures. Ramirez (1999) stated that South Asian immigrants in Canada think that there are no family checks and balances on other immigrants living in the country. South Asians often aim to keep the family together and culture intact. In addition, accessing health care or other services in a foreign language is also a challenge for immigrants. Local healthcare systems are new to many Indians, especially those from Punjab, who may have discrete expectations and values based on their heritage and culture, as well as a lack of experience with Canadian institutions (MacEntee et al., 2014). Immigrants undergo a process known as acculturation when they adjust to the pressures of the dominant group and accept its standards of conduct. Assimilation is a part of acculturation that involves giving up a lot of one's racial or ethnic identity to blend in. Among some ethnic cultures, where family closeness is seen as an advantage of recreational activities, there is some evidence that familism may mitigate assimilation pressures and explain selective acculturation. (Tirone and Pedlar, 2000). South Asians promote family unity and reliance on one another. Individualism is seen as egoistic, but collective identity is highly esteemed. Moreover, much like Black immigrants, the community is considered an extended family (Choudhry, 2001).

In addition to culture shock and conflict, south Asians and other visible minorities are prone to experience racism over all the institutional systems in the country. Racism is a significant factor in this situation, contributing to a continuous cycle of poverty,

uncertainty and sometimes trauma that affects several generations. The framework of Critical Race Theory (CRT) offers insight into the impact of systemic racism on the integration of immigrants into their respective fields of work in Canada. Critical Race Theory argues that racism is deeply rooted in social systems and institutions, which in turn affects the employment prospects of immigrants. Individuals from historically marginalized racial groups encounter additional obstacles because of prevalent stereotypes and biases. Intersectionality is a fundamental concept in Critical Race Theory (CRT) that emphasizes the multiple layers of discrimination immigrants face due to race, class, gender, and immigration status. Institutional practices frequently mirror racial biases, resulting in the systematic devaluation of immigrants' qualifications and their subsequent placement in lower-skilled positions. In addition to recognizing the obstacles faced, CRT acknowledges immigrants' active role in resisting and challenging systemic inequities.

Political economy draws attention to the relationship between state and capital, and it explores the power and how it is unevenly distributed between people, with a specific focus on working conditions, access to resources, and the efforts of employers to maximize profit. In migration studies, political economy is used to elaborate the experience and positioning of a range of migrants in labour markets. Policy decisions frequently prioritize economic considerations, occasionally favouring specific skill sets over others. This approach can result in the marginalization of immigrants who possess valuable expertise that is not adequately acknowledged. Together, these theoretical frameworks offer insight into how policy reinforces racial inequality and ensures the availability of precarious, vulnerable workers. Furthermore, CRT, racial capitalism

analysis, and political economy help us understand the profound discrepancy between what the state purports to be doing through liberalized immigration, multiculturalism, and employment equity legislation and the actual employment and integration experiences of newcomers by elaborating how society establishes and upholds racial classifications and hierarchies (Billings, 2003) in the service of racial capitalism. More precisely, racial capitalism refers to the intricate connection between capitalism, racism, and the exploitation of racialized communities.

As mentioned above, the labour market is significantly impacted by systemic racism and discrimination, resulting in barriers that have a disproportionate impact on immigrants of colour. The systemic issues at hand have a detrimental impact on the health and well-being of immigrants while also contributing to the perpetuation of cycles of marginalization and social inequity. To tackle these challenges, it is necessary to implement comprehensive policy interventions that dismantle discriminatory practices and promote equal economic opportunities. This will ultimately contribute to developing a more inclusive and healthier society.

Canada's immigration laws and practices have been historically influenced by racial capitalism, explicitly concerning the utilization and valuation of immigrant labour. Racial capitalism in Canada is connected to immigration through the exploitation of immigrant labourers. Immigrants, like those at the center of this study, frequently secure employment in low-paying positions and endure unfavourable working circumstances, serving the interests of companies aiming to optimize their profits. Racialized immigrants who experience prejudice and structural obstacles in finding jobs and advancing in their careers are especially vulnerable to this exploitation. This project seeks to understand the

implications of racial capitalism, as revealed through the employment trajectories and in the lives of Nova Scotia newcomers and contribute to the growing understanding of labour market stratification in a social and political context purportedly committed to employment equity and multiculturalism.

A brief history of immigration in Canada

Canada, seen as a quintessential 'country of immigrants', has always depended on immigrants to drive economic and demographic expansion while simultaneously implementing immigration regulations to maintain the ethnic homogeneity of the nation (Bhuyan, 2015). The country is classified as a 'settler' nation that has been populated over time by successive waves of immigration, frequently resulting in the removal and eradication of the original indigenous population. Canada has one of the highest rates of permanent immigration per person globally, with a rate of 7.5%, second only to Australia (Milan 2011). The country initially asserted its sovereignty by favouring 'White' settlers, specifically immigrants from Great Britain, the USA, France, and certain northern European countries, over 'non-preferred' groups such as immigrants from Italy, Poland, and Greece, as well as historically excluded groups like First Nation, Inuit, Métis, indigenous groups, Japanese, Chinese, Indian immigrants, and enslaved Africans who were denied citizenship (Jakubowski, 1997). The policy of 'White Canada' is further demonstrated in a speech given by Prime Minister Mackenzie King after World War II. Amidst the large-scale movement of people from Europe, including numerous Jews escaping persecution, King advocated for Canada's independent authority to choose British and northern European immigrants as "preferred" citizens. He emphasized that

Canada could select individuals they consider desirable for future citizenship (Bhuyan, 2015). This sentiment has persisted.

The neo-liberalization of Canada's immigration regime, like many state systems, originated in the post-war period. In the 1960s, Canada underwent significant changes in its nation-building process, such as eliminating national considerations and implementing a 'universal' point system to attract qualified workers (Nupur and Slade 2011). Implementing the 'points system' in Canada replaced race-based preference with indications of human capital aligned with the country's labour market requirements (Reitz 2007). It successfully attracted highly qualified immigrants from other countries, significantly changing the nation's demographic makeup. According to Statistics Canada, in 2007, since 1970, half of all immigrants came from nations in the Caribbean, Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America that were previously considered 'excluded'. According to Statistics Canada, in 2011, 20% of the population in Canada were immigrants and 19% identified as belonging to a visible minority group (Bhuyan, 2015).

Since the early 1970s, the Canadian government directed its immigration policy towards aligning with the labour market's needs, specifically focusing on occupational demand and the attributes considered crucial for immigrants' long-term success (Aydemir, 2002). Hence, it is vital to acknowledge Canadian immigrants' involvement in the job market as a fundamental aspect of their employment results. The increase in the number of immigrants from various countries prompted a revision of the Immigration Act in the 1990s. This revision was driven by the perception that immigration was financially burdensome for the Canadian population (Thobani 2000). The federal government

initiated the transfer of responsibility for settlement to the private sector and intensified monitoring of migrants' utilization of social security programs (Bhuyan, 2015).

One of the most important ways eligible people immigrate to Canada is via the Express Entry method. To facilitate the selection of qualified applicants for three federal economic immigration programs—the Canadian Experience Class (CEC), the Federal Skilled Trades Program (FSTP), and the Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSWP)—Express Entry was launched in 2015. It is an online application management system. This system includes provincial nominee programs (PNPs), which allow territories and provinces to recommend people who are in line with what is needed in their respective employment sectors. As the initial stage in the Express Entry procedure, candidates will have to fill out an online profile detailing their personal data, educational background, job history, talents, proof of funds and language abilities. Afterwards, the Comprehensive Ranking System (CRS) assesses and rates each profile. The CRS considers numerous variables, like age, education, employment history, and skills in English and/or French).

During recurring drawings from the Express Entry pool, the top CRS scorers are asked to apply for permanent residence. Upon getting an invitation, aspiring applicants, either they or along with their families, have sixty days to fill out and submit an application to Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). The target time for application processing is six months. Skilled workers worldwide choose the Express Entry system because it is apparently fast, simple, and transparent, all of which are important in the Canadian labour market. While the method does claim to be efficient, it stresses that applicants with superior language abilities, degrees, enough proof of funds to

survive for 6-8 months after initial landing , and job experience in Canada will have a far better chance of being approved.

Although Canada faces a shortage of skilled labour and skilled immigrants are admitted based on their potential to contribute to the economy, they still encounter higher rates of underemployment and unemployment than Canadian-born individuals. Several factors significantly challenge skilled immigrants' effective social and economic integration. These include a lack of information and guidance, difficulties in having foreign credentials recognized, struggles with obtaining recognition for previous work experience or meeting employers' requirement for Canadian experience, language skill deficiencies, obstacles in obtaining references, prejudices, stereotypes, and discrimination, cultural integration issues, the need for social and emotional support, and concerns regarding health and well-being. Various studies and sources have highlighted these challenges (Alboim and McIsaac 2007; Banerjee and Phan 2014; Chen et al. 2010; Drolet et al. 2015; Gauthier 2016; Ng and Omariba 2010; Reitz 2007; Sakamoto et al. 2010, Weiner, 2008).

Racial Capitalism Concealed in Policies and Practice

In 1971, the Canadian government implemented a multiculturalism policy to endorse and advance the cultural distinctions of different ethnic groups, aiming to create "unity in diversity" (James, 2005). In 1988, the Canadian parliament established and ratified the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, which further promoted eliminating racial discrimination initially stipulated in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms of 1985 (James, 2005). The author noted that Canada officially became multicultural by implementing the multiculturalism policy. This means that all immigrants, regardless of

race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, gender, (dis)ability, or other differences, are accepted and should be treated equally and respectfully. Upon acquiring citizenship, immigrants must assimilate into the country's social structure and be granted rights and liberties. In turn, government-funded settlement and integration programs are developed to counter segregation and marginalization. James (2005) elaborates that, regrettably, these principles are quickly undermined given what we can describe as the conditions of racial capitalism in Canada that marginalize immigrants, particularly those who are racialized, depriving them of equal opportunities.

Research Process

This thesis sought to highlight the discrepancies as they are revealed in the experiences of newcomers in Nova Scotia and to understand the implications of de- and re-skilling in the lives of South Asian-born immigrants in fast food and retail. The study also aims to offer critical analytical insight into why de- and re-skilling persist despite employment equity legislation and the prioritization of skills embedded with the immigration-selection process. While the literature provides several important insights into some of the reasons for de- and re-skilling, it repeatedly fails to consider how racial capitalism and the legacy of settler colonialism determine the opportunities available to newcomers.

A secondary objective of this work was to offer a re-articulation of the trajectory of Canadian immigration since the 1880s, highlighting the ongoing workings of Canadian racial capitalism in shaping immigration policy, determining the parameters of labour market inclusion and exclusion in Canada, and in turn, establishing the persistent exploitability of newcomers. The contemporary example of the offer was used as an

example of the longevity of the state's collaboration with capital vis-a-vis immigration policy. Put differently, the conditions of labour experienced by recent arrivals in NS are part and parcel of a much longer history.

Nova Scotia Immigration Pathways

On August 27, 2002, the provincial and federal governments entered into the Canada-Nova Scotia Agreement on Provincial Nominees. This agreement initiated a five-year pilot project to nominate 1,000 foreign nationals to CIC for immigration purposes (Dobrowolsky, 2011). The NSNP originally consisted of different categories of immigrants, including skilled workers, community-identified individuals and economic nominees. In the following years, two additional streams were introduced. The first was specifically designed for individuals working in family businesses and was implemented in late 2006. The second stream, catering to international students, was established in the spring of 2007. In 2010, the NSNP introduced a new Agri-food Sector pilot, as reported by the Chronicle Herald and cited in Dobrowolsky's work from 2011. A PNP seemed suitable for Nova Scotia, considering the province's persistent migration challenges and recent concerns, such as decreasing birth rates, an aging population, and rural depopulation. Additionally, the organization has faced ongoing challenges in attracting and retaining immigrants. The Nova Scotia government experimented with immigration policies due to the province's economic demands and labour shortages in key sectors.

Policy analysts and scholars long ago realized that Nova Scotia has a shortage of skilled labour (Singer, 2021), and people coming to the country gain points through their skills and experiences. One would expect individuals to stay there if the advantages of migrating outweigh the financial and psychological disadvantages. Hence, The Atlantic

Immigration Pilot Program was initiated in 2017 as part of the Atlantic Growth Strategy. Its primary objective was to assist employers in recruiting foreign skilled workers and international graduates to fill local job vacancies that could not be filled otherwise. Starting in 2022, the program has been extended to the Atlantic Immigrant Program, allowing individuals to pursue employment opportunities in any of the four Atlantic provinces. Consequently, Nova Scotia's population grew last year, the fastest since 1951 (Willick, 2023). During the past few years, a population boom has mainly been observed due to immigration and people moving here from different provinces across the country.

Now, the government has the lofty goal of reaching the 2 million population by 2060 (Thomas, 2022). If the government wants to stick with the plan, it must welcome 25,000 newcomers yearly. Because of the relatively faster permanent residency process, people are always attracted to move to Nova Scotia. People also prioritize the province among other Atlantic provinces due to its booming economic growth, scenic options, and closeness to bigger cities like Toronto and Montreal. However, as my research reveals, the more people come, the more likely it becomes that they will be frustrated due to the lack of job opportunities. Given that employment and income are the crucial social determinants of immigrant health, too many people arriving in Canada are highly qualified and experienced in their career sectors back home or in other countries (Keung, 2023. Yet they end up with dead-end jobs to meet their needs in Canada.

Very little literature is available focusing on Nova Scotia and South Asian immigrants. In a recent survey conducted by Akbari (2020), it was found that a significant portion of immigrants, approximately 26 percent, who arrived between 2011 and 2018, chose to leave the province. Furthermore, the study suggests that an additional

10 percent of immigrants may leave over the next five years. The main factors that prompted their departure included improved job prospects, the desire for higher wages and lower taxes, and the pursuit of better healthcare options. Additionally, there were mentions of workplaces that exhibit discriminatory practices. Stayers and leavers perceived Nova Scotia as having a less favourable economic situation, with lower wage rates, higher tax rates, and limited job opportunities. Individuals who have migrated from Nova Scotia are more inclined to secure employment and pursue their desired professions compared to those who currently reside in Nova Scotia. Individuals are less inclined to engage in multiple forms of employment. On the other hand, the media often highlights certain "success stories" that are frequently discussed by government officials and featured in government publications. These stories tend to focus on white, heterosexual couples from countries in the global North, particularly the United States and Great Britain (Dobrowolsky, 2011).

In addition to being an understudied site of immigration, Nova Scotia provides an important opportunity to explore immigrant inclusion and integration in a context that has just recently, but very vocally, harnessed immigration as a key economic strategy. While Nova Scotians may have historically been leery of immigration since the early 2000s, the province has aggressively pursued immigration, often framing Nova Scotians as inherently friendly, welcoming, and inclusive. And yet, as a small but important scholarship demonstrates, immigrant outcomes in the province paint a very different picture. This proposed thesis will contribute to that scholarship, offering insight into the expectations and employment experiences of highly skilled immigrants recruited to the province through programs prioritizing skill as part of the selection criteria. In turn, it will

consider why labour market exclusion persists, as well as the implication of that exclusion for immigrants. Finally, it hopes to generate locally relevant policy recommendations to ameliorate the conditions immigrants face in Nova Scotia. More specifically, this project asks:

1. What are the expectations and experiences of racialized newcomers in Nova Scotia when attempting to access high-skilled employment? And more precisely, what barriers, challenges, and potential opportunities do racialized newcomers encounter in so doing?
2. What are, in turn, the actual work experiences of newcomers in the province, and what are the implications of this work on the emotional, physical, and relational well-being?
3. Drawing on the framework of racial capitalism, how can we understand these experiences, barriers, challenges, and opportunities faced by racialized newcomers in Nova Scotian labour markets?

Methods

Due to its exploratory nature, the study utilized a qualitative method. The researcher collected some demographic information through semi-structured interviews. The duration of each semi-structured interview varied depending on the respondents' inclination to provide shorter or longer responses, typically lasting between 1 and 1.5 hours. Before commencing the data collection process, it was essential to thoroughly evaluate and ensure the validation and reliability of the tools through piloting. One advantage of piloting is adjusting and modifying the tool (Faulkner & Faulkner, 2019), as was the case for this study.

Sampling

Techniques

This study aimed to collect data from 15 racialized Nova Scotia migrants residing in Halifax Regional Municipality. The following criteria were taken into consideration in determining the participants:

- Who are at least 20 years old and speak communicative English, Bengali, Urdu or Hindi
- Who identifies as a racialized or person of colour.
- Who came to Nova Scotia within the last five years.
- Who works in the retail or any food industry in Halifax Regional Municipality (i.e., Tim Hortons, Walmart, Home Depot, Canadian Tire, Best Buy)
- Who have valid visa Status: Permanent Resident, Study Permit or Work Permit

Recruitment

The study used a combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Potential participants were reached via flyers distributed via email, University notice boards, and phone calls. Once they had agreed, a consent note was distributed, and they were asked to give verbal consent while completing the interview.

Ethical Consideration

This study had some ethical considerations. Participants were asked to provide consent to participate in the study. Participants were told they could withdraw from the study at any stage, whether during the interview or completing the questionnaire. Following the completion of the study, participants were given a 2-week window to determine whether they wished the researcher to delete the data. Participants' privacy is

of utmost importance to the study, and the researcher ensured that any information they provided would be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Privacy was considered, and the research report employed coding techniques and pseudonyms to protect anonymous identity. The study aimed to address any potential power imbalances that may existed between the researcher and the participants. Given the researcher's experience as a visible minority, a commitment to impartiality was maintained. Various factors, including the effectiveness of data security measures, the risk of unintentional disclosure during data analysis or sharing, and the potential for external privacy breaches, were essential to consider.

Data Management, Preservation and Sharing protocols were solidified during the data collection process. While protocols for the storage, preservation and sharing of data are not identified, Dalhousie University has several guides (Dalhousie Research Ethics & Information Technology Services, 2021) and tools (e.g. Microsoft Teams, Secure File Exchange Portal) that satisfy privacy and confidentiality requirements of the ethics board, can be accessed by persons outside of Dalhousie University through email specific invites and can be relied on for data management, preservation and sharing.

Limitations of the Study

More stratifying considerations of samples based on gender and home countries, such as India, Bangladesh, Palestine, Ghana, and Nigeria, may reveal significant differences among the visible minority groups.

Contribution of the Project

This research project is unique in Nova Scotia. It explored the complex relationship between racial capitalism, mostly South Asian immigrant integration

dynamics, and the application of critical race theory in Canada's political economy. This study also examines the relationship between Critical Race Theory and political economy, providing insights into race's role as a central power source within economic systems. By examining the points where race, class, and capitalism meet, we enhanced our comprehension of the inherent disparities within the Canadian political economy and how they are maintained and perpetuated. This theoretical framework clarified the inherent disparities present in the labour market's structure and emphasized possible domains for revolutionary alteration. This work provided valuable contributions to the current body of knowledge by conducting a thorough analysis and empirical examination.

This study examined how the lasting effects of colonialism and racial exploitation still exist in current economic systems, leading to ongoing inequalities and marginalization among coloured populations and immigrants. This research sought to make a substantial contribution to comprehending the professional and personal obstacles encountered by racialized individuals who have just arrived in Nova Scotia. This research filled a significant need in the current body of literature by specifically examining the experiences of racialized persons in high-skilled work, an area that has been largely neglected. This study aimed to identify and describe the unique obstacles that racialized newcomers face when trying to obtain high-skilled jobs. Doing so established a strong basis for policymakers and stakeholders to create focused interventions. This research aimed to comprehensively examine the lived experiences of racialized arrivals by utilizing qualitative analysis. It sought to provide a detailed and nuanced understanding of how their work lives affect their emotional, physical, and relational well-being. Having comprehensive knowledge is essential for creating policies and procedures that assist.

The results provided insights for creating practical suggestions to enhance racialized newcomers' assimilation and long-term employment in high-skilled jobs. The results of this project are significant for establishing policies and advocacy efforts that attempt to promote fairer economic prospects for immigrants and racialized groups in Canada. This thesis focused on serving as a driving force for constructive transformation, arguing for policies and practices that acknowledge and tackle the distinct obstacles coloured arrivals encounter. Pursuing this goal is targeted at actively promoting the development of a fair and unbiased society where the abilities and aptitudes of every person are recognized and exploited to their maximum capacity.

CHAPTER 2 MIGRANT EXPECTATIONS

Introduction

This chapter provides insight into the expectations of highly skilled workers in NS. Exceptions around immigration are always complex, reflecting realities and experiences in the country of origin and projecting forward to the resettlement site. Though highly personal, expectations are also created through the activities of governments, of both sending- and receiving- states, those of third-party recruiters and consultants, and those of employers and, for many, post-secondary educational institutions. At each turn, these actors project an image of Canada intended to communicate specific meaning and to motivate immigrant hopefuls to relocate to the country permanently. Importantly, since the late 1990s, and in Nova Scotia since the early 2000s, the provincial government has also embarked upon this messaging with the hopes of capitalizing on the social capital, training, and expertise of immigrants by encouraging them to migrate to the province. To this end, newcomers are—often prior to arrival—bombarded with images of a multicultural, inclusive Canada where equality, across a range of registers, is not only possible but the norm.

In addition to the more explicit signalling done online and through different recruitment forums, newcomers are subjected to more implicit messaging. Here, reflecting on neoliberal ideology and often through the work of state settlement services, newcomers adapt to the norms and expectations of neoliberal Canada. Here, the rhetoric of multiculturalism and inclusion obscures the reality of racial capitalism, but only for so long, as newcomers quickly realize that their expectations will not be met, and rather than

the celebrated saviours of the Canadian economy, they are, more accurately, cogs in its machine.

In what follows, this chapter elaborates on the development of Canadian immigration policy. After discussing this context and providing some insight into Nova Scotia, this chapter details the expectations of highly skilled newcomers. What is revealed is a set of hopes and objectives that are very much in line with the promises on offer by Canadian and Nova Scotian immigrant recruitment tactics. Moreover, their expectations are very much per the logic of neoliberalism. Indeed, the participants (table 1 below) in this study each wanted to be self-sufficient, to succeed professionally in their fields of study and training; each wanted to contribute to the Canadian economy and society; and each was interested and invested in the prospect of upward mobility for themselves and their families. This is explored in some detail in the discussion portion of this chapter, which also considers how newcomers are exposed to ideas about what Canada is and how these ideas shape and inform their ambitions around immigration.

Table 1 Respondent Portfolio

	Participant Details					
Participant Code	**Pseudonym**	**Highest Degree**	**Profession Back Home**	**Present Job**	**Years in Canada**	**Status In Canada**
M001	Rahul	Ph.D, MSW, BSW	Social Worker	Call Centre Representative	3.5	PR
M002	Rafiq	MSC in Botany	Social Worker	Associate, Home Depot	2	PR
M003	David	MBA	Finance Manager	Retail Associate	4	PR

F004	Dalia	Registered Nurse	Registered Nurse	Unemployed	4	SP
F005	Nancy	MBA	Bank Manager	Care Giver	7	PR
F006	Kai	Masters in Community Health Education	Health Manager	Care Giver	6	PR
M007	Sandy	BSC in Electrical Engineering	Engineer	Associate, Best Buy	3	WP
F008	Megan	Registered OT	Occupational Therapist	Unemployed	5	PR
F009	Linda	Master's and bachelor's in library science management	NGO Manager	Cash Associate, Dollarama	3	WP
F010	Mary	Masters and Bachelors in Population Science	NGO Officer	Associate in Clothing Store and Kitchen Helper, The Keg	1	WP
F011	Puja	Dentistry	Student	Associate in Home Depot	6	WP
M012	Ifrad	MSc and BSc in Computer Science	IT Manager	Associate, Sobeys	2	SP
M013	Lytton	MBA, BBA	Bank Manager	Associate, Staples	3	WP
F014	Sweety	MBA, BBA	Finance Associate	Cashier, Tim hortons	1	WP
M015	Rony	Master's in science, IT	Technical Trainer	Associate Best Buy	8	WP

*PR= Permanent Resident; SP= Study Permit; WP= Work Permit

Critically, and the focus of the next chapter (chapter two), discourse around multiculturalism, inclusion, and equity quickly hit the hard limits of neoliberal capitalism, such that newcomers tailor themselves to simultaneously be many things at once.

Section One: Situating Migrant Expectations

The expectations migrants hold respond to the historical and contemporary conditions that encourage migrations in both the sending and receiving states. This section focuses on the latter, tracing the development of Canadian immigration policy from the confederation to the current moment. Human migration is a multifaceted social phenomenon that has been present throughout history. This phenomenon was often attributed to or described within the early migration scholarship concerning a push-and-pull dynamic between sending and receiving countries. It was understood that individuals migrated to escape unfavourable conditions in their countries of origin, expecting that the destination country would provide a more favourable environment (Yan, 2017). From this vantage point, favourable conditions typically meant employment opportunities, economic security, upward mobility for subsequent generations, safety from political unrest, freedom from persecution, or some combination. Migrants would leave places absent from these conditions and possibilities in search of them elsewhere.

In the contemporary moment, many of these distinctions are blurred. What, then, are the favourable and unfavourable conditions? How are they assessed by individuals planning a migration journey, particularly those anticipated as permanent? How do people decide to move? Why do some countries open their doors to immigrants, and what promises are made to attract immigrants? How do migrant hopefuls assess and navigate the opportunities available to them? These questions point to the complexities of

migration, which involve more than physically relocating to a different country but also encompass the efforts of states to manage migration (one way or another) in a manner that best suits the public and private interests and—the focus of this chapter—the histories, trajectories, and objectives of migrants themselves.

In the context of global migration, both now and historically, Canada emerges as an anomaly. The country's history as a settler colonial state has prompted a high level of intervention into and management of migration on the part of the government. This, coupled with its enormous land mass (almost 10 million km-squared) and novel geographical isolation (sharing a nearly 9000-kilometre border with one neighbouring country), has made Canada less accessible to migrants seeking undocumented entry while ensuring that those who do arrive represent a specific economic or demographic use to the country. As a result, Canada receives a significant number of highly skilled and qualified immigrants and has high levels of popular support for immigration, as noted by Bloemraad (2012).

Indeed, despite the current economic recession, support for immigration in Canada remains robust. This characteristic sets Canada apart from other Western nations. The widespread endorsement of maintaining high levels of immigration in Canada by governments, the business community, and the public is partly motivated by the belief that economic difficulties resulting from the retirement of the 'baby boom' generation can be mitigated by sustaining a steady influx of immigrants (Ferrer et al., 2014). Public support is further generated by worries about selective skill shortages caused by commodities booms and longer-term aggregate labour shortages. Analysts hold differing viewpoints on whether immigration can or should be utilized to alleviate such potential

shortages. Against this backdrop, the immigration system experienced significant transformation in the 2000s, becoming more intricate and incorporating more programs and participants to achieve stated objectives more effectively (Ferrer et al., 2014).

This support can be attributed to concerted efforts by the Canadian state to establish Canada's "multicultural" national identity and legislative efforts around anti-discrimination. Canadian immigration policy has, in principle, kept up with these broader social and cultural changes, and for many newcomers, Canada's diversity and inclusivity represent its true potential. Prior to 1960, Canadian immigration regulations explicitly divided potential immigrants depending on ethnicity through the implementation of a nationality preference system that granted advantage to European immigrants over non-Europeans (James, 2005). The focus had been put on white immigrants because these people were regarded as superior, beneficial, and more easily able to assimilate compared to immigrants of colour (Elliott and Fleras, 1999). Non-Europeans were considered undesirable, and endeavours took place to halt their immigration to Canada (Hardaway, 1997).

The early policy of immigration in Canada featured discriminatory and exclusionary actions, especially toward immigrants of Asian culture, specifically those originating from China. The waves of Chinese immigrants in the nineteenth century were caused mainly by a demand for cheap labour in the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway (Strong-Boag 2014). Nevertheless, the spike in Chinese immigration was significantly influenced by discrimination based on race since Chinese individuals were explicitly looked for to do hazardous tasks. They often received the most perilous jobs as they were deemed to possess the potential to survive difficult conditions (Strong-Boag,

2014). After the Pacific Railway was completed, the Chinese Migration Act of 1885 went into force, along with the launch of the "renowned head tax system." The program's primary goal was to discourage more Chinese immigrants from arriving in Canada by introducing high penalties upon their arrival (Strong-Boag 2014). During this era, a limited number of Chinese women immigrated to Canada. Unfortunately, they faced discrimination and were often stigmatized as sex workers.

Additionally, labourers' wives were frequently denied entry because they depended on their husbands. Concerning this issue, it is worth noting that the 1923 Chinese Exclusion Act prohibited the entry of Chinese individuals into Canada (Strong-Boag 2014). Nevertheless, the Act was suspended during World War II to address the demand for more workers to reconstruct the economy (Strong-Boag 2014).

During the post-World War II period, Canada experienced a significant shift in its immigration policies. These events were crucial for the country as it strived to embrace democratic and impartial approaches to cope with immigration. This decision additionally created an unprecedented standard for Western countries (Poy 2013). Canada introduced a fair immigration policy and points system in 1967, portraying itself as a progressive leader in the liberal Western world. The Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulation implemented the Comprehensive Ranking System, a points-based system designed to evaluate economic migrants based on their ability to meet a predetermined threshold and specific requirements (Canada 2002). Individuals considering migration would receive points based on their educational accomplishments, language proficiency, work experience, age, job prospects, and adaptability, as outlined by Canada in 2002. In turn, and since the early 1970s, the Canadian government has directed its immigration policy

towards aligning with the labour market's needs, specifically focusing on occupational demand and the attributes considered crucial for immigrants' long-term success (Aydemir, 2011). Aydemir (2011) analyzed the distinctions among those who sought immigration in the three family, economic, and business classes. The study observed that males in the business-class group have the lowest beginning employment rate but the highest consecutive growth rate. This phenomenon serves a role in reducing job gaps during a period of two years. On the contrary, weekly earnings do not show a reverse correlation. Still, the gaps linger even after an interval of two years arrival.

The increase in the number of immigrants from various countries prompted a revision of the Immigration Act in the 1990s. This revision was driven by the perception that immigration was financially burdensome for the Canadian population (Thobani 2000). The federal government initiated the transfer of responsibility for settlement to the private sector and intensified monitoring of migrants' utilization of social security programs (Bhuyan, 2015). While immigration was deemed vital to address Canada's stagnant population growth, the potential risk of population influx resulting from immigration was underscored.

At this point, the points system underwent modifications to enhance the significance of general human capital attributes, particularly education, in the selection process. The selection technique known as the "human capital" model has a longer-term perspective and significantly emphasizes attributes expected to impact economic results over time (Ferrer et al., 2014). The authors also identified that during the 1990s, there was a significant increase in the educational achievement of immigrants. Additionally, there was a rise in the proportion of immigrants from the economic class, partly due to

the surge in high-tech industries during the late 1990s. Under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) legislation implemented in 2002, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) abandoned the strategy of fulfilling immediate labour market needs through the Federal Skilled Worker (FSW) program, which relied on a points-based selection system (Ferrer et al., 2014). Though the search for labour has long been a critical part of Canadian immigration policy, in the mid-2000s, the focus on addressing labour market shortages and demands accelerated.

This shift has corresponded to the maturation and cementation of neoliberal ideology and policy in Canada and, critically, a heightened focus on immigrant (as well as resident and citizen) ability, responsibility, and capacity to engage in productive and remunerative employment (Dobrowolsky 2008) rather than equal opportunities. In turn, immigration flows are viewed as transactions for short-term labour contracts, reflecting the shift towards temporary economic immigration (Tariq, 2013) or long-term investment on the part of newcomers in the Canadian economy and, to a lesser extent, society. Concerning the latter, and following the trajectory established through the points system, the Canadian immigration regime has, over the last 20 years, implemented myriad, novel approaches to economic migration to attract highly educated and skilled individuals. However, it restricts the access of less skilled foreign-born individuals to permanent residency and citizenship status, maintaining strict control over their numbers (Tannock, 2011). At the same time and reflecting the economic aims of Canadian immigration more broadly, it retains access to their labour through policy mechanisms like the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program, which hires

foreigners to temporarily address labour shortages in Canada without (until relatively recently and only then in a restricted fashion) offering a route to citizenship (Tariq 2013).

Section Two: Migrant Expectations of Canada and Nova Scotia

Migrants in Nova Scotia and Canada, as well as immigrants in a broader context, encounter an ecosystem that has been dramatically influenced by neoliberalism. The application procedures and agendas that immigrants go through have the purpose of coinciding with and reinforcing the core principles of neoliberalism. The immigration application method heavily emphasizes skill and training and strongly impacts migrants' expectations. This, coupled with the fact that Canada consistently attributes the country's long-term economic success to the integration of highly skilled immigrants, leaves immigrants and migrant hopefuls with a sense of possibility and opportunity. Indeed, Canada and its representatives abroad are also speedy to point to labour market shortages as a recruitment strategy. Here, the rhetoric of "Canada needs you" plays effectively on the objectives and ambitions of immigrant and migrant hopefuls, my participants among them.

According to Statistics Canada's 2016 statistics, there were 23,000 vacancies in New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island during the year. Nova Scotia has an extensive history of embracing immigrants, reaching back to the 18th century when the province became an important location for European colonization, especially by the French, British, and ultimately the Irish and Scots. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, Pier 21 in Halifax played a significant role as the primary entry point to Canada for more than one million immigrants, resembling Ellis Island in New York. Over the past few decades, Nova Scotia has made concerted efforts

to attract and retain immigrants. These successes were made via launching programs like the Nova Scotia Nominee Program, created in 2003, and the Atlantic Immigration Pilot, which went live in 2017. In 2022, the pilot program was transformed into the Atlantic Immigration Program, to bring immigrants possessing specific skills to the province. These measures were implemented to combat the challenge of population drop and stimulate economic expansion. Halifax acts as the most significant urban centre in the province, generating a substantial number of immigrants. In Nova Scotia, there are additional efforts at both the provincial and community levels focused on addressing the shortage of professional and skilled workers. Such initiatives are intended to attract immigrants across various areas, especially rural areas and small towns. A small but growing body of scholarship has focused on the immigrant experience in Nova Scotia. Dobrowolsky, Bryan, and Barber's (2014) work elaborates on the unmet expectations of highly skilled migrants arriving through one of the earlier iterations of the province's Nominee Program. More recently, Akhbari's (2020) study offers specific insight into the current expectations of immigrants arriving in the province through a broader range of categories and programs.

In his study, respondents believed Nova Scotia would offer a favourable living environment. Many respondents admired the vast business opportunities and seemed eager to seize them. The top five factors considered are employment opportunities, quality of life, proximity to friends and family, creating a better future for children, and access to education. Only a tiny fraction, totalling 9.1 percent, chose any other options on the list. These included access to quality accommodation, educational opportunities for children, healthcare, language training, a safe community free from discrimination,

culturally relevant products and services, organizations assisting with service access, and local community services. Finally, the respondents in Akhbari's study expressed optimism regarding job prospects, particularly in professional and technical fields, health care, community reception, and child schooling. Their positive outlook was informed by information obtained from the government and other nonpersonal sources about the province. Several comments suggested that the information sources they accessed prior to arriving in the province presented an overly optimistic view of the province.

The qualitative data from this study complements the primarily quantitative findings of Akhbari and his colleagues regarding immigrant expectations, particularly around employment and quality of life. At the same time, however, the current project brings to the fore an explicit consideration of training and educational attainment when approaching immigrant expectations. Critically and as detailed in the introduction (see Table 1), the participants in this study all held advanced degrees and high-level positions related to the fields of study in their countries of origin. Participants worked in a range of sectors, including non-profit service delivery, information technology, engineering, health care, and finance, and all had anticipated that their employment in Nova Scotia would be similar to what they had done before, accounting for some variation. In what follows, I parse out the rationale and expectations that prompted participants to migrate to Nova Scotia, flagging the extent to which, in many instances, they simply anticipated what government and third-party immigration actors (educational institutions, recruiters, and consultants) had promised them. This section also provides insight into the breadth and depth of immigrant skill and capacity—skill and capacity that, as explored in chapter two—goes underutilized mainly.

While none of the participants in this study aspired for wealth, each signalled a need for improved job prospects. Indeed, having significant educational attainment and high work experience did not translate into career advancement and additional financial security in the country of origin. Like other accounts in the migration literature, participants in this study struggled to make ends meet in their countries of origin despite having good work. As one participant from Bangladesh explained, while his employment with the non-profit sector was classified as high-skilled, and he had required a master's degree to secure it, the working conditions and low salary represented a considerable challenge. He explained:

> *"During my employment at a non-profit organization, the compensation provided was inadequate to meet the financial needs of my family and myself." While residing in the capital, I had to leave my family behind in our village. The distance between the places was 220 kilometres, requiring a 7-hour bus journey on the weekends. Simultaneously, I had apprehensions regarding the potential closure of my organization, as it would pose challenges in fulfilling my familial responsibilities. Optimistically, for a better future, I prepared to immigrate to Canada. For social security and economic opportunities, I migrated to Canada, specifically to NS."* (*Rafiq*, MSC in Botany, a social worker turned Home Depot associate)

Another participant echoed these feelings: *"In the early stages of my career, I had not initially considered relocating to a different country. However, in 2018, I decided to embark on this migration journey. The objective was to tackle social issues, ensure security, explore career opportunities, and safeguard family well-being for future*

generations in India" (*Rahul,* PhD, social worker / academic turned call centre associate). In both examples, we see that the decision to migrate was motivated by the need to overcome or alleviate social challenges experienced in the country of origin.

Security was a significant consideration in the decision to relocate, encompassing personal and family safety. Although they came from varied fields and academic backgrounds, all participants held similar views concerning what constitutes good work. All emphasized the importance of finding suitable employment that does not require excessive physical labour. For example, one participant who was at the time of the interview unemployed but who had, in the country of origin, worked as a registered occupational therapist shared her interest in a solitary, satisfactory occupation that does not require physical exertion, such as employment in the food service or clothing retail sector. For most, this meant work within the corporate sector.

Good work would provide work-life balance, something many needed help to realize in their countries of origin. Such a balance, however, required employment that was not only flexible but also well paid: "achieving a satisfactory balance between personal and professional life through esteemed positions that offer competitive salaries and flexible working hours" (*Mary*, Occupational therapist; currently unemployed).

In this study, it has been observed in almost all the participants. F004 mentioned: *"Ideal employment would consider my qualification and payment. It won't be labour-intensive work. I expect to get into a good job with it."*

Another participant explained:

"An ideal job would consider my qualifications and offer fair compensation. The work would require a manageable amount of effort. I anticipate securing a

promising employment opportunity through it. I pursued additional master's degrees to qualify for the desired position. I am optimistic about securing a position in health promotion or health marketing soon" (*Kai*, Masters in Community Health Education, health manager turned caregiver).

This participant had anticipated she could work within her field at a level comparable to what she had held in her country of origin. While her current work is broadly related (health), she could only find an entry-level position that involved direct patient/client care, something she had yet to train for. To augment her chances of moving out of this work, she pursued a master's degree in Nova Scotia. This was a strategy used by many of the participants, who felt obliged to return to school. Another participant explained: *"I aspire to work as a registered nurse. I excel in this area. The estimated duration is approximately two years. Last year, I submitted my academic documents to apply for registration as a nurse. However, I have not yet received any response. Upon completing my studies, I will be eligible to obtain the certificate for registered nurse."* (*Dalia, Registered Nurse Back in Palestine, currently unemployed, studying in Nova Scotia to get Nursing degree*)

Several participants had arrived as international students. Earning a Canadian degree was, in large part, a strategy to secure lucrative, stable employment. As one participant explained:

"Following my experience in various prominent IT corporations, I needed to leave my familiar surroundings in my country of origin." I am interested in obtaining a degree in a practical field from a prestigious Canadian institution. I aspired to secure employment directly relevant to my field during my studies. After

completing my degree, I would obtain a favourable position in a prominent Canadian or multinational corporation…I decided to relocate in search of better opportunities." (*Ifrad*, IT professional turned cashier at Sobeys)

This participant's response reveals several things. In the first instance, he understood that his advanced training would not position him favourably in highly skilled labour markets in Canada or elsewhere. His decision to pursue his advanced degree in Canada was an effort to access new opportunities that he felt were inaccessible to him otherwise. Participants also spoke of the importance of Canada's public system and social safety net. Indeed, all arrived in Canada, understanding that they could access public support if things did not go as planned or encountered economic hardship.

Despite arriving temporarily, international student participants planned to remain in Nova Scotia, and long-term settlement in Canada was the objective. Significantly, all participants had explored other options before deciding on Canada. These decisions were based on several things. One participant, for example, was very particular about Canada providing the best opportunities for career development in his field. He explained: *"I intended to visit Canada, the UK, or Australia. Given my expertise in computer networks, I may have favourable prospects for establishing myself in Canada. Canada's competitive advantage in specific professional fields makes it an appealing choice for highly skilled immigrants who want to maximize their career potential"* (*Ifrad, IT Professional turned cashier at Sobeys*).

Here, the participant spoke at once about Canada's status as a leader in computer networks but also stressed the importance of Canada's welcoming and inclusive environment. Similarly, one participant explained that they chose Canada because they

were convinced that the country—known for multiculturalism—would offer them and their families the most equitable opportunities. One participant expressed this well: *"I was searching for various opportunities and countries that would suit my family and me. I am also seeking suitable residence and employment opportunities that align with my qualifications. I have determined that Canada [was it]"* (*Kai*, Masters in Community Health Education, previously health manager, now caregiver in nursing homes). Another participant also echoed this, explaining that in her favourable perception of Canadian society, which included a just legal system of healthy living,

"I held numerous favourable perspectives regarding Canada." Their legal system, culinary offerings, cultural norms, and the warm and respectful nature of the locals all contribute to the region's unique lifestyle. There is a notable absence of communal violence in this area, allowing people from different communities to coexist peacefully. I was particularly drawn to that concept" (*Rafiq,* MSC in Botany, a social worker turned Home Depot associate).

Safety, security, and freedom from persecution were also a central feature of many of the interviews, particularly for those who left countries of origin with high levels of violence and political instability. As one participant explained: *"I have been in a country where there has been a significant increase in violence recently. I have always strived to ensure my children's liberation and improved prospects. I believed Canada would provide my children and family with a secure environment. The political situation has lacked stability in the past. There has been a significant amount of violence and loss of life in the home country of Palestine"* (*Megan*, Registered Occupational Therapist from Palestine, currently unemployed). Even participants who had experienced less violence in their

countries of origin spoke of a desire for peace and ease in their lives. Another participant explained: *"I had high expectations for the upcoming days. I desire to reside in a spacious house. We would have the opportunity to enjoy a house with a garden. My children will play in both the garden and the home. I will receive smiles from others. I prefer to be part of a community where I can easily integrate"* (*Megan*, registered occupational therapist, currently unemployed).

Puja, one of the participants in this study, identified that she would not easily get permanent residency once she was done with her dentistry back home, so she decided to move to Canada, specifically Nova Scotia, to get permanent status. She earned her Social Service Worker diploma from Ontario but could not get any related job, so she started working in kitchens to find an easy way to get her permanent residency.

The desire to be embraced by a supportive community, fostering a new sense of belonging and inclusion, was a common theme among all participants. Achieving a harmonious equilibrium between work and studies, fostering personal and professional development, and feeling welcome were all significant goals held by all. *Rahul,* who held a PhD and had worked as a social worker and academic in their country of origin, emphasized this: "*I relocated to Canada due to its welcoming policies for me and my family. I believed Canada would offer me and my family a promising future and a high quality of life"* (*Rahul* PhD, social worker / academic turned call centre associate). Despite his difficulties when searching for a job, that person expressed thankfulness for Canada's expansive immigration system, which significantly impacted his choice to relocate to Nova Scotia. Another participant offered: *"I did not anticipate an ordinary life. I desired to cultivate a fulfilling familial existence. Residing in comfortable housing*

and maintaining stable employment. I aspired to fulfill my civic duties and contribute positively to my nation. Specific goals have been achieved, while others still need to be fulfilled" (*Rahul*).

Section Three: Discussion

Neoliberalism is often described as a set of social and economic policies that developed in reaction to globalization (Brown, 2003) and a mindset that seeks to regulate and restrict government activities based on artificial notions of free market behaviour, entrepreneurship, and economic rationality (Burchell, 1993). The concept is also characterized by how individuals shape themselves as certain subjects via exercising their freedom, which affects the relationship between the government and the governed (Burchell 1993). The idea prioritizes a smaller welfare state, where governments have reduced involvement, and individuals and families are responsible for their social welfare. Additionally, they advocate the gradual turning of social goods, including educational opportunities, healthcare, and welfare services, into commodification. Likewise, neoliberalism stresses economic efficiency as a means to keep up an unlimited free market. Brown (2003) explored the ideological basis of neoliberalism, its consequences outside the market, and how it can be utilized in government action (Brown 2003). Contemporary Canadian immigration policy largely adheres to neoliberal political rationalities. If earlier models of migration management responded to the emergent needs of the settler state and nascent Canadian racial capitalism, the country's current immigration regime would be propelled by an even deeper commodification and commercialization of immigrants, which, driven by neoliberal ideas, prioritizes those who can contribute to national economic progress while minimizing cost to government

for their settlement (Dobrowolsky 2011). This has been accompanied by a heightened preoccupation with security and, in turn, the securitization of immigration. These two features of contemporary neoliberal life and, more precisely, immigration management have significantly impacted how immigrants mould their identities to meet the requirements of Canadian immigration programs and how they identify with the Canadian nation-state.

Having been vetted through immigration programs that prioritized skill and training, each imagined that the skills they did have would be put to work effectively in Nova Scotia. This was reinforced by the relative ease each experienced in securing permanent residency either prior to or, for international students, after arrival and completion of their education. To reflect further on understanding the cultivation of expectation and the eventual disconnect between expectation and experience (the focus of chapter two), we can turn to the different actors and sectors—government and -non—implicated in international forms of mobility and the material and affective contours of that mobility. For example, with the government, employers and educational institutions have become increasingly active in recruiting and selecting immigrants (Bhuyan, 2015). While expectations and migration objectives are also cultivated through the transnational linkages between migrants and their families, often time across generations, the active role of employers and educational institutions in recruiting immigrants, often with the support of third-party recruiters and consultants, represents a significant source for how potential immigrants learn about Canada and decide to adjust their plans, and sometimes very identities, in an effort to migrate.

Participants' engagements with the Government of Canada and Government of Nova Scotia websites were equally informative—not only in the preparation of their applications but in their decision-making process. The government actively promotes Canada and Nova Scotia as attractive destinations for immigrants, emphasizing the region's distinct combination of opportunities and community support. Nova Scotia highlights its rich culture, strong economy, and excellent quality of life, making it an appealing destination for individuals looking to thrive personally and professionally. On the Nova Scotia immigration website (You Belong in Nova Scotia, retrieved on July 31, 2024), it says: *"In Nova Scotia you can be you. The you you've always wanted to be. And you can live the way you've always wanted to live. Here, you're free to explore. To find opportunities in our growing economy. To be welcomed by our vibrant and safe communities. To experience our beautiful coastline, clean air and moderate Maritime weather."*

The government conveys information regarding different immigration avenues, such as the Nova Scotia Nominee Program and the Atlantic Immigration Pilot, to promote immigrant integration while addressing specific job market requirements. Likewise, the government offers significant services, like language learning and career assistance, exhibiting an immense dedication to enabling effortless integration and continued development of immigrants in their new community. All of these messages depict Canada and Nova Scotia as welcoming communities with abundant opportunities and beautiful landscapes, promising an optimistic and lucrative future for immigrants and their families. Although the materials circulated online by the Canadian and provincial governments present an inclusive, open, and welcoming multicultural society where

newcomers can thrive, a critical body of scholarship in Canada points to how multiculturalism is a strategy of the state intended to appease "other cultures" while ensuring the supremacy of white, English and/or French speaking Canadians (James, 2005). According to James (2005), immigrants from countries other than Britain and France tend to be seen as "outsiders" who are required to make adjustments to the "Canadian way of life." On the contrary, it is suggested that modern immigrants from Britain and France have already fully adjusted to their culture upon their arrival.

Conclusion

The contradictory desires of highly skilled migrants in Nova Scotia are being extensively explored in this portion of the thesis. Immigration is complicated by and affected by a number of people and organizations, including governments, recruiters, educational institutions, and firms, as the study shows. The amalgamation of businesses presents an attractive representation of Canada, which guarantees an ethnically diverse, inclusive society with abundant employment possibilities in the expectation of recruiting bright people. Such glorified representation serves as an enormous motivating factor that keeps individuals migrating in hopes of more significant opportunities for their families.

Still, what these migrants experience can differ considerably from what they anticipate. Whatever follows constitutes a chapter mainly focused on the challenges confronted throughout the transformation from anticipation to truth. The following chapter will go further into the post-settlement experiences of immigrants in Nova Scotia, concentrating on the disconnects between the anticipated social and economic integration they were promised and the obstacles they experience with obtaining job opportunities, being welcomed by their community, and growing in their position within society.

Immigrants with higher educational credentials possess enduring obstacles to employment, which will be addressed in the next chapter. Those individuals often find themselves underemployed due to their undervalued abilities and expertise. The social obstacles individuals experience while striving to settle into an unfamiliar environment are another topic the study will focus on. The lofty goals of diversity encounter the complex challenges of injustice and exclusion at this point. The challenges that overseas immigrants experience in Nova Scotia have an immense impact on the state of their finances, mental health, and the level with which they have been willing to settle in and acquire long-term satisfaction.

The following chapter examines the gap between the dreams and fulfillment of immigrants in Nova Scotia by juxtaposing what is promised to them by Nova Scotia's neoliberal immigration regime (that with the right skills and a positive mentality, anything is possible) with the reality of immigrant life in the province. To ensure that Nova Scotia not only welcomes but also maintains and effectively uses the skills of its new arrivals, this thorough investigation serves as vital for leading proposals for policy that aim at bettering integration processes.

CHAPTER 3 EXPERIENCE OF NEWCOMERS AS REFLECTIVE OF NS RACIAL CAPITALISM

Introduction

In Canada's current knowledge-based economy, finding good jobs can be challenging. Many scholars consider this economic period a significant stage in global financial restructuring, driven by technological advancements and the growing influence of multinational corporations (Carnoy, 2000). The global economic restructuring has resulted in concerning shifts in social policy and labour legislation at the local level. There has been a weakening of government oversight over labour markets, a deterioration in legal protection for workers, and devastating cutbacks to social safety nets and welfare programs (Goldring & Landolt, 2009). As a result, labour market exclusion and uneven inclusion have become a widespread concern, with workers (those who remain in their countries of origin and those who become internationally mobile) affected. Critically, however, many of the migrants interviewed in this study sought out credentials that would, in principle, make them competitive in the new global economy and, more precisely, in Canadian labour markets. Participants in this study had training and education in Ph.D., Master of Social Work, Bachelor of Social Work, MSC in Botany, Master of Business Administration, Registration in Nursing, Masters in Community Health Education, Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering, Registration in Occupational Therapy, Masters and Bachelors in Library Science Management, Masters and Bachelors in Population Science, Dentistry, Diploma in Social Service Work, Master of Science and Bachelor of Science in Computer Science. Also, these participants worked for numerous years as social workers, bank managers, registered nurses, health managers, engineers, NGO managers, occupational therapists and IT managers. This widely held

view, and expectation was reinforced by Canadian immigration programs, which appear to target highly skilled migrant hopefuls for permanent resettlement in Canada. And yet, their credentials would prove insufficient as participants attempted to access employment in Nova Scotia.

Labour market statistics demonstrate the substantial role immigrants play in the growth of Canada's labour force and the economy more broadly. As their contributions are expected to increase in the future (Kustec, 2012), Canadian immigration policy has doubled down on its efforts to recruit the world's "best and brightest". This relationship between immigration and the economy is established through Canada's federal immigration policies and reinforced through political discourse, consistently aligning immigration with Canada's economic security and growth. In turn, applicants are admitted to Canada based on a points system that assesses the alignment of their human capital with the country's labour market requirements (Creese, Dyck & Mclaren, 2008). Changes to immigration policy carried out by Stephen Harper's conservative leadership suffered far-reaching effects on foreign workers. Undoubtedly, most of these changes aimed to enable immigrants to locate employment that is more suitable for their educational background and experience. Some critics have raised concerns regarding the growing privatization of federal immigration policy because it extensively benefitted only Canadian employers as recruiters and left the system open to discrimination (Wilson, Sakamoto & Chin, 2017). They argue that this trend primarily favours Canadian businesses as employers and increases the possibility of discrimination within the system (Ibbitson, 2014). For example, discrimination against skilled immigrants, particularly those who are racialized within Canada, has been a longstanding issue, and the express

entry program has the potential to perpetuate this problem by allowing discrimination to take place during the immigration selection process (Wilson, Sakamoto & Chin, 2017).

Capitalism has endured since its establishment, primarily because it was constructed upon a foundation of racial injustice (NICHE, 2023). The social structures of feudal societies were strengthened with the emergence of capitalism (Robinson et al., 2000) and made much worse by colonialism and the slave trade (Rodney et al., 2011). In Canada, racial capitalism endures, in part, because of the country's reliance on and management of immigration, coupled with its long-standing subjugation of Black and Indigenous peoples. Concerning immigration, the country's economic structure depends on utilizing various kinds of migrant labour and strategically excluding specific racialized communities from the possibility of upward class mobility (Robinson et. al, 2000). Gaining a comprehensive understanding of these interrelationships is critical to effectively tackle the structural disparities that persistently influence the lived realities of immigrant communities in Canada.

Even as what constitutes "good work" is contested, economic integration is crucial in immigrant settlement. In the past, Canada has primarily focused on assessing whether immigrants meet or surpass the financial performance of native-born Canadian workers. However, this has happened without considering how newcomers are often excluded from more lucrative labour markets. This is equally the case in the Employment Equity Act. This act has primarily emphasized employment status (working or not) and wages, neglecting the significant obstacles immigrants encounter in securing and retaining quality jobs (Shakya et al., 2013). Policy discussions and solutions regarding employment rates and wage gaps need to fully encompass the utilization of immigrants'

skills in the labour market or the degree to which they have experienced them (Creese & Wiebe, 2012). Over time, the deskilling process may hinder immigrants from securing employment in their desired fields (Wilson, Sakamoto & Chin, 2017). This holds especially true for immigrants employed in professions that necessitate on-the-job training to stay current in their respective fields.

It is, moreover, essential to consider that wage gaps and employment rates, as measures of immigrant integration, do not fully capture the extent or quality of job insecurity experienced by members of immigrant communities (Wilson, Sakamoto & Chin, 2017). This includes factors such as access to health benefits, job safety, union representation, job stability, and opportunities for career advancement (Wilson, Sakamoto & Chin, 2017). In what follows, this chapter elaborates on participants' lived experiences as they attempt to access employment, often first in their fields and then outside of them. What is revealed through their narratives is a considerable disconnect between expectation (borne of promises made by Canada) and experience. I situate this discrepancy and its persistence in the organization of racial capitalism in Canada. In what follows, I provide an overview of what racial capitalism means and how it intersects with immigration policy both explicitly and implicitly through applying the "Canadian experience" as a mechanism of newcomer exclusion. From there, I provide insight into my participants' labour market exclusions, drawing on the scholarship to elaborate and contextualize their experiences.

Section ONE: Critical Race Theory, Racial Capitalism, and Labour Market Exclusion

Canada is a highly stratified country where racial and ethnic immigrant groups are absorbed into the greater community in varied ways. Attaining fairness and equitable treatment for all individuals is typically challenging in stratified cultures. The societies in question are often organized hierarchically, dividing individuals into majority and minority groups. These groups have uneven authority and limited access to resources due to inequalities in race, ethnicity, social class, religion, and other factors (as discussed in Elliott and Fleras, 1999). As a result, discrimination remains prevalent among racialized communities in Canada, with Black and Asian Canadians facing exceptionally high levels of discrimination. For example, Canada has experienced a significant increase in hate and intolerance towards various racialized groups. During the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals of East-Asian descent have faced a rise in incidents of both individual and systemic racism. Systemic racism is so intertwined that there is plenty of literature portraying the inaccessibility of the health system by black and other visible minority groups. African Canadians are over-represented in the national rates of HIV infections, diabetes, heart disease, hypertension and mental health, as well as poor birthing outcomes (Massaquoi & Mullings, 2020). Experiences of racism and sexism, expressed as structural and cultural violence, are traumatic and cumulative and negatively impact health (Vigod & Rochon, 2020; Williams, Lawrence, and Davis, 2019).

It is estimated that one in every five persons in Canada was born outside of the nation, making Canada one of the countries with the most significant immigrant populations in the world (Cheng, 2020). It was also identified that skilled immigrants, driven by economic motives and possess professional training and vocational orientation, have unique settlement experiences compared to other immigrants (Chen 2008; Meraj

2015). The prevalence of racism has particular consequences for employment outcomes. For instance, figures from Statistics Canada in 2002 indicate that visible minorities are not adequately represented in the workforce. The majority of individuals in this category are compelled to rely on their ethnic enclaves to pursue self-employment as a means of livelihood. Indeed, despite the introduction of policies, such as the Employment Equity Act of 1986, aimed at reducing obstacles to participation in the workforce, visible minorities, particularly women, still find themselves on the periphery of predominantly white Canadian institutions and workplaces (James, 2005). It appears that the wage difference and workplace culture are completely different for people of colour. For instance, there has been a lot of literature on the wage and working hours difference and how the system creates racism towards visible minorities. Immigrants have to maintain a 30-hour week to submit their applications for permanent residency applications, regardless of their personal leaves or sickness. Furthermore, the perspectives and explanations they receive for such exclusions are typically presented from the ethnocentric viewpoint of the dominant white majority (Paraschak 1999). Here, racist discourse is used to naturalize labour market exclusion and the overrepresentation of racialized Canadians in low-wage, low-status work.

For recent immigrants, this is worsened by tenuous legal status or a lack of familiarity with Canadian norms and cultural practice and by persistent views that Canada accepts too many immigrants and that this has negative social and economic implications. Canadian immigration policy is, in turn, very strategic, integrating some migrants only partially (through temporary work programs) and others, those deemed worthy, permanently. In Canada, however, social stratification, compounded by legal

status and the very likely possibility of experiencing racially based discrimination, is veiled by legal frameworks and political discourse concerning multiculturalism and equity. For immigrants, this is further concealed by immigration criteria that communicate inclusivity and settlement programs that suggest a welcoming environment. As a result, even as migrants remain susceptible to the combined effects of insecure employment and the uncertainty associated with not being a citizen (Goldring et al., 2009), it becomes difficult to identify and anticipate.

Critical Race Theory (CRT), racial capitalism analysis, and political economy help us understand these conditions and the profound discrepancy between what the state purports to do through liberalized immigration, multiculturalism, and employment equity legislation and the exclusions experienced by migrant and immigrant workers in Canada. CRT also offers a theoretical framework for analyzing social studies by examining historical, geographical, anthropological, political, and economic norms beyond stereotyped or dominant perspectives. In this way, CRT provides us with a framework for both identifying the effects of white dominance and moving beyond it. In so doing, CRT examines how society establishes and upholds racial classifications and hierarchies as the standard and suggests a re-evaluation and reinterpretation (Billings, 2003).

In turn, analysis of racial capitalism considers the intricate connection between capitalism, racism, and the exploitation of communities of colour. Canada's immigration laws and practices have been historically influenced by and reinforcing of racial capitalism, explicitly concerning the utilization and valuation of immigrant labour. In its most explicit form, racial capitalism in Canada is connected to immigration through the exploitation of immigrant labourers, but particularly those who are temporary. For those

with permanent legal status (residents or naturalized citizens), exclusion from more lucrative labour markets frequently prompts immigrants to employment in low-paying positions and endure unfavourable working circumstances, serving the interests of companies aiming to optimize their profits. Racialized immigrants who experience prejudice and structural obstacles in finding jobs and advancing in their careers are especially vulnerable to this exploitation.

White supremacy refers to the dominant social, institutional, and cultural influence exerted by white people over coloured and indigenous populations on a worldwide scale. Due to their linguistic and cultural background, White Canadians are more adept at expressing themselves, resulting in a more impactful presence. Having said that, for the native culture and language, white Canadians are often provided or offered better positions in society or in the workplace. While white Canadians transition to more lucrative positions and organizations, immigrants often find themselves confined to entry-level or low-wage employment. Indeed, immigrants frequently face discrimination and are overlooked for advancements while possessing the necessary skills. According to James (2010), this tendency exposes immigrants to various economic and psychosocial challenges. Skilled migrants in Canada sometimes find themselves in low-skilled positions despite their advanced qualifications. For instance, individuals with doctorate degrees may wind up driving taxis or working in grocery shops or superstores. In a study conducted by Li (2003), it was revealed that immigrant women of colour with foreign degrees face the highest degree of undervaluation of their university degrees compared to white native-born Canadian degree holders. Additionally, even immigrants who earned their degrees within Canada experience a wage gap.

Concealing and Revealing Racial Capitalism in "Multicultural" Canada

In 1971, the Canadian government implemented a multiculturalism policy to endorse and advance the cultural distinctions of different ethnic groups, aiming to create "unity in diversity" (James, 2005). In 1988, the Canadian parliament established and ratified the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, which further promoted eliminating racial discrimination initially stipulated in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms of 1985 (James, 2005). The author noted that Canada officially became multicultural by implementing the multiculturalism policy. This means that all immigrants, regardless of race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, gender, (dis)ability, or other differences, are accepted and should be treated equally and respectfully. Upon acquiring citizenship, immigrants must assimilate into the country's social structure and be granted rights and liberties. Government-funded settlement and integration programs are developed to counter segregation and marginalization. James (2005) elaborates that, regrettably, these principles are quickly undermined given what we can describe as the conditions of racial capitalism in Canada that marginalize immigrants, particularly those who are racialized, depriving them of equal opportunities.

In the context of Canada's legislation of multiculturalism and ongoing liberalization of immigration, parallel efforts were made about employment equity. Signalling the state's long-standing awareness of the challenges many new and old Canadians faced in the labour force, 1984 the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment generated a report to set the stage for implementing the Employment Equity Act (EEA) in 1986. The purpose of the EEA was to enhance representation and address systemic barriers in the recruitment, promotion, and retention of individuals from specific

groups in federally regulated workplaces. These groups included women, Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, and racialized people. This acknowledgment highlighted the underlying causes of inequality in employment and emphasized the importance of implementing comprehensive solutions. It also established Canada as a frontrunner in policy development during that period.

Lowe and Ortiz (2015) have described Canada as exhibiting "disappointing" results regarding the economic and social consequences of integrating skilled immigrants throughout the country. Notably, immigrants struggle to even get in the door for higher-skilled work. A study conducted in 2009 examined hiring practices and found that résumés listing only foreign job experience had a 6.2 percent lower employer callback rate compared to résumés that included prior Canadian employment (Kukushkin & Doughas, 2009). And yet, according to Douglas et al. (2020), relatively few research papers have concentrated on immigrants employed at entry-level, low-paying jobs. Hence, Canada's survival and prosperity must gain insight into the integration process of newcomers employed in entry-level positions (Cheng, 2021). One of the most common industries immigrants get into is retail. As per the 2016 Census in Nova Scotia, there are visible minority income tables based on their roles in retail industries and their degrees. There were # 240 visible minority people performing NOC 64 (Sales Representatives and Salespersons- wholesale and retail trade) with at least a university degree, diploma, or bachelor's degree or above, earning a median income of $19,508, which is way less than the Market Basket Measurement (MBM) threshold of any cities in the country. MBM is Canada's poverty measurement tool that calculates the expenses associated with a

designated assortment of goods and services that reflect a modest and fundamental standard of living (Statistics Canada, 2022).

According to a study conducted by Aydemir (2006), there has been a decline in newcomers' earnings, employment, and labour force participation rates. Aydemir highlights that even though recent Canadian immigrants have higher education than previous groups, their performance in Canada's labour markets remains unsatisfactory (Aydemir 2006). The study conducted by Frenette and Morrisette (2005) focuses on comparing immigrant wages with those of Canadian-born individuals, specifically exploring the potential for wage parity. The authors contend that immigrants' earnings must rapidly grow to attain income parity with Canadian-born individuals' earnings. These migrant workers are frequently unjustly blamed and stigmatized, being portrayed as lazy, illiterate, illegal, criminal, or even terrorist (Thobani 2007). However, it is essential to recognize that the root causes of their precarious work and working conditions lie in structural issues such as government inaction, global capitalism, and, more recently, neoliberalism (Syed, 2016). Generally, these precarious works do not encompass bonuses, health, dental, maternity or paternity benefits, severance pay, formal membership or association with unions. In Canada, immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries often encountered challenging and uncertain work conditions (Vosko 2005).

According to the Law Commission of Ontario (2012), immigrant workers in Ontario make up around 10% of the workforce, yet they make up nearly 16% of temporary part-time workers. Three Immigrant groups in Ontario and throughout Canada are more likely to experience poverty, according to the Law Commission of Ontario

(2010). The classification of immigrant work into high- and low-skill categories has led to the phenomenon of "deskilling" and "de-credentialization" (Mirchandani, 2004). This process undervalues foreign work experience and training, often failing to recognize their credentials. Instead, the emphasis is placed on the importance of having a Canadian experience. Many immigrant workers are left with only low-wage and precarious sectors and employment arrangements as entry options (Marsden 2011; Mirchandani 2004). In what follows, I provide insight into my participant's experiences of employment exclusion in Nova Scotia, highlighting and parsing out the challenges they experience in relation to the current scholarship and Canadian racial capitalism. Central to their experiences are the lingering effects of the "Canadian experience", which is deployed as an informal exclusion mechanism.

SECTION TWO: Immigrant experiences of labour market exclusion

Critical Race Theory reminds us that public discourse and policy that avoids the explicit use of racist or racial categories can still have racist effects. Jakubowski (1997) argues that eliminating race-based discriminatory laws in Canada was a response driven by administrative considerations rather than popular demand. Canada aimed to establish itself as a compassionate and economically strong nation compared to the United States and within the diverse Commonwealth community. Canada has consistently worked to uphold its reputation as a nation that embraces immigrants, receiving praise for its inclusive policies that foster equality and respect for cultural diversity. The requirement for skilled immigrants to have English or French language proficiency is a crucial aspect of the criteria for 'Canadian experience.' However, it does not explicitly mention any preference based on ethnicity or race. This policy also refrains from explicitly mentioning

the discriminatory impact that CE has been proven to have on racialized immigrants in the job market.

Despite high levels of training and education, many new immigrants encounter challenges during settlement (Kaushik and Drolet, 2018). This reality has been persistent. For example, based on data from the Censuses of 1981 to 1996, Ferrer and Riddell (2004) discovered that educated immigrants tend to be employed in jobs that do not need high levels of Education (Raza, 2012). Statistics Canada (2024) identified that numerous immigrants with a bachelor's degree or higher sometimes find themselves in jobs that fail to fully employ their unique skills. This mismatch can diminish employment income, productivity, and general well-being (Cornelissen & Turcotte, 2020). During 2001 and 2016, the total number of Canadian workers who possessed a bachelor's degree or higher increased by 1.7 million. Yet only half of these individuals had the ability to get employment in high-skilled occupations, which specifically needed a bachelor's degree or higher. The phenomenon of education-occupation mismatch among individuals with a degree was mostly observed among recent immigrants, while younger individuals born in Canada witnessed a small decline in their mismatch rate throughout this time period (Hou, Lu, & Schimmele, 2019).

Upon arriving in Nova Scotia, the participants in my study encountered various challenges, including stress, limited job opportunities, social and economic setbacks, discrimination, substandard housing, restricted access to services, and insufficient social support. Each had hoped to have all their objectives fulfilled to achieve a more professionally successful life than in their home countries (Trumper and Wong 2010), but very quickly came to understand the near impossibility of this prospect. For all

participants, the barriers they experienced in accessing fulfilling work related to their training resulted in deskilling, where they ended up working in jobs that were below their qualifications and as underemployment.

Deskilling and the under-utilization of skill

Despite her educational background in Population Sciences and experience in non-profits, the respondent, Mary, finds herself in jobs unrelated to their field. She explained the type of job I am doing right now; *they never ask for my education and job experiences. I am doing completely different things to survive.* Reflecting on his wife's experience, *Ifrad*, conveyed a sense of unease and remorse. A highly skilled doctor in their native country, in Nova Scotia she works in retail. The underutilization of skills and qualifications in Canada highlights the systemic barriers that hinder highly skilled immigrants from practicing their professions. He said: *I feel awkward for my wife; she was a brilliant doctor back home.*

Upon arriving in Nova Scotia, *Dalia* had clear ambitions for her and her family. Already holding a master's degree, she aimed to pursue a PhD to eventually obtain an academic position, anticipating her husband's swift establishment as a family physician. Nevertheless, barriers to his reaccreditation and a three-year delay in relaunching his medical practice prompted her to reconsider her plans. Instead, *Dalia* opted for a shorter, second master's degree, hoping that some Canadian experience would facilitate her entrance into more lucrative employment, all while juggling various low-paying jobs. One participant, *Dalia*, a masters in community health, working as a caregiver, mentioned:

"When I came in, I started working in a care home for elderly people. It was a survival job. The schedule was long. I never expected that I would need to do something like this. I thought my master's in community degree would help me to get into a good job. But it was totally different from my expectations. We had no choice at that point…"

As a social worker from Bangladesh, *Rafiq* encountered considerable obstacles in acquiring the required licensure to practice in Nova Scotia despite having the necessary qualifications and experience. At the same time, his current employment at [North American Home Improvement Retail] significantly differs from his previous role as a senior research associate in Bangladesh.

Critically, even those educated in Canada experienced similar exclusions. Despite possessing a degree in Social Work from Toronto and considerable job vacancies in the field, *Puja* relies on formal job-support assistance in her effort to secure employment as a social worker. In the meantime, she is employed full-time in a kitchen. At the same time, a number of participants were restricted in the kinds of positions they could even apply for because of immigration-related criteria. *Puja* explained: *Even if I am qualified and get an offer of supervisor or manager, I cannot take the job because that's not on the National Occupation Classification (NOC) list to get qualified for permanent residency application.* Here, immigration's reliance on and reification of the NOC itself represented a barrier to meaningful employment.

A similar experience is possessed by *Linda*, who has a Canadian degree in Supply Chain, working in [large Atlantic home improvement retail]; they mentioned: *"I am working as a cashier in now a home improvement retailer there, so of course, that is not my background. I'm doing it because I need to survive"*

Requiring Canadian Experience

Consistently in their search for employment in their fields, participants were met with a series of obstacles, some more implied and others very explicitly related to their status as newcomers. *Linda* highlighted the challenge of finding employment in Canada, even with relevant expertise and experience. Establishing local connections can be challenging for immigrants in the job market, as networking and references play a crucial role in securing employment opportunities. Adding to this, *David* explained that the employers he had encountered were extremely hesitant to hire immigrants, citing concerns about their perceived lack of knowledge and experience. He elaborated that *employers are not motivated to recruit me as an immigrant. They somehow felt I didn't have the right knowledge and experience for them.* What that knowledge and experience entailed remains unclear to *David*, who, on paper, met the criteria for the positions he had applied for. Here, some discussion of "Canadian Experience" (CE) as an implied criterion for labour market integration is warranted.

In a study by Sakamoto and colleagues (2010), various interpretations of the term 'CE' in the Canadian labour market were recorded. Employers consider soft skills, such as values, behaviours, identities, and forms of communication, essential for navigating the Canadian workplace culture. The discourse surrounding the Canadian Experience connects soft skills with explicit knowledge. As Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) stated, explicit knowledge refers to established forms of training, commonly known as 'hard skills' in the Canadian workplace. These include educational credentials, certificates, or licenses issued by recognized institutions (Sakamoto et al., 2010).

On the other hand, 'soft skills,' as in the knowledge specific to a particular context, are also considered crucial for success in the Canadian marketplace (Sakamoto et al., 2010). Employers and settlement service providers frequently characterize skilled immigrants as having technical or complex skills while being perceived as lacking the necessary tacit knowledge (Sakamoto, Chin, and Young, 2010). According to Sakamoto et al., (2010), having a CE is required to find employment in Canada. Reflecting this, in the research by Zhang et al. (2023), several of the managers they interviewed consistently encountered challenges when filling professional and managerial roles. However, less than 50% reported hiring new employees for these roles within the last year. Several interviewees cited a limited capacity to verify potential candidates' educational qualifications and professional background as the reason for not hiring. Employers maintain skepticism towards foreign educational credentials despite the validation of these credentials through an Educational Credential Assessment (ECA), which is a requirement for a growing number of immigrants. In their recent work on hiring practices, Zhang et al. (2023) found that most HR/hiring managers did not utilize ECAs as an evaluation tool and lacked knowledge about them. The persistent non-recognition of foreign credentials culminates in disregard for previous work experience and, in turn, a reinforcement of the "Canadian Experience" as a means of excluding immigrant job applicants (Akbari, 2005; Statistics Canada, 2005; Alboim and McIsaac, 2007).

Importantly, the discourse of CE portrays immigrants as lacking specific skills without referring to their racial or social characteristics. It attributes their challenges to this perceived deficiency, as opposed to the discrimination they face in accessing employment. Measuring and addressing the racist effects of CE is a complex task. In

2013, the Ontario Human Rights Commission acknowledged the discriminatory effects of CE as 'prima facie discrimination' in the Canadian labour market (Oliphant, 2012). The Ontario Human Rights Code makes a clear connection between racism and the use of CE in hiring practices. According to the code, refusing to hire someone based on their previous workplace can be discrimination based on race, ancestry, colour, place of origin, or ethnic origin (Oliphant, 2012). Before Ontario's human rights code amendment, Canadian corporations had already started shifting their hiring strategies away from considering the Canadian experience (CE). Instead, they emphasized transferrable skills applicants acquire from their work experience in Canada or abroad (Sakamoto et al. 2013). Despite this shift, however, immigrants still continue to experience labour market exclusion and relegation to low-wage employment. At the same time, where they work in sectors or companies where promotion might be possible, they are—as described above—consistently overlooked. Under such circumstances, immigrants are subjected to the stereotype that they lack intelligence, creativity, and the ability to engage in abstract thought.

For participants in this study, Canadian Experience was a roadblock that often prompted a feeling of "needing to start over again". Putting aside their objectives and expectations (the focus of chapter one), participants were compelled to begin anew, accepting survival jobs that failed to meet their financial requirements or make use of their professional skills due to the insistence on "Canadian experience." *Rafiq* emphasized: *the earning opportunity is much less because when an immigrant comes here with his previous experiences, this means nothing here. I always hear a common thing is a Canadian experience. You must have a Canadian experience. So, if I do not*

have Canadian experience, I must work from scratch, like survival jobs. In her interview, *Nancy* explored the difficulty of starting over in Canada despite their previous experience in a mid-management role in their home country. The significant change, combined with the absence of assistance and challenging weather conditions, worsened as she struggled to find any employment with which she was familiar. She expressed considerable shock and disappointment that her credentials wouldn't be recognized in Canada: "*I needed to gain Canadian experience. Shockingly, I could not get a job based on my academic qualifications. The province and Canada nominated me as a skilled worker, but I could not utilize my experience and academics."*

Nancy was not alone in her shock and disappointment. Despite holding a master's degree in community studies, *Kai* worked long hours in jobs such as care homes for older people. She explained, "I never expected that I would need to do something like this. I thought my master's in community development would help me *get into a good job."*

Linda, with a bachelor and master's in library science from back home and a post-graduate diploma in supply chain management from Nova Scotia, currently working in Kent as a cashier, expressed:

"…they are welcoming people in Canada, so when people are coming with expertise and experiences, but they cannot get the job because what I have found here if you don't have any references, it's very hard to get into an office or company…"

At each turn, participants received the message that they required "local" experience and references from those experiences to meet the requirements for employment. However, the experience consistently offered was low-skilled and low-waged, and typically outside of their training area, making transition back into their fields

extremely difficult. For example, *Rahul* required additional local experience to enhance their employability in the field of social work. Instead, they dedicated nearly eight months to customer service, a role that did not align with their area of expertise and did not improve the likelihood of securing work in social services.

Despite his extensive managerial experience in financial institutions spanning 13 years, *Nancy* was assigned to an entry-level position typically filled by recent graduates. This participant flagged an important contradiction in hiring and promotion practices, explaining that *people do not have any degree other than school but are leading some positions. I don't think it's right to be the manager of people from other countries because the person who is a manager does not possess a graduation or higher academic qualification.* The fact that positions such as coordinator or manager often require only a high school diploma but are still difficult to access brings attention to the systemic barriers and potentially discriminatory practices in both hiring and promotion practices.

Survival Jobs, underemployment, and financial precarity

Engaging in survival jobs to fulfill financial obligations, even with a background and qualifications that could substantially contribute to the economy, highlights the inefficiencies within the job market. *Linda*, who was also working as a cashier, explained: *I am working as a cashier now at a home improvement retailer there, so that is not my background. I'm doing it because I need to survive.* The theme of economic survival emerged consistently throughout the interviews, with participants explaining that at a certain point, they simply had to take whatever job they could find—a reality execrated by the current affordability crisis in Nova Scotia.

Megan discussed the difficulty of starting her career again after working as a registered nurse and manager for nine years in Palestine. She emphasized the financial burden of relocating to Canada, necessitating the depletion of her savings and the relinquishment of her former way of life and social standing. *Megan* expressed: *I worked hard in Palestine and was doing well in my career. I have spent much money on my regular expenditures for the settlement. Apart from that, I had to give up my status, position and lifestyle.*

Having exhausted their savings, many of the immigrants interviewed for this study had to take on multiple jobs. *Mary*, for example, experienced significant financial difficulties despite having two jobs. Both part-time and minimum wage, these positions were insufficient to meet her needs and those of her young family. This was compounded by timelines for state benefits, such as limiting access to child benefits to 18 months after arrival. This delay worsened the family's already precarious financial situation. To cope with the exorbitant daily life expenses, they have opted to sublet the only bedroom in their one-bedroom apartment, resulting in their confinement to the living room. She expressed: *The policy says we can only afford child benefits after 18 months of landing. We had to sub-lease our one-bedroom apartment to share the huge rent, resulting in us living in the living room and the tenant in the bedroom.*

All participants often engaged in strategies to offset high living costs while studying. *Megan*, for example, described the challenges she faced in juggling their studies, family responsibilities, and financial constraints. She said: *right now, the studies are so demanding. I have a lot of assignments and tests every week. At the same time, I can work only 20 hours/week. This is something from which we can't afford to live a*

better life now. I don't even have this free 20 hours. I have to give time to my children." In turn, she tries to sell handmade jewelry but still struggles. In her interview, she said: *"From morning till evening, I am heavily involved in my study. Nevertheless, I tried to start my own business. I do a lot of handmade items. I made some handmade items and some jewelry. I struggled selling them to the markets, but people here usually don't buy them. I am trying to figure out the right direction for this business."*

Ifrad also emphasizes the challenge of juggling work and study to meet ends, especially with a pregnant wife in the retail industry. The simultaneous responsibilities strain individuals considerably and restrict their opportunities for quality time, ultimately impacting their familial relationships and overall welfare. Managing multiple roles at once reflects the economic challenges that immigrant families often encounter. He said: *I have to study and work to meet my ends with my wife. My wife used to hang out with relatives and friends after work but also works in retail. We don't get much time together. She is pregnant but still has to work to meet the ends."*

Mary highlights the importance of obtaining further qualifications or skill-based courses to enhance employability. Nevertheless, juggling additional academic pursuits alongside two part-time jobs presents a significant obstacle. In addition, the exorbitant educational expenses and the inability to qualify for loans intended for domestic students pose substantial challenges to their pursuit of advanced studies. He said*: It's tough to get a degree with two part-time jobs; education is also expensive, and I am not allowed to take loans because I am not a domestic student.* Finally, due to limited financial resources, *Mary* and her family depend on food banks to fulfill their essential dietary requirements. The reliance on external support highlights the gravity of their economic

predicament and the broader problem of food insecurity among immigrant households. She offered: *we must depend on the food banks because we can't afford groceries independently.*

The limitation of working only 20 hours a week poses a considerable obstacle for international student participants, as it hinders their capacity to generate sufficient income to sustain their families. This limitation can be incredibly challenging when considering the significant expenses associated with living and the financial responsibilities that come with starting a family. *Ifrad* explained that *the cap for working 20 hours a week is challenging to survive. Even if I choose to work elsewhere, I cannot do that.* ? highlights the economic burden of elevated taxes in Nova Scotia in contrast to provinces such as Alberta. The financial strain, along with the challenge of finding a high-paying job, worsens the economic hardships experienced by immigrants. He said: *another frustrating thing is that whatever I earn in Nova Scotia gets deducted by 15% as a tax. The province is not allowing me to grab a good job, but at the same time, it deducts huge sales tax and income tax. Other provinces like Alberta only deduct 5%. So, my hard-earned money is just draining out*.

Language Expectations

Participants also reported that employers would hesitate about their level of English. The immigrant participants in this study arrived predominately from Southeast Asia, so their first languages tended not to be French or English. In a 2017 study, Chiu found one-fifth of respondents mentioned language limitations as the most significant challenge to integration. According to Statistics Canada (2005), a significant majority of principal applicants under the Federal Skilled Worker Program, as well as a large

percentage of skilled workers' spouses and dependents, possessed the ability to communicate in English or French. Applicants for the Federal Skilled Worker Program must meet the minimum language requirement in English or French per the Canadian Language Benchmark for listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities (Government of Canada 2017) to be eligible for Express Entry.

In Zhang et al.'s 2023 study, employers consistently mentioned that job applicants' communication skills were lacking, and their knowledge of Canadian business practices and organizational culture was insufficient. *Mary (having a Master and Bachelor in Population Science and working as an associate in a clothing store in Nova Scotia)* emphasizes the considerable obstacle that language barriers present when effectively communicating with customers in the retail industry. This challenge can result in misinterpretations, decreased job productivity, and social detachment. She said *Language Barriers are there to communicate well with the customers. Because the culture and dialect make it different, even if I know the grammar.*

A growing scholarship on language, communication, and immigrant integration has developed over the last twenty years. In more recent work, for example, Cheng (2021) revealed from their study that topical knowledge pertains explicitly to an individual's understanding of content and real-world information in the workplace context. The acquisition of this knowledge impacts the way language is used, which may either facilitate or hinder effective communication. Communication challenges occur when tasks become unpredictable, and newcomers lack strategies to complete them (Cheng, 2021). Nevertheless, the range of these abilities can differ and may not always be deemed

satisfactory for effective communication in everyday situations or for securing employment (Murphy, 2010).

Cheng (2021) also reported that newcomers encounter difficulties in comprehension when engaging in conversations about unfamiliar subjects, such as topics related to cultures, vocabulary, or jargon that they need to be more familiar with. These challenges persisted despite the relevance of the issues to their everyday lives, including electricity, sports, movies, and local expressions. The primary communication difficulties experienced by newcomers were related to phonological factors, specifically accents and speech rate. The study found that participants faced communication challenges when they perceived native English speakers to speak at a fast pace. The participants faced organizational knowledge challenges and needed help using appropriate language, specifically pragmatic knowledge, in their workplaces. During interviews, participants expressed confusion regarding how to ask questions and appropriately address seniors in the workplace.

Critically, while English was not their first language, many of the participants in this study were proficient in English—an outcome of their higher formal education, training, Canadian education, and social and cultural norms around English language acquisition in their countries of origin. Many had to mandatorily go through internationally recognized tests, such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), and meet specific criteria. For my participants, however, it was often the absence of a Canadian accent or speech rhythm, familiarity with specialized linguistic abilities like job-specific terminology, understanding of Canadian expressions, idioms, and slang, as well as proficiency in cross-cultural communication that, from their

perspectives, impacted on employment results. Language programs for adult immigrants often prioritize the instruction of Canadian values, overlooking the intricate and multifaceted nature of the cultural journey for most newcomers (Guo, 2013). These programs also prioritize the development of immigrants' presentation skills and employability, which includes activities like adopting anglicized names, acquiring soft skills, and assimilating into the Canadian work environment. According to Fraser (2009), the effectiveness of current policies and programs for adult immigrants is severely compromised.

Implications for Permanent Residency

While some participants arrived as permanent residents, many hoped to transition to permanency after a period of temporary status (as a worker or, more often, a student); however, employment exclusions would complicate this plan. *Dalia* (registered nurse in Palestine, unemployed currently, and studying again to be registered nurse in Nova Scotia), who arrived as a permanent resident, discussed the challenges faced during the pre-immigration process, such as repeated attempts at the IELTS exam, extensive travel for English tests and medical checks, and the need to provide proof of funds consistently. The challenges mentioned emphasize the demanding and sometimes overwhelming aspects of the immigration process. She explained:

> *"I had to go through IELTS twice. I had to acquire the cut-off marks. The English test was also stressful. I was struggling with the travel to the city where the English test was taken. It was around a 5–6-hour journey by bus. I had to undergo medical checks, and we travelled to the same city. Actually, for the medical, I had to go back twice. The first time, I was pregnant, and they could not do an x-ray. So, when my*

boy was born, I had to travel again to do the x-ray. It was stressful because I had a newborn. I had to show proof of funds and keep that money. Until you land, you are not allowed to touch the fund. The immigration officer also asks about the money when you land."

In her interview, *Puja* (currently working as a chef in a kitchen and associate in home improvement retail, having a diploma in Social Service Work from Ontario), who arrived on a study permit and recently got her permanent residency, highlighted the rigorous criteria that must be met to acquire permanent residency in Canada. To be eligible for submission, immigrants must work full-time and accrue a designated number of hours, even in the event of illness. In addition, the position should be a permanent, full-time role and fall under the skilled labour category to fulfill the requirements. She explained *that to get permanent residency, we immigrants must work full-time and certain hours. Even when sick, we must maintain the hours to prepare our files for submission. Also, the job has to be permanent, full-time, and skilled to apply for permanent residency. You have to maintain 30 hours a week to be full-time. Puja* expressed frustration with the NOC statement that they cannot accept qualified positions, such as a supervisor or manager, due to the absence of these roles in the National Occupation Classification (NOC) list: *Even if I am qualified and get an offer of supervisor or manager,* she explained, *I cannot take the job because that's not on the National Occupation Classification (NOC) list."*

Puja also mentioned:

"The work I do in the kitchen is full-time, but it's frustrating. I am trying to find a job in social work, and here, no one is giving me the opportunity to work even if I have a degree from Toronto."

Even when one works a frustrating job out of their will, she still experiences microaggression, which is different. She mentioned:

"I started working at [Large Chain Food Retail across the country], where they agreed to provide me with the documents to apply for permanent residency. After working there for two years, they started making up things and did not help me at all. I had to leave the job and move to Nova Scotia to join another kitchen."

Employment Exploitation and Betrayal

The employment experiences of this study's participants reveal a depth of vulnerability that employers capitalize on. Employers get highly high-skilled workers at low prices and have access to a dependent and, therefore, highly exploitable labour pool. Herein lies the profitability of immigrant labour in Nova Scotia, as elsewhere in Canada. In addition to the underutilization of their skills and training, participants recounted experiences of exploitation and betrayal—betrayal by the immigration system that brought them to Canada and betrayal by their employers. *Puja*, for example, recounted how her employer (at a large chain restaurant) had promised to support her eventual application for permanent residency. In turn, she worked hard despite not enjoying the work, was consistent, dependable, took on extra tasks, and never complained despite having reason to do so. After two years, however, her employer refused to fulfill their commitment to providing the permanent residency documentation—in stark contrast to their agreement. *Puja* resigned from her position, found another similar job, and

eventually received the required paperwork from that employer. She emotionally explained: *After working there for two years, they started making up things and did not help me. I left and started work at [name of other restaurants], which gave me all the documents needed for permanent residency. I have all the documents. They said they would help me."*

The unfortunate experience of being misled and exploited by employers highlights the vulnerability of immigrants in the labour market. During her time at the first restaurant, *Puja* was hesitant to address the issue of unfair treatment because she worried about its potential impact on their immigration status. The concern over potential retaliation underscores the unequal power dynamics between immigrant workers and employers and the possibility of discriminatory practices.

Kai (having master's in community health from Ghana, working as caregiver supervisor) encountered discrimination and inequitable treatment within their professional environment, specifically in supervision positions. The interviewee describes an incident in which their leadership was challenged by a subordinate, highlighting the presence of biases and resistance toward accepting immigrants in positions of power. She explained:

> *"I supervise people, but there are no differences between supervisors and supervisees. For example, once, I tried to instruct one of my supervisees. He is from Canada. He questioned my leadership, telling me I was pretending to be a supervisor. I was questioned in the meeting room about my behaviour."*

Despite having extensive managerial experience in a bank for more than ten years, this interviewee initially had to settle for part-time, low-wage work as a bank teller due to the unavailability of daycare facilities for her young child.

Dalia's workplace experience was characterized by isolation, limited communication, and a hostile environment, which sharply contrasted with the vibrant and relaxed work culture she was accustomed to in Nigeria. She experienced racial discrimination and was the sole individual of African descent in her professional environment, intensifying her sense of isolation and unease. *Kai* mentioned about the similar experiences. Even if the job she did was not aligned with her past degrees and experiences. Yet, she had to continue to survive and support the family. Further she expressed:

"I was looking for survival jobs as a care assistant. I had to fight hard for this position through multiple interviews. I have applied for a series of jobs. It was not a pleasant experience because I was feeling isolated. No one was willing to chat with you. It was very difficult to survive there. It was just like getting to your work, getting your job done, and leaving the place. The working environment was not friendly. This is something I was not used to backing home. In Nigeria, the work environment was so lively and relaxed"

David describes their involuntary resignation from their initial employment, citing instances of workplace discrimination and unjust treatment. The incident, along with the unwelcoming attitude from colleagues, indicates a work environment that is hostile towards immigrants. He explained: *I was forced to resign from the job. Whatever I was*

told, I did. People there did not like me. I never experienced such an attitude from back home. Without any proper reason, I was told not to come to the office anymore.

Conclusion

Significant obstacles to employment include the non-recognition of foreign credentials, disregard for previous work experience or the insistence on Canadian experience by employers, challenges in obtaining references, and instances of discrimination (Akbari, 2005; Statistics Canada, 2005; Alboim and McIsaac, 2007). Adapting to a different society often involves a transitional phase, especially when individuals need to find employment, acquire a new language, navigate educational institutions, access healthcare services, interact with government entities, and understand unfamiliar laws varying wildly from their home country. The challenge of transitioning can be observed in the labour market profile of recent immigrants. In comparison to immigrants who have been in the country for a more extended period, as well as those who were born in Canada, many recent immigrants may face higher unemployment rates, work in jobs that do not match their level of education, and earn lower incomes (Boyd, 2000).

Although Canada faces a shortage of skilled labour and skilled immigrants are admitted based on their potential to contribute to the economy, they still hold higher rates of underemployment and unemployment than Canadian-born individuals. Several factors significantly challenge skilled immigrants' effective social and economic integration. These include a lack of information and guidance, difficulties in having foreign credentials recognized, struggles with obtaining recognition for previous work experience or meeting employers' requirement for Canadian experience, language skill deficiencies,

obstacles in obtaining references, prejudices, stereotypes, and discrimination, cultural integration issues, the need for social and emotional support, and concerns regarding health and well-being.

Importantly given this study's relatively small sample size, the experiences of my participants are mirrored in the academic literature (Alboim and McIsaac 2007; Banerjee and Phan 2014; Chen et al. 2010; Drolet et al. 2015; Esses et al. 2007; Gauthier 2016; Lowe and Ortiz 2015; Ng and Omariba 2010; Reitz 2007; Sakamoto et al. 2010, Weiner, 2008). For example, in a research project by Sakamoto et al. (2010), multiple community agencies in Toronto investigated the significance of the Canadian experience in skilled immigrant employment. Their study, like mine, revealed that the Canadian experience is not only considered essential for securing employment but is also utilized by employers as a means to discriminate against immigrants. Similarly, a study conducted by Houle and Yssaad (2010) discovered that the acknowledgment of foreign credentials and work experience hinders the economic integration of skilled immigrants and their overall integration into Canadian society. Buzdugan and Halli (2009) showed that degrees acquired in Western and Northern Europe and Australia hold more significance in the Canadian labour market compared to degrees gained from other regions, including Canada. Qualified immigrants in regulated professions often face challenges regarding having their foreign credentials recognized in Canada (Banerjee and Phan, 2014). Typically, immigrants encounter a lengthy, time-consuming, and expensive process when attempting to have their foreign credentials accredited and previous work experience recognized. Education is sometimes necessary for this process, which can lead to frustration among immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2005). It is worth noting that the

devaluation of international qualifications extends beyond tightly regulated fields like medicine, education, and social work and occurs in unregulated professions (Reitz, 2005).

As a result, the immigrant workers in this study demonstrated considerable adaptability and ingenuity to thrive in their circumstances. Unfortunately, for many, this has meant sacrificing time with family and friends to work multiple jobs, often while studying. This relative isolation, coupled with labour market exclusion and, consequently, profound financial challenges, generates considerable mental distress, anxiety, and, in some instances, even more serious mental health challenges. This is particularly acute for those who are not yet permanent and cannot easily access health care services. In the following chapter, I elaborate on the psycho-social and mental health costs of workplace exclusion and alienation.

CHAPTER 4 BRIDGING THE GAP: IMMIGRANT EXPECTATIONS, EXPERIENCES, AND IMMIGRANT HEALTH

Introduction

Immigration represents far more than a simple change of location. It encompasses a profound alteration, a journey filled with hope for families and individuals searching for brighter prospects. Always running in tandem with migrants' aspirations and often encouraging them, Canadian immigration policy, as it pertains to labour, has played a vital role in many of Canada's industries, from agriculture to construction to service work. Immigrants are often hired for these jobs because they are willing to work for lower wages and under more precarious conditions than Canadian-born workers. This exploitation of immigrant labour is a central feature of racial capitalism, in which workers from marginalized communities are exploited for their labour to enrich those in power. Many immigrants land in Canada expecting to enhance their quality of life and to access opportunities to use their training, education, work experiences, and other government services like health. For many of them, that proves the opposite. Indeed, being underemployed often in low-wage jobs, with their credentials not recognized, is increasingly an everyday experience for newcomers.

Canada is known for its multiculturalism. In turn, the country has a reputation for providing immigrants with a better life than other immigrant-receiving countries. Canada relies on this reputation to encourage people—often those with high skill levels—to migrate. Yet, the findings depicted in the first two chapters of this thesis and the growing academic scholarship demonstrate that there is a stark disconnect between what Canada claims to offer and what actually happens once immigrants arrive. So far, this thesis has

focused on that disconnect, offering insight into the expectations immigrants arrive at and their experiences of labour market exclusion once in Canada. This chapter, in turn, contributes to a growing body of research concerned with the implications of this exclusion.

Employment is the nodal point for immigrant identity and self-perception. Many individuals in this study's sample derived their sense of identity from their role within the family as financial support providers. Everyone's identity and social status are frequently associated with employment (Government of Canada, 2024). Lastly, and particularly significant for skilled immigrants in Canada, is the sense of identity that comes from being recognized as a professional.

Since Chapters 1 and 2 discussed immigrants' expectations and experiences after landing in Nova Scotia, it is noteworthy to comprehend the fundamental issues rooted within the Canadian political economy and racial capitalism. This chapter revealed the conditions of immigrants' mental health surrounding their employment and social status. Yet, it is necessary to emphasize the wider economic and racial dynamics that build the holistic well-being of immigrants.

Revealing the correlation between alienation and acculturative stress, specifically regarding racism, underemployment, work conditions, discrimination, and interpersonal and familial tensions, several studies have posited a connection between immigration and trauma (Abdulrahim et. al, 2010). Others have applied the theories of acculturative stress to explain the difficulties immigrants and refugees face while settling in a different country. Here, economic anxiety (having difficulty securing a suitable job, housing, and gaining sufficient income), social stress (facing negative attitudes & behaviours), and

psychological stress (coping with trauma) converge, resulting in negative physical and mental health outcomes for newcomers.

Historically, several objectives of immigration policies in Canada have been rearticulated by many conflicts. Some include the augmentation of white British society in Canada by building settler colonies in certain regions of the country (with previously sparse European populations) and meeting the needs of the labour market (Choudry & Smith, 2016). Furthermore, Canada's immigration system has also been shaped by discriminatory policies, such as the Chinese Head Tax and the Indian Act. These policies have sought to restrict immigration from certain racialized groups and limit their economic opportunities. As part of this, immigrants from Britain were always prioritized to immigrate to Canada with far less effort, and other countries were considered when the immigrants from Britain were inadequate (Knowles, 1992). This exclusionary approach to immigration is another feature of racial capitalism, in which economic systems are organized around the exclusion and marginalization of certain groups to benefit others. Racial capitalism is concretely connected to immigration in Canada, with the country's economic system relying on the exploitation of immigrant labour. Understanding these links is crucial for addressing the systemic inequalities that keep growing to shape the experiences and outcomes of immigrant communities in Canada.

Yet, the lack of coordination between policies, employers and the provincial governments often traps many newcomers in a spectrum of unstable employment. This chapter argues that the issue of precarity extends beyond individual efforts and is knotted with broader societal issues that influence the integration and health outcomes of immigrants.

In what follows, I evaluate the gap that prevails between the promises (discussed in Chapter 1) and experiences (discussed in Chapter 2) through the neoliberal immigration policies and how they impact immigrant mental health. The focus will be on Nova Scotia, a province renowned for its easier permanent residency for the last twenty years, with picturesque landscapes and a growing economy.

Immigration reform has been a significant focus of the federal government's policy change agenda during this period of financial constraint, corresponding to the maturation of neoliberalism. However, the connection between austerity, neoliberalism, and changes in immigration policy is mostly missing in the Canadian literature (Roots et al., 2014). It has been depicted in several government and non-governmental websites that immigrants' hard work can lead to career growth and community integration. Nevertheless, when these immigrants with higher skill sets, education, and global experience arrive in the province, they face harsh realities like underemployment, poor healthcare, and the burden of skyrocketing rent. The situation remains unchanged. While much of the literature concerning immigrant well-being focuses on larger cities, notably Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, over the last ten years, there has been increased attention paid to smaller urban and rural centres, there still remains a gap concerning outcomes in the Atlantic region, with limited insight into Nova Scotia especially. And yet, given growing efforts to increase immigration to the province, such insight is critical. In turn, his chapter connects the dots between the immigrant expectations and the experiences faced in the province of Nova Scotia and the impact on their mental health. It begins with a review of the research literature on immigrant health, focusing on the intersection between economic exclusion and mental health outcomes.

Section 1: Immigrant Health

The social determinants of immigrant health encompass various factors such as employment and income (Dean and Wilson, 2009), socioeconomic status (Ng and Omariba, 2010), and race and ethnicity, particularly racism and discrimination (Hyman, 2009). The mental health of immigrants is adversely affected by unemployment and underemployment (Dean and Wilson, 2009). In a study conducted by Wu and Schimmele (2005), the focus was on analyzing the fluctuations in depression levels among immigrants over some time. The analysis confirmed the healthy immigrant effect and the subsequent decline in health advantage over time. It was observed that racialized immigrants exhibited good mental health initially but experienced an increase in depression shortly after their arrival. As an example, in a longitudinal survey, skilled immigrants who were over-qualified for their current employment experienced a decline in their mental health and persistent feelings of sadness, depression, or loneliness.

According to a survey conducted by Chen et al. in 2010, there is a clear correlation between the mental health of immigrants and their unfulfilled expectations or overall dissatisfaction with their employment. Ng and Omariba (2010) made a comparative analysis with metadata through the Systems Approach Framework on factors influencing the mental health of migrants in Canada. It was revealed that on a systems level (Macro), economic barriers, underemployment or unemployment are some of the biggest reasons for adverse mental health. Unfortunately, the government has not provided clear guidelines for addressing the mental health concerns of immigrants (Kaushik & Drolet, 2018).

Individuals who migrate for work and those in vulnerable employment face ongoing anxiety about potential job loss. They often find themselves underemployed, working excessive hours for inadequate pay, which contributes to poverty, lack of resources, and a sense of powerlessness. Studies have shown that workers in precarious employment, such as those employed through temporary employment agencies, often experience more health issues than workers in permanent employment relationships (Lewchuk, Clarke, and de Wolff, 2011).

Several studies have identified that while integrating into the labour market, immigrants in Canada experience a tremendous amount of adverse mental health issues. They end up assimilating their skills, resulting in de-skilling. This phenomenon arises when immigrants' Education and credentials from their home country must be acknowledged in Canada, and they cannot continue working in their previous occupations (Bauder, 2001).

Within the literature, the effect of healthy immigrants is frequently associated with various factors. One factor to consider is the self-selection of immigrants, where those who are healthier and more financially capable are more likely to migrate. Similarly, conducting health screenings by Canadian authorities before immigrants arrive in Canada can result in generally healthier immigrants (McDonald & Kennedy, 2004). The Canadian government has always been following the healthy immigrant tactics, which means individuals who are healthy and affluent will be prioritized (Ng, Pottie, & Spitzer, 2011). As a part of their application, applicants must undergo a robust medical examination by the Canadian government's designated physicians. The exam details are thorough and sent directly to the government from the physician to maintain the

authenticity. Consequently, soon after arrival, the immigrants showcase a superior physical and mental health status than the native-born citizens. This phenomenon is known as the healthy immigrant effect (Gushulak et al., 2011). According to scholarly research, a significant majority of immigrants, as high as 90 percent, indicate having excellent or very good health upon arrival.

New immigrants' growth and welfare depend heavily on their mental and physical health. Although many Canadian government websites project that their efforts are to augment the diversity of the population to effectively and immediately meet the needs, the reality is starkly different and can be observed by the immigrants as soon as they land. It is worth noting that these healthy immigrants tend to diminish their health advantage over time and become similar to the health condition of the Canadian-born population. Lou and Beaujot (2005) conducted a study on the mental health of immigrants in Canada, utilizing data from the 2002 Canadian Community Health Survey. It was discovered that the healthy immigrant effect diminishes over time.

Age and gender play a significant role in determining individuals' health. However, it is also widely recognized in Canadian and international literature that socioeconomic factors, such as income and education, are crucial health indicators (Salami et al., 2017; McDonald & Kennedy, 2004;). In a study conducted by Chen et. al (2010), it was discovered that recent immigrants who were over-educated were more likely to report declines in mental health. This clarified that immigrants' job satisfaction level primarily played an influential role in their mental health.

Immigrants may experience severe mental health issues from the stressful life events that often accompany pre- and post-migration stages. James (2010) revealed the

correlation between alienation and acculturative stress, specifically regarding racism, work, discrimination, and family stress. Other scholars have also applied the theories of acculturative stress to explain the difficulties immigrants and refugees face while settling in a different country. For example, immigrants often face depression or physical symptoms as a result of unstable living conditions, poverty, and lack of employment opportunities in the host country (Gushulak et al., 2011). In a national qualitative study, participants who were immigrants and refugees highlighted the unfair employment discrimination they faced due to the lack of recognition of their international education and experience. In this regard, James (2010) mentioned specifically economic anxiety (having difficulty securing a suitable job, housing, and gaining sufficient income), social stress (facing negative attitudes & behaviours), and psychological stress (coping with trauma).

However, these theories do not fully depict the complex immigrant integration processes into Canadian society. Strains of different people of colour are separate; however, the markers of systemic racism and economic exclusion are considered the same as Black people in Canadian society. James (2010), in his research, identified that economic inequality dramatically impacts the relationship between the individual, their families, and the whole immigrant community. It can be comprehended as a viscous cycle developed by financial hardships, which are harder to break when lacking recognition of foreign degrees by immigrants. People struggle to integrate into the economy, at least as they thought before landing in Canada. Making ends meet within a fixed budget each month is so stressful that saving for the future is nearly shocking. This research also discovered the “myth of merit,” which means that getting an education in Canada will

lead to higher income, even if they already possess an accredited higher degree. This discrimination has a huge negative impact on their mental health, as found by several studies by Simich et al. (2004). As part of it, it was observed that there is also a correlation between economic distress and an individual's inner strength and control (Acharya & Northcott, 2007), which ultimately plays a vital factor in mental distress.

There have been different depictions of the mental distress of overqualified immigrants depending on the duration of their stay in Canada. *David*, a Finance Manager with 13 years of experience back home, living in Nova Scotia for the last four years, mentioned:

> *"Initially, when I came as a new person, I had a lot of anxiety. I did not where to start. I have applied for many jobs. I was trying to find relevant jobs. I never did any odd jobs back home. I got into odd jobs. It was frustrating for me. Some of the organizations were looking for academic and professional experience in Canada. I was hoping to be accepted right away as I qualified for immigration. I thought those would be good for me in the job sector. However, I could not get into the job sector because I had no local experience."*

He also expressed his demotivating reasons, such as his manager having only a high school degree while supervising him having an MBA. *Sandy*, another participant, has ten years of experience in international companies with a BSC in Electrical Engineering, led large teams back home, and mentioned that he could not even get into any entry-level jobs here related to his skills and education. He started working in different retails, being an associate, helping customers. Even after completing a master's in engineering from Nova Scotia, he has struggled to get an appropriate job for the last

nine months. Lou and Beaujot (2005) noted that Immigrants who had been living in Canada for ten or more years reported lower ratings of their mental health compared to those who had resided in Canada for less than ten years. In addition, Salami et al. (2017) found that participants who had recently migrated to Canada within five years had better mental health than those who migrated more than ten years before. Revealing similar findings, Dean and Wilson's 2009 study showed that skilled immigrants in Canada, specifically those who have been residing in the country for three years or less, revealed that skilled immigrants often associated feelings of stress, anxiety, depression, and unhappiness with being over-educated for their job and working in a field that does not align with their expertise (Dean and Wilson 2009).

Understanding underemployment, which can involve frustration over unemployment and overqualification, is crucial to addressing the challenges migrants face throughout the entire migration process, from arrival to post. It is important to consider the social factors that affect immigrants, including the policies that govern their migration and resettlement.

Well-educated immigrants may experience a heightened sense of alienation and social isolation, resulting in significant dissatisfaction and discontent. *Rahul* delves into the significant psychological, social, and emotional consequences of immigration on their family. The first half-year proved quite demanding, characterized by feelings of isolation and the emotional struggle of parting with loved ones. *Rahul*, one of the participants from India, said:

"Initial effects hit hard on me psychologically, socially and emotionally. For the initial six months, my family and I felt too lonely. We had to leave our loved ones. We had

to get settled here to adjust to everything. It was quite difficult to accept everything psychologically."

This emphasizes the emotional impact of immigration and underscores the importance of providing mental health assistance and community-based programs to aid immigrants in navigating these changes. Skilled immigrants project over-education compared to non-immigrants, which is socially acceptable to the immigrant population (Frank & Hou, 2018).

Mawani et. al (2022) investigated underemployment within a framework and explored how immigrants are impacted by social inclusion & exclusion in pre- and post-migration stages and the discrimination process in the job sites after migration. Researchers identified that these factors influence underemployment among newcomers and have a solid impact on their mental health through the material and psychosocial channels that cover daily lives in the family, community, and society. If we consider the post-migration experience in light of pre-migration expectations, it is possible to anticipate that the social exclusions experienced by immigrants may motivate them to move to other better-off countries for inclusion and growth opportunities. The after-migration detaches the Canadian government's selection criteria of skilled migrants based on high skill, education and work experience, and the failure of licensing authorities and employers to acknowledge those credentials, leading to unemployment or underemployment.

Studies showed that immigrants with a higher skill than required may experience obstacles such as lower income, reduced productivity, uncertain or precarious employment, limited job level decisions, in short, the whole de-skilling process, as

evidenced by Wu, Luksyte, & Parker (2015) cited in Frank & Hou (2018). Lower-income gets visible when individuals experience other challenges like finding affordable houses, getting used to new systems, building new social networks, and supporting family members back home. It is also noteworthy that the cost of living in the new country is much higher, leading to leverage of the economic stress experienced by underemployed immigrants. The situation is much more severe for racialized immigrants when they find challenges getting fair remuneration for their foreign experience and education (Guo, 2013).

While evaluating the impact of underemployment on mental well-being, scholars revealed that the association was distinguishable for both immigrants and Canadian-born individuals. The distinction factors get a solid understanding of the relationship between overeducation and self-rated mental health for the compared individuals (Mawani et. al, 2022) because the immigrants portrayed a noteworthy association between overqualification and fair or poor mental health, where the association was not shown among Canadian-born individuals. Interestingly, this discrepancy may reveal more insights into the nature and experiences of overqualification among immigrants from their country of origin compared to other countries.

The unfavourable outcomes of underemployment on mental health have been identified and documented over the past many years. Several researchers ascertained that unemployment leads to deteriorating mental health through several pathways, including socioeconomic factors such as loss of income, social networks and relations, and loss of self-esteem, leading to a feeling of unworthy (M Beiser, Johnson, and Turner 1993; Lavis et al. 2001). Research by Mawani et.al (2022) adhered to the idea that overqualification

among immigrants in Canada is tremendously influenced by racial capitalism. Census data from 1991, 1996 and 2001 also supported this claim, as noted by Galarneau and Morissette (2004, 2008). In their study, the respondents who faced racialization tended to have a 10.76% higher likelihood of being overqualified compared to those who did not experience racialization. Furthermore, immigrants who had their education from outside Canada had a 12.31% higher likelihood of being overqualified than immigrants who got their degrees in Canada. The research revealed that individuals who came from Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, Central America, and South America had a 12.53% higher likelihood of being overqualified than immigrants from Oceania, North America and Europe.

Besides, the shortage of orientation on Canadian laws and systems, as well as the lack of social and professional networks among Canadians and newcomers, can boost challenges in accessing necessary help to report employment discrepancies and pursue training opportunities.

This can hinder their ability to improve their employment status, increase their income, and ultimately alleviate the negative impact of underemployment on their mental well-being (Premji and Shakya, 2017). On the other hand, Cai and Kalb (2006) assert that the nature of employment leads to increased happiness and self-confidence, which positively impacts health. In addition, long-term income better indicates socioeconomic status than current income. Other factors that reflect socioeconomic status include home ownership, type of dwelling, number of bedrooms, and number of children living at home (McDonald & Kennedy, 2004).

Research has shown that new immigrants often face challenges in achieving adequate living standards and accessing healthcare services compared to non-immigrants. These difficulties can be attributed to various barriers that arise during the settlement period (Kirmayer et al., 2011). The effects of discrimination get more prominent when racism comes into place. Racialized immigrants face the intersection of health determinants and the impact of racism and micro-aggressions on society's institutions and social interactions (Gee & Ford, 2011).

Paradies et al. (2015) studied a meta-analysis by scrutinizing the relationship between racism and health with several populations and national outcomes. Their meta-analysis identified a substantial association between poor mental health and racism. These results align with previous systematic reviews and meta-analyses on the topic (Paradies et al., 2015.).

According to Kennedy, McDonald, and Biddle (2006), when racism and microaggressions occur, they can contribute to social isolation and feelings of exclusion and depression. This can ultimately impact the health status of both foreign and native-born populations, as noted by Gee and Ford (2011). *Dalia,* registered nurse from Palestine, currently unemployed and getting degree for being registered nurse in Nova Scotia, felt socially isolated, unable to discuss issues with her supervisor or colleagues, and could only talk to her husband about her problems. *"I was not welcome to talk about anything. I mean, even people were not interested in talking to me. I could not even talk to my supervisor or employer about any issue. I only talked to my husband."*

This social isolation is detrimental to mental health and well-being, emphasizing the importance of creating supportive social networks and community resources for immigrants.

Rafiq, MSC in Botany, a social worker turned Home Depot associate, highlights the challenges of assimilating into the workforce and adjusting to a foreign environment, particularly in light of familial obligations, financial responsibilities, and the pursuit of quality education for their child. The challenge at hand emphasizes the complex pressures experienced by immigrants, emphasizing the necessity for support systems that cater to professional and personal adjustment.

His spouse faces challenges concerning leaving their social circle and relatives in Bangladesh while their child is experiencing difficulties adapting to unfamiliar surroundings. The emotional and social adjustment that accompanies the immigration experience highlights the necessity for improved community support and social integration programs for immigrant families. These programs can assist them in managing the loss of their previous social networks.

Evidence suggests that discrepancies between occupation, education, and income can lead to a decline in overall health. In a study conducted by Peter, Gässler, and Geyer (2007), it was found that there is a correlation between status inconsistency and a higher risk of heart disease. The researchers attributed this relationship to the elevated stress levels of unstable employment. In addition, individuals may experience stress when they fail to achieve their goals (Dressler. 1988). This form of stress is commonly observed in individuals struggling to enhance their job prospects and is especially prevalent among advanced-educated individuals (Smith and Frank, 2005).

Research conducted by Piper in 2015 revealed a negative correlation between over-education and the life satisfaction of university graduates. Various explanations were given for lower levels of life satisfaction. These included unmet expectations, individuals questioning the value of further education, and comparisons with peers who have the same education level but are not over-educated.

Studies have found that South Asian women with low socio-economic status and inactive lifestyles are more prone to heart disease (Tremblay et al., 2006). The experience of being a new immigrant coupled with encountering racism can worsen feelings of exclusion and depression, leading to declining health among immigrants in the long run (Brondolo, Gallo, & Myers, 2008). *Megan's,* (registered occupational therapist from Palestine, unemployed and studying again MSW) challenges in establishing trusting relationships in Canada further intensify her feelings of depression and lack of social support. The dependence on connections in Palestine suggests a deficiency in the local social networks and support systems. *"People here cannot be my social support. I feel depressed; I connect with other people in Palestine. The relationship is dependent on the trust. I am yet to build such a relationship here with anybody."* Mental health services and community programs must be in place to assist immigrants in forming valuable connections and support networks in their new surroundings.

Acculturative stress has been found to have a detrimental impact on psychological well-being, as demonstrated by the research conducted by Jibeen and Khalid in 2010. Upon arriving in Canada, immigrants with limited English proficiency often encounter greater challenges than those already fluent in English. This language barrier can significantly impact their mental well-being (Crooks et al., 2011). *Dalia*, expressed, *"I*

had to go through IELTS twice. I had to require the cut-off marks. The English test was also stressful"

Another participant, *Mary*, Bachelors and Masters in Population Health, now working in clothing retail in Nova Scotia, said, *"Language Barriers are there to communicate well with the customers. Because the culture and dialect make it different even if I know grammar."*

Mental health issues among immigrants can be attributed to various post-migration factors. These include the separation from loved ones and the familiar culture of their home country as they adapt to a new and unfamiliar environment. *Dalia* expressed:

"I was not welcome to talk about anything. I mean, even people were not interested in talking to me. I could not even talk to my supervisor or employer about any issue. I only talked to my husband. The employer or supervisor is always complaining about the petty details of my regular tasks. I was new in Canada, so I did not want to have any problems. However, it was clearly racism. I was the only black person there"."

Overall, most participants in this study and the study conducted by Dean and Wilson (2009) believed that their employment conditions had a detrimental effect on their health. Participants mainly experienced a sharp rise in stress, frustration, tension, depression, worry, unhappiness, and uneasiness as a direct result of their unemployment or underemployment.

About separation from loved ones, *Puja* (currently working as a chef in a kitchen and associate in home improvement retail, having a diploma in Social Service Work from Ontario) expressed, "*I kept crying for my mum and dad at the beginning".* The spatial

separation of immigrants and their families has been linked to negative mental health outcomes, including a lack of satisfaction and increased loneliness, identified again in the study conducted by Dean and Wilson (2009).

In a study conducted by Lai and Surood (2008), it was discovered that there is a correlation between the strength of South Asian cultural values and the likelihood of reporting depression among older South Asian Canadians. There may be a potential conflict between strong cultural values and Western values, leading to a cultural clash that can result in depression. Research has shown that Korean immigrants in Canada may experience negative psychological consequences due to a lack of support from cultural communities. This can result in passive and inactive coping strategies and a low sense of belonging. Research indicates that a strong sense of cultural connectedness can help protect against depression (Costigan et al., 2010). One of the participants, *Megan*, a registered nurse from Palestine, now a student at NSCC, mentioned that:

> *"About my kids, they do not actually like it here. Because of the cultural and religious aspects, the situation is not the same for them. At the same time, they have to learn English to communicate in their school. Back home, English was not even their second language; all they had to speak Arabic. Besides, the surrounding community is something that they cannot integrate with"*

Salami et al. (2017) also identified that the presence of a strong (or lack thereof) sense of community belonging was found to have a direct impact on individual's self-perceived mental health and their self-reported diagnosis of mood disorders. Individuals with a strong sense of community belonging were approximately four times more likely to report excellent, very good, or good self-perceived mental health than those with a

weak sense of community belonging. The stark contrast has been observed with the reality by one of the participants, *Dalia*, mother of 2 kids, who expressed:

> *"I faced challenges finding out the housing. The kids are not allowed to make their voices up. People or neighbours in the apartment feel disturbed by my kids' playing. Neighbours usually complain about their jumping and playing. Often, neighbours were knocking at my door. One day, they called the police on me. It was quite shocking."*

Nancy, having MBA from Nigeria, currently working as care giver, portrayed the community integration requirement and the differences between immigrant black communities and local black communities. She highlighted the need for assistance in integrating the growing Nigerian community in Canada into the broader Canadian society. Many minority groups often experience feelings of isolation and disconnection.

"Nigerian community is growing, but they are not specifically integrating into the Canadian communities. They don't feel that they belong to the community here. Immigration is isolating and lonely to cope with. It's tough for people in the minority. For example, I am black and African, and I do not belong anywhere. There is a term called African Nova Scotia, but we are not even treated like them. We are just hanging in the middle of something which cannot be considered in any term."

The differentiation between African Nova Scotians and African immigrants intensifies this feeling of exclusion, highlighting the necessity for programs that promote community integration and inclusion for all minority groups.

The participants in this study expressed the same feelings as those interviewed by Dean and Wilson (2009). Participants expressed concern about the potential loss of social

status due to de-skilling, which, in turn, impacted health. Here, importantly, it tended not only to be about social status in Canada but also about social status in the country of origin and amongst family and friends. After orchestrating the immigration plans, often conversing with friends and family about aspirations for their lives in Canada, admitting that those aspirations had not been achieved took a considerable emotional toll.

Section 2: The Impact of Racial Capitalism on the Mental Health of Immigrants

Neo-liberal theory posits that individuals are expected to take on individualized responsibility and self-governance (Cradock, 2007). According to this theory, individuals are viewed as self-directing and autonomous, regardless of their circumstances (Bondi, 2005). Regrettably, making individuals responsible also has the unintended consequence of making governments and institutions irresponsible. This creates a disconnect between governments and their constituents. According to Garrett (2008), neo-liberalism has concentrated state authority, leading to a more authoritarian approach focused on security and prevention. This approach lays the burden for both on the individual.

Over the past three years, a growing body of information shows how social factors influence mental health outcomes in particular groups of people. The correlation between unemployment, insecure work, employment circumstances and heightened psychological suffering remains consistent (Han & Lee, 2015). A study done in Sweden has also identified that those in lower-income zones and with tremendous financial distress are more prone to face poor mental well-being (Amroussia, 2017; Lecerof, 2016). Similar results were also noted in different countries like Korea, Europe, and North America (Han & Lee, 2015; Reibling, 2017; Salami et al., 2017), especially among people facing further obstacles. An individual's employment condition is the nodal point

centralized in impacting other social variables. Comparing men and women, it was revealed that unemployment has a more viable effect on the mental health of males. *Puja*, originally from India, describes the emotional distress and homesickness they faced, especially during the initial phases of immigration. The emotional toll of immigration is evident in the separation from family, as seen in the tears shed by parents. She highlighted: *"I kept crying for my mum and dad at the beginning."* This highlights the importance of improved mental health support services for new immigrants, aiding them in navigating the emotional challenges of resettlement.

A vital theme to understand the immigrant experiences in Nova Scotia is racial capitalism, which is evident in the intersection of economic exploitation and racial oppression. Even though the country is committed to the immigrant's multicultural values and the opportunities for holistic success and upward social mobility, the real experiences of the immigrants differ from the promises made. The observed disparity is not solely attributed to policy shortcomings but rather serves as a manifestation of a racial capitalist structure that treats immigrant labour as a commodity and perpetuates racial hierarchies.

Immigrants, particularly those from racialized backgrounds, frequently encounter precarious employment in which their skills and qualifications are not adequately recognized, resulting in low wages. The economic marginalization discussed here is a consequence of a labour market that is designed to maintain the existing economic structure by taking advantage of racialized labour, all while claiming to address labour shortages. The effect on mental health is significant, as the uncertainty of employment results in financial instability, persistent stress, and a reduced sense of self-esteem, which worsens mental health problems among immigrants.

Canadian political economy is known for its neoliberal tendencies, emphasizing market-driven strategies and individual accountability rather than extensive social welfare. This has accelerated since the 1990s, prompted by political projects of mainly privatizing, restructuring, and decreasing the national budget for social assistance expenditures. Without such social safety net services, western countries are more focused on assigning responsibility for the well-being of the individuals. The mental health, child welfare, and correctional sectors, along with their management and front-line workers, function within policy and financial systems that align with this perspective. Approaches prioritizing the individual and emphasizing independent action and self-care directly oppose our understanding that social-ecological processes significantly influence positive psychosocial outcomes among vulnerable populations rather than individual efforts alone (Ungar, 2013).

Teghtsoonian (2009) situated the influence of neoliberalism on governments' response to depression in British Columbia; however, she contends that similar responses are evident globally because neoliberalism has become widespread as a governing ethic.

It was discussed in the previous chapters that the existing capitalist framework significantly affects immigration policies, which constantly rank achieving short-term labour market demands over sufficiently targeting the long-term welfare of the immigrants. Immigrants are considered an economic entity rather than a person with complex health and social requirements. As a result, this discrepancy creates extensive significance on the mental well-being of immigrants. Due to the neoliberal philosophy of the government, most of the immigrants are left feeling isolated, vulnerable and marginalized, thinking of achieving economic self-sufficiency. Thus, the situation gets

convoluted when immigrants find out that there is also inadequate funding for mental health services. However, studies found that these services are vital for immigrants to let them navigate the challenges of acculturation and resettlement.

A relatively new Canadian study conducted by Salami et al. (2017), for example, yielded more data indicating that, whereas migrants often exhibit superior mental well-being compared to native populations early after their arrival, this advantage tends to diminish over time.). Discrimination based on factors such as race/ethnicity, immigration status, sexual orientation, and employment position has consistently been linked to adverse mental health effects in both the United States and Canada (Alegría et. al, 2018). The same author also noted positive and poor familial ties can significantly influence mental well-being. Residing with one's family, contentment with familial ties, and a strong sense of family unity have all been linked to a reduced occurrence of depressive symptoms. It is crucial to acknowledge that mental health disparities related to unchangeable traits such as race/ethnicity and gender are more likely a result of experiencing oppression or discrimination rather than being inherently susceptible to disease (Alegría et. al, 2018).

One of the vital reasons for immigrants having mental health challenges was identified as the process of their integration into Canadian society due to racial capitalism and neoliberalism. These factors shape a societal condition that puts economic outcomes at greater importance than the individuals' overall well-being. Once the immigrants land in the country, they begin pursuing their dreams, putting in a lot of effort, but are eventually left feeling the outcomes of discrimination. As a result, mental health

problems become quite typical for immigrants because of the systemic challenges that limit their social integration and economic visions.

Nova Scotia's Mental Health Service Accesses

According to Johnstone, Brown, and Ross (2023), p. 224, this significantly affects the increase in social power differences based on gender, race, and class. The key characteristics of McDonaldization are efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control (Johnstone, Brown, & Ross, 2023). The study conducted by Brown, Johnstone, Ross, and Doll (2023) examined the relationship between diversity, deep-rooted neoliberalism practices, and the lack of anti-oppressive approaches in service delivery. Specifically, social workers reported that there was a lack of anti-oppressive practice when working with clients who were predominantly members of non-dominant groups, such as members of the queer community, racialized people, or Indigenous people. This lack of approach may have contributed to the mistrust that these groups feel towards the mental health care system. According to the researchers, social work service providers described a top-down approach inside management that included hyper-policing of their work and minimal place for advocacy. Scrutinizing neoliberal managerialism, the authors investigated efficiency vs. compassion. In this regard, supervisors conveyed their annoyance with being ineffective in making decisions on policies that govern how effectively they should follow their duties. They reviewed how Nova Scotia adopted the Choice of Partnership Approach (CAPA) method to help reduce the long waitlists for mental health services. CAPA is favoured (by many countries like Australia, Canada, or the UK) as a service delivery model for mental health and addictions for its theorization of decreasing wait times, enhancing cost-savings, providing a clear-cut, universal

approach to service delivery, standardizing care and service delivery (i.e., manualized approach), and increasing the efficiency of service providers and maximizing the use of time-based resources, improving overall service efficiency.

However, this method has been heavily criticized because it prioritizes upper management's demand to expedite the process to reduce the length of waitlists rather than the actual requirements of the population. It created a huge disorder for health and social workers to interact with the clients intensively. The challenge arises from the nature of social work practice as an applied activity that cannot be simplified into a series of measurable technical processes (Hyslop, 2018). Supervisors at the health authority have also criticized the intake procedure for keeping individuals from using their services. As a whole, there is no way to provide contextualized services to immigrants, depending on their situation; rather, the idea promotes a 'one size fits all' approach.

Conclusion

Within the framework of neoliberal ideology, Canada is seen as a benevolent host, whereas certain arrivals, including dependent extended family members and asylum claims, are depicted as attempting to use the Canadian social welfare system unfairly. Neoliberal politicians have used this language to shape policy and legal reforms that restrict family reunion and isolate and marginalize immigrant families even more (Root, 2014).

Considering the substantial evidence regarding the connections between social determinants and mental health outcomes, it is imperative to implement multilevel interventions that target the elimination of systemic social inequalities. These interventions should improve access to educational and employment opportunities,

healthy food, secure housing, and safe neighbourhoods. Such measures are of utmost importance (World Health Organization, 2014). The framework developed by Bell, Donkin, and Marmot (2013) includes the individual, family, systems (such as health and education), societal (such as social norms), and macro (such as political and economic) levels.

This chapter explored the impact of employment-based exclusions, as a function of racial capitalism, on the mental health of immigrants from secondary literature and from the respondents of this study. Moreover, the chapter also points to the need for an in-depth revaluation of the policies and procedures that amplify the process of integrating immigrants into the country. With the booming economy and growing number of immigrants, it is imperative for federal and provincial governments to formulate policies and practices that are authentically inclusive and diversified, taking into account the varied needs of immigrants and their mental well-being and economic prosperity. This is highly suggested to build an actual multicultural and welcoming society.

Contemplating these matters provides a chance to reconsider the power dynamics and economic exploitation that form the foundation of the Canadian immigration system. By tackling the underlying factors contributing to employment precarity and improving mental health support for immigrants, Canada can make significant progress towards fulfilling its promise as a land of opportunity and inclusivity for all.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

Since the country's inception, Canadian labour markets have relied on labour whose arrival and employment are managed by an intricate immigration bureaucracy. To facilitate the arrival and integration of immigrants, the country developed an extensive immigration system. In addition to being shaped by economic imperatives, this system has an intricate connection to the larger contexts of racial capitalism, in which racial oppression and economic exploitation come together to protect and perpetuate structural inequality. Immigrant labour, especially from non-European countries, has traditionally been depended upon, and this pattern continues today's date. Racialized bodies are often seen as economic tools, put into particular sectors of the labour market to help the national economy grow, but this custom also serves to reinforce racial hierarchy within the workforce.

With a history grounded in racial capitalism, Canada's approach to immigration has consistently influenced its population composition to advance the country's economic objectives. Recruiting immigrants who can fill certain economic gaps has been an established goal, particularly for less attractive areas to domestic residents. Under the banner of multicultural inclusion, this selective process of integrating immigrants often prioritizes economic gain above genuine equality and integration. So, it's hard to separate immigration in Canada from capitalist objectives of expanding production and profit at the expense of building a more egalitarian society.

Systemic impediments that restrict immigrants from progressing beyond jobs with low wages regardless of their skills and knowledge from their home countries are further proof of how racial capitalism intersects with Canadian immigration policy. By

restricting immigrants from advancing in their careers and thus segregating the labour market, governmental acknowledgment of foreign qualifications frequently serves as a gatekeeping tool. This preserves the status quo in place that is founded on the economic exploitation and marginalization of non-white immigrant communities, and it additionally strengthens racial hierarchies. This legal framework emphasizes the critical significance of reviewing immigration policy so that it reaches beyond financial considerations and incorporates notions of equity and genuine multicultural integration.

A principal contemporary example of this function of immigration management in Canada is the Express Entry (EE) system, which has been operating since 2015. It is a key entry gateway for economic immigrants. The Government of Canada announced a lofty goal to welcome and accommodate 401,000 permanent residents in 2021, 411,000 in 2022, and 421,000 in 2023. In 2021, Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) announced that Canada had achieved its annual goal despite the ongoing challenges posed by COVID-19 (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2021). Highly adaptable and versatile in accepting immigrants, the Express Entry program consists of attributes of both supply- and demand-driven immigration systems. It holds promise for enhancing the labour market outcomes of newcomers in a post-pandemic economy. In Zhang et al. (2023) mixed-methods study, it was identified that several "unintended" results of Express Entry were encountered despite its prominent level of amendment for benefits and flexibility. It should be emphasized that while a hybrid system like Express Entry has merits, more is needed to completely resolve the skills gaps and labour shortages in the post-pandemic labour market. This is because it needs to encompass the specific soft skills employers consider vital.

Although most individuals entering Canada under the point system have university qualifications, the findings and analysis of this thesis reveal a growing tendency of unstable employment among Canadian immigrants. Although Canada faces a shortage of skilled labour and skilled immigrants are admitted based on their potential to contribute to the economy, these individuals, my participants amongst them, are consistently relegated to employment where their skills are underutilized. Others struggle to find employment, and many remain underemployed or left juggling several part-time, low-wage jobs. Returning to Zhang et al. (2023), the authors found an almost willful avoidance of immigrant hiring for higher-skilled, better-paid, managerial roles. Indeed, their work suggested that although HR/hiring manager interviewees acknowledged talent shortages, they consistently viewed newcomers as lacking relevant supervisory skills and capacities. Simultaneously, there is a growing concern regarding labour shortages, specifically in skilled trades and service sector jobs. Over the last two decades, service sector jobs have been consistently filled with temporary migrant labour via the Temporary Foreign Worker Program. Notably, as the TFWP has been under public and political scrutiny, highly skilled workers arriving through Express Entry have struggled to find work aligned with their training and education. Instead, it appears these workers are integrated into service and retail sector jobs, filling long-standing labour market gaps. These workers-highly skilled, well trained, and often permanent—represent a differently dependent, but all the same, vulnerable and exploitable pool of labour.

Several "practical" factors significantly challenge skilled immigrants' effective social and economic integration. These include a lack of information and guidance, difficulties in recognizing foreign credentials, struggles with obtaining recognition for

previous work experience or meeting employers' requirements for Canadian experience, language deficiencies, and obstacles in obtaining references; various studies, including this thesis, have highlighted these challenges (Alboim and McIsaac 2007; Banerjee and Phan 2014; Chen et al. 2010; Drolet et al. 2015; Esses et al. 2007; Gauthier 2016; Lowe and Ortiz 2015; Ng and Omariba 2010; Reitz 2007; Sakamoto et al. 2010, Weiner, 2008). These more pragmatic challenges, however, are compounded and complicated by the prevalence and persistence of prejudice and discrimination, which lead to a reluctance on the part of employers to hire and promote newcomers, particularly those who are—again, like those in this study—racialized. This occurs within a set of social and economic structures that are already organized according to social and economic inequality, such that even when interacting with systems intended to provide some benefit (like healthcare or education), newcomers face obstacles and barriers.

When individuals face a socially hostile environment, their opportunities for economic advancement are significantly diminished. As a result, Canada's appeal as a migration destination may decrease. Among participants, reflecting on the sense of being misled was common. *Mary* (having master's and bachelor's in library science from Bangladesh, with a diploma in supply chain management, working as a Cashier in-home solutions retail), for example, stressed the discrepancy between immigrants' experiences in Canada and how immigrant social media influencers depict their experiences. She explained: "*Different YouTubers or social media [are] not always right. They don't talk about the miseries like housing, jobs and weather in their videos. People get misinformed with the videos."* In response, though it is difficult for her to do so, *Mary* tries to be realistic with her friends and family about her life in Canada. Over time, these more

realistic and honest accounts may serve to dissuade immigrant hopefuls from selecting Canada as their destination for permanent resettlement.

Alternatively, individuals may arrive in Canada or Nova Scotia, only to eventually depart or relocate to another province due to unanticipated and harmful living and working conditions. Here again, as expectations—often cultivated in conversation with other migrants or on social media platforms but reinforced by official immigrant recruitment efforts, give way to the reality, many immigrants may experience a sense of betrayal and that Canada sees immigrants not as potential contributors to society and economy, but simply as targets to reach and as workers. Khan (2023) identifies this as a kind of hostility, highlighting official references to immigrants as numbers or idealized "types" as the source of very specific harms experienced by newcomers as exclusion and the prevalence of racist assumptions become clear. Even as this system continues to harm newcomers, as discussed in chapter three, efforts to encourage immigration have not slowed or been redirected or reoriented. Indeed, immigration levels are currently reaching unprecedented heights, driven by the need, according to officials, to address labour shortages and shore up the Canadian population. In such narratives and framings, immigrants are consistently posited as critical to the ongoing viability of Canadian society and economy, and yet, consistently, very little consideration or effort is made to integrate, in meaningful ways, individuals from diverse regions.

Immigrants' envisioned perceptions of Canada, created through narratives of its multiculturalism, economic opportunities, quality of life and educational and professional growth, often conflict with the hard facts they confront after they ultimately arrive. These insights have been clarified by the participants interviewed in this study, who, in

recounting their expectations, experiences, and mental health challenges and outcomes in Nova Scotia, revealed Canada's use of multiculturalism to obscure the country's ongoing exploitation of racialized labour, and indeed, to conceal the systems and structures of racial capitalism. For a national immigration plan to be effective in the long run, it is crucial to recognize and tackle the issue of racism and discrimination prevalent in society. This holds significant importance as the majority of immigrants to Canada, comprising nearly 70% of the annual intake, originate from non-white countries in the Global South. There is a need to reconcile what Canada claims to be and what it is fundamental. Drawing on this study's data and the literature, this conclusion offers a series of recommendations with this ultimate goal in mind. These are intended for policy- and decision-makers, settlement service providers, and those working within the non-profit and immigrant-community sector. These are coordination between IRCC and all employers to retrieve applicants' profiles, the necessary amendment to the Employment Equity Act for recruiting racially visible immigrants, actions & techniques for employers to recruit more racialized immigrants, roles of settlement agencies & NGOs, social workers' role to get immigrants access to holistic support and mental health, introducing financial relief program, and more authentic information on immigration across social media and websites. Here are the detailed recommendations:

Recommendations

1. ***Coordination between IRCC and Employers***

Zhang et al. (2023) discovered from their participants that several managers consistently encountered issues while trying to fill professional roles. Yet less than 50% of the participants reported hiring new employees for these roles within the last year.

Several individuals mentioned their constrained ability to verify credentials like certificates and background of potential candidates as the reason for their decision not to hire. Employers maintain skepticism towards foreign educational credentials despite the validation of these credentials through an Educational Credential Assessment (ECA) before entry for most immigrants entering through EE. Most HR/hiring managers in our sample did not utilize ECAs as an evaluation tool and lacked knowledge about ECAs. Many recruiters highlighted applicants' lack of communication skills and insufficient knowledge about Canadian business operations and organizational culture. Notably, the recruiters do not appear to know the distinctions between immigrants arriving through the EE system and those coming through the previous economic admission system (Zhang et al., 2023). This is the case even though EE entrants have higher formal education and language proficiency levels.

Moreover, immigrants coming through Express Entry must mandatorily pass internationally recognized tests, such as the IELTS, and meet specific criteria. Sometimes, people from non-English-speaking countries have difficulty securing a test score. Even after securing the score, employers still found them to lack communication skills. A significant number of employer participants were unaware of the changes introduced by EE. In contrast, most employers preferred candidates with a deep understanding of the Canadian industry when hiring.

Zhang et al. (2023) findings indicated that HR/hiring manager interviewees acknowledged talent shortages. Still, they did not consistently view EE newcomers as possessing more relevant skills than previous economic immigrants or capable of addressing these shortages. Simultaneously, there is a growing concern regarding labour

shortages, specifically in skilled trades and service sector jobs. It should be emphasized that while a hybrid system like Express Entry has merits, it may not completely resolve the skills gaps and labour shortages in the post-pandemic labour market. This is because it does not encompass the specific soft skills employers consider vital.

Rather, Canadian work experience and local education are considered rough evidence of the applicant's skills. The concept of Canadian experience is widely understood and embraced in employment programs, publications, and policy discussions. The employer's demand for ongoing education (CE) has been consistently identified as a significant hurdle for immigrants in getting employment and, if hired, reaching success in their positions (Chatterjee, 2015; Sakamoto et al., 2013). Zhang's (2023) qualitative discovery suggested this approach lacks efficiency. The failure to develop essential soft skills by international students and temporary foreign workers during their temporary residency, or the influence of bias against individuals from different countries on employers' evaluations of soft skills, could be the catalysts driving this. Considering the vague and elusive nature of soft skills (Grugulis & Vincent 2009), it becomes challenging to determine whether the soft skills gap can be addressed through immigrant selection. Overall, although the EE program targets immigrants in highly skilled occupations, it is not a complete solution to address the skills shortages in the Canadian labour market in the future.

In turn, it is recommended that employers should have access to the profiles of the immigrants retrieved from IRCC. IRCC application process should have a section containing uploading the applicant’s resume, which should portray their skillset, education and experiences. When landing in the province or even before (after applying),

employees will apply for the jobs, and employers will get to know their prospective future staff through cross-verifying the job aspirants. There may be a reporting system that, throughout the year, shows how many immigrants the employers recruited through the process. Employers should also be made accountable for a certain benchmark or number of immigrants or racially visible minorities they hired across the year. One thing to note is that, with the help of the Personal Information International Disclosure Protection Act (NS) – PIIDPA, employers must follow and be cautious about phenomena related to personal data breaches.

2. Amendment to Employment Equity Act

In 1984, the Report by Madame Justice Rosalie S. Abella for the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment set the stage for implementing the EEA in 1986. The purpose of the EEA was to enhance representation and address systemic barriers in the recruitment, promotion, and retention of individuals from specific groups in federally regulated workplaces. These groups included women, Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, and racialized peopleFootnote1. This acknowledgment highlighted the underlying causes of inequality in employment and emphasized the importance of implementing comprehensive solutions. It also established Canada as a frontrunner in policy development during that period.

Detractors of Canada's anti-discrimination regulations have persistently argued that these policies have had minimal influence on the daily experiences of immigrants in the job market (Wilson et al., 2017). Richmond and Shields (2015) discussed the official inclusion measures that directly oppose the increasing social isolation experienced by newcomers in their employment placements. In Canada, employment equity may be

established by implementing policy, law, or a combination of both. It creates a series of adaptable governmental goals and directives as a policy (Wilson et al., 2017). This frequently lacks the backing of a robust system of responsibility and implementation (Anand, 2014; Weiner, 2014).

When the Employment Equity Acts were introduced in 1995, there were substantial changes in the demographics of Canada's workforce. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives documented an analysis focusing on income inequality nationwide. The analysis demonstrated that the country's population continues to evolve and is ethnically diversified. The 2016 Canadian census revealed a racialized population of 7.7 million people. This substantially rose from 16% in 2006 to 22% of Canada's population. South Asians, Chinese, and Black Canadians comprise most of Canada's racialized populations. More than sixty percent of Canada's mixed-race population belongs to these three groups. Racism and discrimination towards varied racial groups seem to be on an upward trajectory in Canada. Individual and planned acts of discrimination targeting individuals of East Asian culture have risen during the COVID-19 pandemic. This unfortunate trend sheds light on a concerning form of discrimination that may impact their ability to secure employment.

Using detailed data, Statistics Canada has initiated several studies to examine employment and wage disparities among specific groups. An important lesson from these in-depth studies on the experiences of various racialized groups in the workplace is that overlooking the need for a detailed and comprehensive analysis of employment outcomes can hide the barriers faced by specific groups. This oversight has perpetuated systemic employment discrimination against these groups. Every employer should be able to report

their disaggregated data based on racialized and black communities. This is one of the factors in the auditing or monitoring a particular employer by the provincial and federal governments.

In recommendation 6.d suggested in Canadian Human Rights Commission-About the Employment Equity Act (n.d.), it was identified that a revised EEA should incorporate a provision mandating the government, in collaboration with employers and employee representatives, to create and implement employment equity training for all human resource staff and managers engaged in the recruitment, training, and retention of employees. With the advancement of digital and virtual training platforms, employers of all sizes now have greater access to affordable training options.

The same recommendation also highlighted that it is important to include provisions in an amended EEA that mandate employers to incorporate mentorship, sponsorship, and career progression programs and strategies for designated groups into their employment equity plans. While it says the selected group, it should also focus on all the racialized communities and distinguish their needs to recruit them with their prior experiences and educational background. Additionally, offering pre-employment training for these individuals from racialized communities is crucial. It would be beneficial for employers with the means and historically lacking diversity in their workforce to be mandated to finance pre-employment training. This would help hire individuals from underrepresented groups, as and when necessary.

There was an Employment Equity Act Review Consultation by the Canadian Bar Association (CBA) in 2022. The Equality Subcommittee promotes and ensures legal equality for sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, national or ethnic

origin, colour, religion, language, age, and disability. The CBA Sections praise the federal government for increasing employment equity and promoting inclusive workplaces that allow everyone to thrive. The policy brief one from the revision (2022) proposed replacing the term "visible minority" with "racialized groups" in category D. The words "visible minority" and "BIPOC" are inclusive terms that encompass all individuals who are not white or Aboriginal, without considering the unique experiences of discrimination, structural obstacles, and potential remedies that vary across different racialized groups. Because it underscores that race is more of a social construction that comes via racialization than an inherent biological division, the expression "racialized groups" is more appropriate. The process of racialization, which involves dividing people into different "races," favours White people at the cost of ethnically marginalized groups. Ideally, the term "racialized groups" should encompass all distinct racial categories. The potential broadening of the classifications to incorporate individuals of other backgrounds, religious minorities, and immigration statuses is currently being studied.

While a single individual is affected by discrimination, it frequently happens due to an amalgamation of circumstances. As it concerns employment, individuals with distinct identities can encounter particular difficulties and numerous forms of discrimination. To accomplish equal treatment, we need to remember the value of considering the account of the implications of multiple identities. For professionals, it is inadequate to consider difficulties and possibilities connected with one specific identity. The EEA should consider expanding its protection to individuals directly or indirectly associated with various groups or subgroups.

In the second policy brief regarding the improvement of support for equity groups, it was proposed that there should be an increase in government-funded research and utilization of existing research on the challenges experienced by these specific groups, as well as on the concept of intersectionality. Evaluation of the extent to which people from specific categories lack representation in the workforce is offered in Policy Brief 3. In addition, one ought to look at the hiring procedures, guidelines, and structures to see if there are any challenges that the participants of specific clubs might encounter. A strategy must be created and put into effect to conquer these difficulties and solve the problem of a lack of representation. Organizations ought to publish their work and achievements if they would like to improve the percentages of the specified categories in their workforce.

There is a need for an enhanced data collection system and a structured analysis framework. The data collected is frequently tricky to search or utilize, making collecting the information futile. Suggested enhancements to data collection include investigating the factors contributing to the under-reporting of self-identification and developing strategies to address this issue. Moreover, Census data should include the mentioned equity groups and consider intersectionality. Additionally, there should be a mechanism for data collection between census periods. Enhancements to the Workplace Equity Information Management System (WEIMS) can enhance public reporting by making previously inaccessible data available to businesses and researchers.

3. Techniques for employers to recruit more racialized employees

Very few reports so far have been generated on How to Improve Workplace Equity-Evidence-based Actions for Employers (2022). Some of them have identified

approaches employers may start persuading from now on. Employers may use several successful techniques to decrease systemic obstacles, unconscious biases, and prejudices in discovering, choosing, and employing. Such tactics include targeted outreach to underrepresented groups, scheduled interviews, and skill-based assessment activities. One potential approach is to undertake targeted outreach initiatives that raise application rates among excluded populations. When a company lacks representation from specific demographics, implementing specific outreach and attracting techniques could improve its capacity to interact with potential employees from underrepresented communities. To increase referrals, it is important to actively encourage employees to share job openings in their networks with individuals from underrepresented backgrounds. Collaborating with external organizations and utilizing alternative channels to disseminate postings to increase visibility among applicants from underrepresented groups is imperative. Utilizing various messengers to disseminate postings, individuals tend to be more attentive to information conveyed by someone who resembles them.

Interviews alone may not provide candidates with equal opportunities to showcase their strengths. As part of the selection process, it is recommended that candidates be requested to undertake tasks that are directly related to the position they are seeking. Tasks necessitating situational judgment, work samples, or smaller assignments could be included in this group. Short and focused on delivering appropriate details for the procedure for choosing the tasks should be intact. Still, compared to white people, the ones from visible minorities frequently score far lower ratings. It may ensure that the task helps or hurts everyone. Focusing candidate evaluation on job-related issues can improve visible minority applicant performance and success.

Getting more than a single interviewer present is ideal. Outcomes are more effectively made while various viewpoints are given consideration. While conducting interviews, it feels more precise and equal when there is a board of interviewers rather than just a single individual. They can provide comprehensive remarks throughout every interview. Hearing and offering helpful feedback make hiring supervisors more accountable for their decisions. When individuals know their conclusions will be scrutinized or require justification from others, discrimination based on race and gender is mitigated.

Organizations ought to wonder about involving programs for mentoring in their future strategies. Mentorship should entail three three-month trials on performance and skills underrepresented groups showcase in the organization. This way, these groups can contribute to the organization by relying on their past out-of-country experiences. Mentorship programs also aim to help employees learn crucial skills and information from their coworkers. Mentorship programs helped underrepresented groups rise professionally. Work experience programs that have been carefully designed and implemented might bring more significant equity. The job prospects of those who are underrepresented can be enhanced when opportunities are offered with fair wages and straightforward recruitment processes. On the other hand, people with more robust networks are prone to profit via informally structured internships that rely on personal connections, pay very little, and require few extra conditions. The sad truth is that discriminatory practices in internship initiatives frequently hinder those from underrepresented groups from getting involved with these opportunities.

It is expected that different mentorship programs might enhance fairness by incorporating knowledge sharing among all employees. Unfortunately, there is still much data needed that leads to the verdict that training on diversity and subconscious racialism may increase any visibility or accomplishments of visible minority groups. Employers must monitor the impact of these trainings to change the mindset of all employees and motivate any positive change across the organization.

Organizations cannot rely exclusively on diversity statements to attract people from different communities, notably if they are already missing numerous staff members from underrepresented groups. Employers must proceed cautiously when addressing this problem, recognizing the challenges involved. They want to follow up their assertions with actual evidence, such as goals in numbers and instances. Additionally, company owners ought to monitor to see whether their actions have turned out well. The inclusion of diversity statements needs to be reviewed if companies don't have straightforward targets and specific evidence of achievement.

4. ***Approaches for settlement agencies and NGOs to help racialized employees***

Settlement agencies offer a couple of pre-arrival services, but most of them are related to immigrants who are coming through the permanent residency route. These services entail orientation on the cities, resume building, communication, and many more, yet they are less likely to meet the needs of the immigrants. Having said that, most of the training in pre-departure periods is quite generic, which warrants more need analysis as per the immigrants' portfolio.

Job-matching and credential-matching services link immigrants' skills with relevant jobs to recognize and appreciate foreign degrees and work experience to help

talented immigrants enter their sectors quickly. This will ease the transition into work that matches their experience, maximizing their workforce involvement. In relation to that, different settlement agencies and NGOs have a stake in providing individualized skill development programs to help immigrants can help them acquire Canadian job-market-relevant competencies while employing their existing skills. Through these programs, immigrants should be able to receive training and certification to improve employability that fits their skills. Although the settlement agencies have limited career counselling, mentorship, and placement services to assist immigrants in finding jobs, there should be more funding for these agencies to employ more employment specialists to reach out to numerous immigrants.

Implementing extensive linguistic and cultural orientation programs for immigrant families can be efficient in helping them integrate into school and society. Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia have had different language programs for quite a while. Nova Scotia currently requires contextualized programs for immigrants to let them integrate smoothly and faster. These initiatives will assist immigrants and their families in adjusting to and connecting with the community.

Also, immigrants need access to different services and orientations. More information is needed for immigrants to understand the process and pathways to seeking health support. New immigrants and refugees often need financial help, significantly contributing to low service utilization rates (Dastjerdi, 2012). Specialized mental health care is typically only covered by private insurance, which is often not accessible to those who are unemployed, working part-time, or in precarious job positions. If an individual lacks health insurance for such medical conditions, they must pay for expenses out of

pocket, which can be significantly higher. Prioritizing basic needs such as food, clothes, and housing may have taken precedence over seeking mental health services (Root et al., 2014). Settlement agencies may step in to provide support on the orientation and accessibility to the mental health system for immigrants.

5. Social Worker's Initiative on Mental Health and Community Support

Social workers help racially diverse clients overcome obstacles to mental health, community inclusiveness, and childcare. By offering comprehensive and practical help, social workers may improve these clients' well-being and integration into their new contexts. Racialized immigrants have psychological and emotional issues caused by immigration stress, including family separation, cultural shock, and unfair treatment. Social workers play a crucial role in bringing clients to mental health care. In group therapy and counselling, social workers can offer safe spaces for immigrants to share opinions while improving emotional resilience and mental wellness. Apart from the employment issues, it is also necessary to highlight the knowledge and awareness of the new country’s healthcare system. When settlement agencies have minimum resources to help immigrants holistically, there is almost none to orient the newcomers about the health systems and how they operate across the province. Moreover, understanding healthcare with limited multilingual resources is quite stressful when it comes to mental health (O'Mahony, 2012). Hence, social workers may step in to orient the systems to the immigrants.

To ensure culturally appropriate and readily available mental health procedures, social workers sometimes struggle with their code of conduct. As discussed in Chapter 3, there is organizational pressure for social workers and other therapists not to delve into

detailed sessions with clients. Yet, the immigrants require customized therapies to grow and integrate into the new country. Since social workers are all over the place, like clinics, child protection, and disability programs, clinical social workers may initiate many interventions. This includes assisting immigrants to acclimatize through community-building initiatives. Social workers help clients cope with immigration's mental health effects by guiding them to these resources and offering moving-forward support.

Racialized immigrants' well-being relies on collaborative integration. Social workers have taken oaths to motivate minority community integration and inclusion. They can have access to promote cultural interaction and community events that bring immigrant groups to society. These programs help immigrants feel at home and teach their host communities about their different backgrounds. As part of it, social workers can also play an essential part in anti-racism activities. Social workers may support racialized immigrants to feel valued and welcomed by establishing and encouraging open and genuine social support services. They can link immigrants with nearby organizations that might offer additional assistance and programs.

Immigrant parents need affordable and credible daycare while they work full-time and integrate into Canadian culture. Social workers can promote initiatives that offer inexpensive daycare and flexible schedules for young parents. They can also assist families with hectic schedules by combining them with childcare alternatives. Social workers can further enhance immigrant family healthcare access. Families should be ready to find family physicians and get appropriate medical treatment, particularly for

emergencies. Social workers may decrease barriers to health care among racialized immigrants, raising family well-being.

Social workers deal with mental health, community integration, and childcare comprehensively. Referring individuals to appropriate sources, driving for changes to the law, and offering immediate help is practical support. Social workers might help immigrant businesses in the local market, enabling them to flourish.

6. Inception of financial relief programs

This thesis recommends establishing programs offering tailored tax cuts and monetary support to assist immigrant families economically. It is projected that immigrants are likely to be able to establish financial stability and lower their degree of stress within five years of arriving in Nova Scotia with the rollout of these efforts. Introducing customized tax relief programs is crucial for lowering the financial strain on immigrant families, particularly those from jurisdictions with high taxes, such as Nova Scotia. These programs should be mainly built to give large tax deductions or credits to immigrant families throughout the initial stages of settling in a new country, ideally for five years. As the newcomer families adapt to new economic circumstances and try to establish themselves, this phase can sometimes be the most financially difficult. To help mitigate the strain, immigrants should be able to apply for tax exemptions during these initial crucial years. This will allow them to put more money toward necessities like housing, further education and healthcare. Needless to say, once the immigrant families strengthen their financial base, they will be better positioned to meet their goals and to contribute to Canada.

Strengthening social safety nets while offering help in emergency preparedness is vital to assisting recently arrived immigrants in surviving major financial crises and obtaining steady employment. If we want newcomer immigrant families to survive financially, we must strengthen the social safety net. Initiatives such as housing subsidies, emergency funds, and unemployment benefits can be more accessible by the provincial government. Through the inception of a well-rounded social welfare program, particularly for immigrants, they may overcome financial obstacles and remain resilient in the face of adversity. Equally important is aiding programs for contingency planning to assist immigrants in enhancing their financial literacy and creating savings strategies. These services, available to immigrants within the first two years of arriving in Nova Scotia, empower them with the tools and knowledge to reach financial stability and autonomy. This method not only helps immigrant families deal with their current financial distress but also helps them achieve long-term financial security and prosperity.

Following these suggestions, immigrant families may find a significant alleviation of financial strain, leading to more stability and less stress in the five years after they arrive in Nova Scotia.

7. More Authentic and Readily Accessible Information

Locating and utilizing information regarding available economic opportunities is a challenge immigrants encounter in their new country. In 2015, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) was surveyed to collect data on the experiences, expectations, and service requirements of skilled immigrants to Canada who are currently residing overseas or are considering immigrating to Canada. The survey revealed a pressing requirement for pre-arrival information and guidance regarding employment support,

including career education, training, and professional licensing. The study showed that while the specific timing for when potential skilled immigrants are prepared to receive settlement information may differ, the desire for this information while still abroad indicates the existence of specific pre-migration information and guidance requirements. (Lowe and Ortiz, 2015). The information on government websites needs more practical details regarding settlement and living in Canada and employment-related information such as educational requirements, Canadian experience requirements, and job search strategies like resume building and networking (George and Chaze, 2012). In order to tackle this issue, Banerjee and Phan (2014) proposed providing skilled immigrants with comprehensive information regarding occupational requirements and expectations before they immigrate. This would enable them to better prepare for their integration into Canada.

On top of the above recommendations, the experiences stated in the qualitative data make apparent the vast policy reforms and targeted interventions urgently needed to advance the prosperity and integration of immigrants in Nova Scotia. Effective collaboration between federal, provincial, and territorial departments requires collective effort rather than working independently. Furthermore, it is essential to note that economic factors do not solely drive immigration. Regular immigrants often seek to flee from conflict, discrimination, and political instability in their countries of origin. It is crucial to consider when evaluating eligibility and the potential of each immigrant beyond their economic abilities. To accomplish successful immigrants to be assets, it is imperative that the discourse surrounding immigration undergoes a transformation and focuses on addressing the aspects of policy and practice. It is necessary to alter the

discourse surrounding immigration to Canada. One way to address this issue is by altering how Ottawa portrays immigration and immigrants, shifting the focus from labour supply to other aspects. Immigration is a fundamental human right that should not be reduced to a mere statistical exercise. The solution must be effective for the migrant population and the host country. Immigrants can contribute to addressing Canada's labour shortages and aging demographics.

Lastly, any immigration plan must include a comprehensive strategy to provide social protection for the increasing number of immigrants rather than solely focusing on economic compensation. Considering the significance of racism and race relations, it is crucial to incorporate these aspects into the development of immigration policy in a country that prides itself on its multicultural identity.

Immigration should not solely focus on meeting quotas and statistics. This opportunity does not involve working on an assembly line. Ultimately, we are addressing the aspirations and desires of individuals and families with expectations for Canada. Challenging these expectations through racial discrimination is the least desirable situation for individuals looking to begin a fresh chapter in a foreign nation (Khan, 2023).

Finally, eliminating the underlying barriers that immigrants perceive is essential to their ability to adapt to the Nova Scotian community. Nova Scotia's community may promote a more inclusive and vibrant environment by adopting detailed legislative changes and distributing customized assistance. Policymakers and policy implementers have to reach a certain threshold of understanding and coordination to make Nova Scotia a new home to the racialized immigrants.

Conclusion

This thesis extends to the prevailing knowledge on immigration, focusing on Nova Scotia, Canada, through its exploratory nature and qualitative research methods. This thesis primarily focused on the experiences of highly skilled South Asian immigrants and partially Nigerian and Palestinians in Nova Scotia, exploring their journey from arrival to integration into the local labour market, often characterized by precarious and low-wage employment despite their high qualifications.

One of the thesis's main findings is the divide between these immigrants' ambitions to be successful professionally and socially and the actualities they encounter. The study emphasizes the stark difference between the realities experienced by immigrants and the values presented by Canadian immigration laws, which offer multiculturalism, inclusiveness, and economic opportunity. People of colour sometimes face racial capitalist structural challenges that render it difficult for them to find jobs that are a good fit for their skills and experience, which can lead to underemployment and deskilling. The thesis additionally delved into how immigration policies in Canada, despite their progressive shape, really contribute to preserving current disparities and maintaining neoliberal ideology, which places a premium on economic contributions rather than true inclusion. The study throws light on the mental and psychological difficulties faced by immigrants who are reluctant to quit their low-wage, insecure occupations, even if these jobs are completely different from the ones they were educated for back home.

Overall, this study's findings add to our knowledge of the systemic obstacles skilled immigrants encounter in Nova Scotia and throughout Canada. They also provide concrete suggestions for how governments, policymakers, NGOs, social workers, and

immigrant settlement agency groups can collaborate to build more welcoming and equal employment environments.

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