

INTERSECTIONALITY AND THE ROLE OF SERVICE PROVIDERS: A STEP TOWARDS
IMPROVING THE EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES OF IMMIGRANT WOMEN

INTERSECTIONALITY AND THE ROLE OF SERVICE PROVIDERS: A STEP TOWARDS
IMPROVING THE EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES OF IMMIGRANT WOMEN

By: Farha Hassan, BSW

A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree Master of Social Work

McMaster University © Copyright by Farha Hassan, August 2020

DESCRIPTIVE NOTE

McMaster University MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK (2020) Hamilton, Ontario (Social Work)

TITLE: Intersectionality and the Role of Service Providers: A Step Towards Improving the Employment Outcomes of Immigrant Women

AUTHOR: Farha Hassan, B.S.W. (Ryerson University)

SUPERVISOR: Dr. Allyson Ion

NUMBER OF PAGES: vii, 103

ABSTRACT

There are multi-faceted barriers that shape the employment trajectories and economic outcomes of immigrant women in the Canadian labour market. In response to the barriers that immigrant women experience, the Federal government, Immigration, Refugee, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), have initiated funding towards employment programs for immigrant women. This critical ethnographic study examines the perspectives of ten service providers in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), in order to identify the barriers and facilitators immigrant women experience within employment services when trying to obtain secure well-paid employment. The data analysis revealed three major themes: the role of funding for employment programs and settlement services, the categorization of immigrant women by skills; and the application of individualized services to meet the needs of immigrant women. Using an intersectional lens, my research highlights that immigrant women experience various challenges to finding, obtaining, and maintaining employment due to the intersection of their social location (e.g. race, gender, immigration status, language, culture, and religion). Service providers mitigate some of these barriers to secure well-paying employment by providing individualized services to meet differential needs of immigrant women. While this approach has led to success in matching some immigrant women to jobs that align with their field of expertise and career goals, service providers are restricted in their ability to meet the full needs of immigrant women due to underfunding and structural barriers. My research reveals that employment services, immigration processes, and labour market practices can (re)produce and maintain the marginalization of immigrant women in the labour market. This paper concludes with some policy recommendations for immigrant-serving employment services and social work practice.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Words cannot express how grateful I am towards those who have supported me throughout this year, during my Master of Social Work degree. Without the insight of the participants, as well as encouragement and support of my supervisor, family, and friends, I would not have been able to complete this thesis.

Firstly, thank you to the service providers who participated in my research during a global pandemic and agreed to share their stories with me. I am honored to hear your experiences and I am truly grateful to you for trusting me with your experiences. I appreciate each one of you for taking the time and being so patient throughout the study. I can only hope that this research will better shape the work you do with immigrant women.

I am incredibly thankful to my supervisor, Allyson, whose constant enthusiasm and mentorship gave me the confidence to move forward with my thesis. Thank you for going beyond supervising my research and genuinely having my best interest at heart. You have truly helped me grow academically and I have learned a lot from your advice. I am so grateful to have had you as my supervisor and for all the work you have put into providing feedback and revisions for my thesis.

To my second reader, Dr. Premji, thank you for your thoughtful reading of my thesis. Your work has influenced my interest in this research and has provided me with a greater understanding of the disadvantages that immigrant women experience in the Canadian labour market.

A special thank you to my family for their ongoing support. Thank you to my parents, Mahboob and Mahbuba, for all the hard work you have done to create opportunities for me. To my sister, Ambareen, thank you for keeping me company and being my “synonyms.”

Finally, thank you to Karen and Nick from the McMaster Research Ethics Board for your patience and guidance during my ethics application.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|------------|
| ABSTRACT | iii |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | iv |
| CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW | 3 |
| 2.1 Unemployment and Wage Gaps | 3 |
| 2.2 Barriers to Employment | 6 |
| <i>Deskilling of Immigrants</i> | 6 |
| <i>Devaluation of Foreign Credentials and Work Experience</i> | 7 |
| <i>Discrimination within the Canadian Labour Market</i> | 9 |
| <i>Race and Gendered Disparities in the Labour Market</i> | 10 |
| <i>Occupational Segregation</i> | 11 |
| <i>Precarious Work and Immigrant Women</i> | 12 |
| <i>Gender Roles and Household Division of Labour</i> | 13 |
| <i>Barriers to Services and Labour Market Information</i> | 14 |
| 2.3 Job Search Strategies and The Role of Immigrant-Serving Sectors | 16 |
| <i>Job Search Strategies Utilized by Immigrant Women</i> | 16 |
| <i>Settlement Services and Employment Services for Immigrants</i> | 17 |
| CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK | 19 |
| 3.1 Origins of Intersectionality | 20 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 3.2 Crenshaw and Intersectionality | 21 |
| <i>From Single Axis Analysis to Intersectionality</i> | 21 |
| <i>Anti-essentialism and Intersectionality</i> | 22 |
| <i>Structural and Political Intersectionality</i> | 23 |
| 3.3 Defining Intersectionality | 25 |
| 3.4 Intersectionality and Immigrant Women Seeking Employment | 26 |
| 3.5 Research Questions and Objectives | 27 |
| CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY | 28 |
| 4.1 Critical Ethnography | 28 |
| 4.2 Participant Recruitment and Selection | 32 |
| 4.3 Data Collection | 34 |
| 4.4 Data Analysis | 35 |
| 4.5 Study Participants: Service Providers | 39 |
| CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS | 40 |
| 5.1 The Role of Funding for Employment Programs and Settlement Services | 41 |
| <i>Facilitator: The Role of IRCC in Addressing Challenges to Employment</i> | 41 |
| <i>Barrier: Lack of Adequate Funding and Outcome-Based Programs</i> | 43 |
| 5.2 The Categorization of Immigrant Women by Skill | 54 |
| <i>Facilitator: Matching Immigrant Women to Jobs in Their Field of Expertise</i> | 54 |
| <i>Barrier: Channelling Immigrant Women into Job Sectors</i> | 57 |
| 5.3 Individualized Services | 61 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| <i>Facilitator: Meeting Individual Needs and Going Beyond Employment Services</i> | 61 |
| <i>Barrier: Disregard for Cultural and Religious Practices</i> | 68 |
| CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION | 71 |
| 6.1 Summary of Key Findings | 72 |
| 6.2 Situating My Research in Employment Services Literature | 72 |
| 6.3 Funding for Outcome-Based Programs and Neoliberal Restructuring | 73 |
| 6.4 Immigration Processes and Immigrant Selection Based on Human Capital | 77 |
| 6.5 Channeling Immigrant Women into Racialized and Gender Segregated Sectors | 79 |
| 6.6 Perceiving Immigrant Women as Insufficiently Skilled | 81 |
| CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION | 82 |
| 7.1 Implications and Recommendations | 83 |
| <i>Increase Access to Employment Services and Improve Job Outcomes</i> | 83 |
| <i>Increase Government Funding and Long-Term Agreements for Programs</i> | 85 |
| <i>Increase Minimum Wage</i> | 86 |
| <i>Implement a Universal Childcare Program</i> | 86 |
| <i>Improve Immigration Processes</i> | 87 |
| <i>Address Labour Market Discrimination</i> | 87 |
| <i>Implications for Social Work Practice</i> | 89 |
| 7.2 Possibilities for Further Research | 90 |
| 7.3 Limitations and Reflections | 90 |
| 7.4 Final Thoughts | 93 |
| REFERENCES | 95 |

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Unemployment, underemployment, and precarious work has been a topic of interest to me since the beginning of my social work education. My interest in empowering immigrant women grew when I learned about the realities of my immigrant mother's job. After immigrating to Canada, my father was able to find a secure employment opportunity, while my mother's jobs were always characterized by low job security, low benefits, and low-income. Throughout my undergraduate degree in social work and experience, I came to learn that many immigrant women were in similarly precarious positions, unemployed, and struggling to find work. Immigrant mothers, like my own, especially struggled to balance childcare responsibilities and employment, resulting in unemployment, underemployment, and precarious work.

During my placement experience, I witnessed the impact of financial insecurity that some immigrant women experience. I observed how financial insecurity intersected with challenges related to a lack of affordable housing, domestic violence, and child welfare involvement. What stood out to me during my experience working with immigrant women was that these women were extremely resilient and even after immigrating to Canada, they managed to navigate the challenges they experienced. The more I worked with immigrant women and their families, the more I realized the disadvantages they experienced as a result of inequalities within the Canadian labour market. Furthermore, I saw that these issues were similar to my mother's struggles as an immigrant woman supporting four daughters on a survival job. Not to mention, I witnessed the positive turnaround due to the support she received from a service provider

who matched her skills to a job with greater security and income. Unfortunately, during my placement experience I observed women who did not have the opportunity to benefit from these services because of their lack of awareness of the existence of such programs. It was the combination of my personal experience as an immigrant woman's daughter and my educational experience working with immigrant women and their families that encouraged me to examine the barriers that exist for immigrant women seeking employment. Furthermore, I wanted to explore the ways in which immigrant women can be economically supported for their financial independence and overall well-being. I pursued this study, not just as a social worker trying to fill a gap in the research, but in hopes of using the study to have a real world impact on the lives of immigrant women who continue to struggle with finding, obtaining, and maintaining secure well-paid employment opportunities. As will be discussed, this study focuses on the perspectives of service providers who work in employment services that are delivered to immigrant women. In examining the work of employment services staff, I aim to identify the barriers and facilitators that exist for immigrant women who access and utilize such services to find, obtain, and maintain employment.

My research aims to fill a major gap in the literature, which will be discussed in the following section. In the literature review, I will discuss the research on barriers to employment for immigrants, additional challenges faced by immigrant women, and

the role of settlement agencies that provide employment services in facilitating employment for newcomers.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review explores the barriers immigrants experience when seeking employment, and the processes that facilitate economic integration in Canada. This body of literature illustrates the gendered and racialized labour market processes that create additional barriers for immigrant women to secure jobs, thereby resulting in their underemployment and unemployment. The literature review aims to identify the ways social, political, and economic structures intersect with gender, race, and immigration status to shape women's labour market experiences. I begin with an overview of employment trends among immigrants in Canada to examine the discrepancy between the number of highly skilled workers and underemployed and unemployed immigrants. Next, I examine barriers to employment and focus on intersections of gender and race that exacerbate challenges for immigrant women seeking secure employment. Lastly, this review highlights the role of service providers and employment services in facilitating economic integration, specifically for immigrant women.

2.1 Unemployment and Wage Gaps

The most recent statistics reveal that from 2018 to 2019, 313,580 immigrants were admitted into Canada, with the highest number (139,071 immigrants) residing in Ontario (Statistics Canada, 2019). Of the 286,000 permanent residents selected in 2017, over half (55.6%) arrived under the Economic Class programs. These Economic Class programs include Federal skilled, Caregivers, Federal business, Provincial nominee, Atlantic Immigration Pilot, Quebec skilled workers and Quebec business immigrants (Immigration, Refugees, Citizenship

and Canada, 2018). Of the census metropolitan areas, the largest number of core-aged (aged 25-54) immigrants, about 37% in 2017 resided in Toronto (Yssaad & Fields, 2018).

Reports suggest that the demand for skilled immigrants is expected to increase as a result of the aging workforce and decline in working adults (Statistics Canada, 2019). For example, the current worker-to-retiree ratio is 4.2 to 1 and the estimated projection in 2036 is 2 to 1 (Immigration, Refugees, Citizenship and Canada, 2018), suggesting that the demand for skilled immigrants will increase in order to meet the demands of the labour market. Canada's immigration system is designed to select immigrants who can best contribute socioeconomically (Immigration, Refugees, Citizenship and Canada, 2018). Under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA), one of the objectives of immigration is to "support the development of a strong and prosperous Canadian economy, in which the benefits of immigration are shared across all regions of Canada" (Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, 2001, p.2). The Minister of Immigration, Refugees, Citizenship, and Canada (IRCC) stated that, in 2017, the Government of Canada created a multi-year, multi-level plan to increase immigration (Immigration, Refugees, Citizenship and Canada, 2018). In particular, the Economic Class was projected to increase by 60% in 2020 to "sustain our labour force, support economic growth and spur innovation" (Immigration, Refugees, Citizenship and Canada, 2018, p.2).

In 2017, 44% of immigrant women were primary applicants of the Economic Class program compared to 56% of immigrant men (Immigration, Refugees, Citizenship and Canada, 2018). Although Canada accepts many skilled immigrants each year through processes of immigration, research suggests that newcomers, especially immigrant women, are disadvantaged and continue to experience underemployment, unemployment, and wage gaps in the Canadian labour market. Women who were primary applicants to the Economic Class program earned

significantly less (on average \$32,000) compared to men (on average \$56,000) who were primary applicants (Immigration, Refugees, Citizenship and Canada, 2018). Furthermore, core aged (aged 25-54) immigrant women experienced a higher unemployment rate compared to immigrant men and Canadian-born women (Yssaad & Fields, 2018). In 2017, the unemployment rate of immigrant women compared to Canadian-born women was 7.2% versus 4.3% (Yssaad & Fields, 2018). On average, it takes about 12 years for immigrants to reach the employment earnings of Canadian-born workers (Immigration, Refugees, Citizenship and Canada, 2018). In Toronto, the employment rate of immigrant men has been similar to their Canadian-born counterparts, however, the gap in employment rates remains an issue for immigrant women (Arora, 2019).

From 2013 to 2017, the unemployment rate for landed immigrants between the ages of 24 to 54 slightly decreased from 7.6% to 6.4% (Yssaad & Fields 2018). While these statistics offer a promising picture, it is important to note that these rates of employment and unemployment do not specify the type of jobs that immigrants typically obtain compared to their Canadian-born counterparts. It is important to critically appraise statistics that are used to describe the status of employment and unemployment among landed immigrants; the statistic noted above denotes the employment rate in any job rather than unemployment in jobs related to immigrant's foreign credentials and skills. For example, quantified data indicating a slight decrease in unemployment may be due to employment in jobs unrelated to foreign skills and credentials. The issues and concerns this gap in statistics raises will be examined through the literature on deskilling of immigrants and devaluation of foreign credentials and work experience. This gap will also be analyzed in my research that examines the ways in which government funded immigrant employment programs both facilitate job opportunities and maintain barriers to

employment for immigrant women. The following section highlights the immigration processes and labour market practices that shape the economic integration of some immigrants through processes of deskilling and devaluation.

2.2 Barriers to Employment

Deskilling of Immigrants

According to human capital theory, skill development is “an investment which can yield dividends in the form of productivity and economic prosperity” (Bouchard, 2006, as cited in Guo, 2015). In other words, investing in education should lead to successful economic outcomes. However, research reveals that after arriving in Canada, immigrants, including highly skilled workers, are often unable to obtain jobs in positions that they held prior to immigration (Creese & Wiebe, 2012; Dean & Wilson, 2009; Guo, 2013; Premji, 2018). This phenomenon is also known as de-skilling. Scholars argue that highly skilled workers are de-skilled in Canada’s labour market (Creese & Wiebe, 2012; Dean & Wilson, 2009; Premji, 2018; Wilson-Forsberg, 2015), which specifically impacts immigrants arriving to Canada through the skilled workers category. Deskilling occurs when immigrants, “whose foreign education and credentials are not recognized in Canada, lose access to the occupations they previously held” (Bauder, 2003, p.701). De-skilling prevents skilled immigrants “from reaping the full benefit of their skills and of the nominal amount of their education” (Bauder, 2003, p.708), which is contradictory when immigrants are selected on the basis of education and credentials that are unrecognized in Canada (Creese & Wiebe, 2012). Numerous studies of immigrants in Canada suggest that often newcomer immigrants are unable to obtain jobs related to their work experience and education. This is because of unrecognized foreign credentials, lack of Canadian work experience, lack of English fluency (Branker, 2017; Creese & Wiebe, 2012; Premji & Shakya, 2017; Guo, 2013;

Serrano, 2015; Kosny et al., 2019; Wilson-Forsberg, 2015), lack of social and professional networks (Branker, 2017; Premji & Shakya, 2017; Guo, 2013, Creese & Wiebe, 2012, Serrano, 2015), and discrimination (Creese & Wiebe, 2012; Danso, 2009; Dlamini et al., 2012; Oreopoulos, & Dechief, 2011; Premji & Shakya, 2017). A study with highly skilled newcomer Chinese immigrants found that immigrants who were unable to find jobs most frequently reported challenges such as lack of English fluency and lack of Canadian work experience, followed by a lack of Canadian qualifications and lack of social networks (Guo, 2013). Furthermore, research with Latin American immigrants in Canada revealed that the majority had foreign university degrees and extensive work experience, but were unable to obtain related work because their credentials were unrecognized, their work experience was undervalued, their English was not fluent enough, and they lacked “Canadian experience” (Wilson-Forsberg, 2015). Another study found that Latin Americans were working low-paid and low-skilled jobs unrelated to their credentials or experience (Wilson-Forsberg, 2009). This continuous lack of recognition of foreign education and work experience reflects the structural barriers and power dynamics within immigration processes and labour market practices and signals the devaluation of foreign credentials.

Devaluation of Foreign Credentials and Work Experience

Research highlights the contradictions between Canada’s immigration policies, which enable the acceptance of highly skilled and educated immigrants, and the labour market practices that create barriers for those with foreign experience and education. Creese and Wiebe (2012) argue that although 40% of residents in Vancouver were born outside of Canada, it is common for employers to privilege Canadian experience when assessing job applicants, even though the

legitimacy of such experience has not been established and does not necessarily serve as a proxy measure for how effective the applicant may be for the job. Research suggests that these practices “welcome immigrant bodies, but not their professional knowledge, and their labour, not their credentials” (Gibb & Hamdon, 2010, p.194). The common requirement for Canadian experience by employers devalues the foreign credentials and work experience of skilled immigrants, and results in deskilled immigrants. This lack of recognition of “foreign education and credentials clearly indicates the power dynamic operating in the immigration process and how people from non Western societies are devalued in a society organised by a racial and ethnic hierarchy originating from Canada’s colonial past” (Ng & Shan, 2010, p. 178). Consequently, many skilled immigrants experience underemployment, unemployment, and poor economic outcomes that adversely affects their integration into Canada (Guo, 2013). An inverse relationship exists between education and income for immigrants because upward trends in education levels are related to downward trends of immigrant incomes (Creese & Wiebe, 2012). Creese and Wiebe (2012) found that although many immigrants were highly skilled, three-quarters of participants in their study experienced a downward occupational trajectory, with the majority employed in low-skilled and low-wage survival jobs. Furthermore, recent immigrants who lived in Canada for five or less years were over-represented in part-time work (Hira-Friesen, 2018). Creese and Wiebe (2012) argue that the devaluation of foreign educational credentials, work experience, and accents is a process in which deskilling occurs and shapes the downward trajectory of occupation among skilled immigrants. Some scholars argue these barriers to employment, specifically hiring bias for Canadian experience, reflect discriminatory practices within the labour market (Creese & Weebie, 2012; Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2013; Taylor, 2018).

Discrimination within the Canadian Labour Market

Research suggests that discrimination hinders immigrants' ability to obtain jobs that are related to their work experience and education. The Ontario Human Rights Commission (2013) argues that the "requirement for 'Canadian experience' is *prima facie* discrimination (discrimination on its face) and can only be used in very limited circumstances" (p.3). Creese and Wiebe's (2012) research with sub-Saharan immigrants in Vancouver found that most participants experienced significant underemployment, unemployment, and barriers related to unrecognized foreign credentials and experience. Additionally, immigrants seeking white-collar jobs (e.g. clerical, sales and service) that require high levels of English proficiency, experienced discrimination based on their "African-English" accent (Creese & Wiebe, 2012). Three quarters of the immigrant women from Africa who participated were educated in English from Commonwealth countries and reported being treated as if they were not competent in English (Creese & Wiebe, 2012). Furthermore, research suggests that not all foreign credentials are devalued in the Canadian labour market (Li, 2008). Li (2008) suggests that credentials of visible minority immigrants are devalued compared to foreign credentials held by majority members who are white (e.g., British, North and West Europeans), and can explain disparities in income between the two groups.

Moreover, to examine why skilled immigrants struggle to obtain jobs in Canada, Oreopoulos (2009) sent out resumes with Chinese, Indian, Pakistani and English sounding names to observe differences in callback rates for interviews. This research suggests that employers valued Canadian experience more than foreign, because changing resumes to include only Canadian experience increased callback rates by 11 percent (Oreopoulos, 2009). Furthermore,

those with English-sounding names were 39 percent more likely to receive interview call backs compared to applicants with Chinese, Indian, or Pakistani names (Oreopoulos, 2009). This research suggests that employer discrimination of non-English sounding names increases barriers to employment for immigrants in Canada. In a follow up study on why name-based discrimination occurs, employment recruiters suggested discrimination can occur because employers may make assumptions about ethnic names as being related to a lack of language proficiency or skills for jobs (Oreopoulos & Dechief, 2011). This body of literature suggests that some form of employer discrimination and bias based on ethnic names, foreign experience, and ethnic accents operates in the Canadian labour market. My research aims to fill the gap in literature by examining the ways in which employment programs and service providers can support immigrant women in navigating barriers such as the requirement for Canadian experience.

Race and Gendered Disparities in the Labour Market

In addition to the challenges that immigrants experience, including the lack of English proficiency and lack of Canadian experience, immigrant women experience additional barriers to secure well paid jobs due to “household gender relations (e.g. heavy household/caregiving workload, lack of affordable childcare, unsupportive spouse, etc.)” (Premji et al., 2014, p.18). Women disproportionately take on household and family responsibilities, hence, their labour market decisions are shaped by these demands for unpaid household labour (Flippen, 2014). Research with immigrant women suggests that race and gender are interrelated in employment marginalization through racialization and gendered practices. The processes of racialization and gendered practices can be seen as more skilled immigrant women are channelled into low-wage

and gender segregated jobs, such as personal support workers, daycare assistants, fast food servers, front-line community workers, and office clerks (Premji et al., 2014) which “rely on a feminised and racialized workforce” (Ng & Shan, 2010, p.178). Premji et al. (2014) argue that the “racialized-gender division of labour” can result in lower income, job security, and social value of these segregated jobs (p.136). For example, a study that examined Chinese immigrant women’s employment strategies found that some women who worked in male dominated fields in their host country were unable to find similar jobs in Canada (Shan, 2009). Left with no option, these women trained in Canada for occupations in female dominated fields such as early childhood education and community services (Shan, 2009). Furthermore, this study found that immigrant women were over-qualified and employed in lower echelon positions (Ng & Shan, 2010). Research with skilled immigrant women in Canada reveals that many immigrant women are unable to obtain jobs in their previous field of work after arriving in Canada (Dlamini et al., 2012; Premji & Shakya, 2017; Rashid & Gregory, 2014; Ng & Shan, 2010). Shan (2009) found that only two out of twenty-one Chinese women within their study found jobs within six months of living in Canada that were related to the positions they held prior to immigrating. On the other hand, many women were employed in “low-end” service jobs, call centres, and manufacturing factories (Shan, 2009). Another study with immigrant women, who lived in Canada for five years, found that only nine of thirty-seven women (24%) were working in positions that were equivalent to the job and income prior to immigration (Dlamini et al., 2012). This racialized-gender division of labour further segregates the Canadian labour market and impacts the jobs that immigrant women obtain.

Occupational Segregation

Research with African immigrants in Canada suggests that immigrant women are the most disadvantaged as a result of occupational segregation and racialization (Creese & Wiebe, 2012). African immigrant women reported less access to both low-wage blue-collar jobs and low-skilled white-collar jobs that are typically occupied by immigrant men and Canadian women respectively (Creese & Wiebe, 2012). The manual labour that some African women obtained include cleaning and light manufacturing work paid less than similar jobs that immigrant men held (Creese & Wiebe, 2012). Additionally, African women found it difficult to get white-collar jobs (e.g. clerical, sales and service jobs), which were commonly known as women's work (Creese & Wiebe, 2012). This indicates how the segregation of jobs that immigrant women are channeled into, due to the barriers they experience in the labour market, can lead to unemployment or underemployment in precarious work that is racialized and gendered. Further research is required to understand why these jobs are commonly referred to as "women's work" and how immigrant women are being channeled into certain jobs and sectors. My research aims to examine the ways in which service providers and employment services more broadly mediate employment opportunities for immigrant women. My research will aim to fill the gap in literature to improve understanding of how immigrant women's experiences in finding, obtaining, and maintaining employment are facilitated or hindered through such services.

Precarious Work and Immigrant Women

There has been growing research on barriers immigrant women experience in obtaining employment in Canada. Some of these studies focus on the disproportionate number of immigrant women in precarious work due to challenges in obtaining jobs related to their field of expertise. Precarious work is often taken by immigrants who need a job to survive (Wilson-

Forsberg, 2015), hence, they are often called “survival jobs.” Precarious work includes jobs that are characterized by limited social benefits, job insecurity, low job tenure, low earnings, and poor working conditions (Cranford et al., 2003). Research has demonstrated that precarious work is significantly racialized and gendered (Evans, 2009). Immigrant women in Canada are often employed in part-time work, temporary work, low paid work, and other precarious work (Caragata & Cumming, 2011). Racialized immigrant women with higher education are also disproportionately impacted by underemployment and unemployment (Premji & Shakya, 2017) and overrepresented in low-paid, low-skills jobs with high precarity (Premji et al., 2014). Premji and Shakya (2017) found that immigrant women often held jobs that were temporary or had hazardous working conditions and no benefits (e.g. paid sick days, dental insurance). Although precarious work has negatively impacted the well-being of immigrant women (Dlamini et al., 2012; Premji, 2018), some immigrants suggest that survival jobs fulfilled their basic needs and serve to be a stepping stone to access the Canadian labour market (Huot et al., 2016). This is relevant to my research because my study will explore the ways in which employment programs and service providers support immigrant women in obtaining jobs beyond precarious work, as well as the views held about so-called “survival jobs” by workers in employment service settings. My research will examine whether employment programs are designed to prevent the rise in precarious work and gender disparities in the labour market.

Gender Roles and Household Division of Labour

Research with immigrant women suggests that gender norms and traditions held within certain cultures or societies, and the unequal distribution of family responsibilities typically observed in nuclear families, intersect with barriers based on race, gender, and class. This limits

employment opportunities for immigrant women. Within the Standard North American Family (SNAF) and within families of various cultures, men are primarily responsible for providing the economic income (Smith, 1993); while women may earn an income they are primarily responsible for taking care of the family and household (Smith, 1993). In addition to unrecognized foreign credential and experience, immigrant women in Canada experience barriers related to the lack of affordable childcare, women's responsibility for unpaid care work, lack of social support, and lack of transportation (Premji et al., 2014). These factors play a role in shaping power relations in families that hinder employment outcomes for immigrant women. Furthermore, immigrant women arriving to Canada as partners of spousal sponsorships can experience increased challenges to seeking employment. Premji and Shakya (2017) found that abusive spousal sponsorships reinforced immigrant women's status as dependents of their husbands and impacted their ability to find and maintain jobs. For example, immigrant women experienced high loads of household and childcare work when they had unsupportive male partners (Premji & Shakya, 2017). Furthermore, research suggests that immigrant women often choose part-time jobs to meet the needs of their husband and children (Dlamini et al., 2012). Some immigrant women view job attainment as a way to gain power and financial independence (Dlamini et al., 2012). The research that has been conducted on this issue highlights the role of immigrant women as primary caregivers, which is reinforced by patriarchal structures and gender norms.

Barriers to Services and Labour Market Information

Moreover, some immigrant women do not have access to community services and economic support to overcome these challenges (e.g. lack of social support, lack of childcare

support, lack of transportation) to obtain employment (Premji & Shakya, 2017). Huot et al. (2016) argues that accessibility barriers to settlement agencies that provide employment services limit immigrants' economic integration and employment opportunities. Huot et al. (2016) found that access to childcare and transportation were barriers for immigrant women to access settlement and employment services. Similarly, a recent study found that immigrant women had limited access to services and jobs due to the absence of childcare support and presence of caregiving responsibilities (Kosny et al, 2019). Research highlights that some immigrant women struggle to find jobs because they are misinformed about what Canadian society will be like and what economic opportunities will be available prior to their arrival in Canada (Dlamini et al., 2012). For example, immigrant women reported that they felt Canadian embassies and their host country's embassies glorified economic opportunities in Canada (Dlamini et al., 2012). Additionally, immigrant women shared that other immigrants with whom they met upon arriving did not disclose their challenges to obtaining employment (Dlamini et al., 2012). Furthermore, research suggests that the lack of social capital in host countries can be a barrier to finding and obtaining employment because having social and professional connections opens up opportunities to a range of jobs available outside of advertised jobs (Akkaymak, 2017). Akkaymak (2017) argues that the "importance given to social capital turns its absence into a structural barrier" (p.671). My research aims to examine the gap in research on who has access to immigrant employment services by examining the eligibility criteria and exploring service providers' perspectives. Through my research, I will examine the ways in which gender, race, class, and immigration status can be barriers to accessing the services that are meant to support economic integration. My research will add to this body of literature by examining inequalities

based on gender, race, and immigration that shape labour market outcomes for immigrant women in Canada.

2.3 Job Search Strategies and The Role of Immigrant-Serving Sectors

Job Search Strategies Utilized by Immigrant Women

The high rates of newcomers immigrating to Canada increases demand for communities to provide adequate employment, education, and social services that can facilitate socioeconomic integration (Guo, 2013). As a result of the various challenges immigrants face in navigating the labour market, some immigrants have utilized settlement and employment services to improve job search strategies and opportunities. Research suggests that economic insecurity and deskilling of immigrants motivate immigrant women to take part in job search and career building activities (Premji, 2018). Research with immigrant women in Ontario found that they utilize different job search strategies through the use of the internet, attending immigrant services, registering with employment agencies, volunteering, and social networking with friends and family (Dlamini et al., 2012). Research suggests that some immigrant women found employment programs to be helpful because they provide information on building resumes and cover letters, and sometimes helped them find jobs (Dlamini et al., 2012). Research with newcomers from the Caribbean in Toronto suggests that social capital or social networks significantly influences employment opportunities (Branker, 2017). Branker (2017) found that social capital (e.g. family, friends, and church groups) presented job opportunities for half of the Caribbean immigrants in the study. Social capital is necessary because immigrants do not have access to the “hidden job market,” which is referred to as job opportunities that are available but not advertised (Akkaymak, 2017). However, research also found that although social networks,

including friends and family, can mediate job opportunities, the opportunities identified can be unrelated to the person's credentials and may offer lower pay (Dlamini et al., 2012). A more recent study with newcomers in Ontario coincided with previous literature. The researchers found that strategies used to obtain employment involved volunteer work, participation in employment programs offered by settlement agencies, family, and community connections, and taking survival jobs to gain Canadian experience (Konsy et al., 2019). My research aims to examine how service providers who work within settlement and employment agencies influence and facilitate the kinds of employment opportunities that are available to immigrant women. Additionally, research suggests that immigrants who have been in Canada for less than ten years still need support in finding employment, however, it has been asserted that immigrants who have been in Canada for less than three years need the most support in settlement (Guo, 2013). My research aims to address this gap and build on existing research by examining current immigrant employment services and the role these agencies play in supporting women to find, obtain, and maintain employment.

Settlement Services and Employment Services for Immigrants

McCoy and Masuch (2008) argue that settlement and integration “involves the activities of new immigrants, but also the policies and services that mediate their establishment in Canada and facilitate their engagement with the local labour market” (p.187). Settlement agencies within Ontario offer housing support, counseling, legal assistance, referral and information services, language training, skill development, and employment support (Kosny et al., 2019). Settlement agencies that offer employment programs play a major role in the economic integration of immigrants. Settlement services and immigrant-serving employment programs often offer

employment counselling, job training, and job placement (McCoy & Masuch, 2008). A recent study with immigrant women and service providers highlight that settlement agencies with pre-employment programs typically provide workshops on job search skills, resume writing, and interview preparation (Kosny et al., 2019). Furthermore, these settlement agencies connect newcomers directly to employers through opportunities such as internships, mentorships, and job placements (Kosny et al., 2019). McCoy and Masuch (2008) argue that policies and services in the immigrant-serving sector are continuously changing and have significantly changed within the recent years. There is little research on the current available immigrant-serving settlement services and employment programs in Toronto, which is a city with one of the highest concentrations of newcomer immigrants. Furthermore, there is a lack of research on how service providers at these agencies facilitate immigrant women's economic integration. My research will focus on the current immigrant employment services available in Toronto, to examine the role of these employment programs and service providers within the settlement sector in assisting immigrant women to find, obtain, and maintain employment. My research will examine the types of support provided and the type of jobs to which these services typically lead. There is limited analysis of the ways in which service providers and employment services shape the employment experiences and labour market integration of immigrant women. Furthermore, there is limited literature on how this intersects with factors such as race, gender, immigration status, and language. Research suggests that immigrant settlement services and employment programs in Canada shape and influence the jobs offered to immigrant women and can reinforce the gendered and racial division of labour (Senthanar et al., 2019). For example, a recent study in Ontario with refugee women and service providers found that despite women having higher education and work experience, they were offered highly gendered jobs such as food, tailoring,

and factory jobs, while men were offered trade positions (Senthana et al., 2019). Furthermore, Senthana et al. (2019) found that refugees were referred to low-skilled and low-income positions because they often arrived with lower language levels and financial constraints. Additionally, ethno-specific agencies promoted feminized roles by offering programs such as cooking classes while limiting access to other programs catered towards economic immigrants (Senthana et al., 2019). This research suggests that employment programs may be providing differential services based on specific immigrant groups. To fill the gap in this literature, my research will analyze how employment programs are funded and designed to facilitate jobs for immigrant women and how broader structures within the immigrant serving sector, labour market, and immigration play a role in shaping economic integration of immigrant women.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter I provide an overview of my use of an intersectional lens within a critical ethnographic study to examine the perspectives of service providers on barriers and facilitators for immigrant women seeking employment. In the first section I describe intersectionality by focusing on the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw. In the second section, I discuss how intersectionality within my research can provide an analysis for the ways in which gender, race, immigration status, and language intersect to shape immigrant women's labour market experiences and how employment services and service providers support immigrant women in overcoming challenges they experience at the intersection of their social identities.

The term intersectionality was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, an African American scholar. The term emerged because Crenshaw (1989) argued that neither feminist theory nor anti-racist discourse alone analyzed the ways in which race and gender intersect and shape Black women's

employment experiences. Although the term was first coined by Crenshaw, previous Black feminists have highlighted how identities (race, gender, and class) intersect and can produce inequality (Davis, 2008). However, Crenshaw has given a name to a framework that analyzes intersecting forms of oppression and power. Intersectionality can be employed by researchers to analyze the interlocking ways that social identities interact with social structures to produce power and oppression (Crenshaw, 1991). The following section will provide a description of intersectionality by drawing on Crenshaw's contributions and implications of using intersectionality to analyze immigrant women's experiences of employment and unemployment in Canada.

3.1 Origins of Intersectionality

The origins of intersectionality can be found in critical race theory and Black feminist thought within legal studies (Davis, 2008). Early Black feminists such as Angela Davis and bell hooks have highlighted the need to analyze women of colour's experiences by focusing on intersecting forms of discrimination and oppression. Davis (1983) highlighted that racism and sexism often intersect and that like racism, "sexism is one of the great justifications for high female unemployment rates" (p.239). Furthermore, hooks (1984) critiqued the feminist notion that "all women are oppressed" because it implies that all women have similar experiences (p.5). She argued that believing that all women are oppressed in the same way suggests "class, race, religion, sexual preference, etc., do not create a diversity of experience that determines the extent to which sexism will be an oppressive force in the lives of individual women" (hooks, 1984, p.5). These early contributions of Black radical feminists highlight how women of colour have been

silenced within mainstream feminism and that an intersectional analysis is needed to uncover structures and systems that oppress these women.

3.2 Crenshaw and Intersectionality

The following section will highlight intersectionality within Crenshaw’s two landmark articles, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics” (Crenshaw, 1989) and “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color” (Crenshaw, 1991).

From Single Axis Analysis to Intersectionality

Intersectionality as a theory of knowledge is rooted in and responds to the historical scholarship and theorizing of Black feminists and critical race scholars. Crenshaw (1989) used the term intersectionality to argue that laws in the United States did not recognize the combined discrimination (racism and sexism) that Black women plaintiffs experienced in the labour market. Additionally, she argued that women of colour’s experiences cannot be understood by adding the effects of racism and sexism because of the multi-layered intersections of women of colour (Crenshaw, 1989). She highlighted that the “intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, [and] any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated” (Crenshaw, 1989, p.140). Crenshaw (1989) criticized single classification systems that “treat race and gender as mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis” and challenged the idea that disadvantage occurs from single classifications (p.139). She suggested that these

narrow types of analysis contribute to the marginalization of Black women because single axis frameworks overlook intragroup differences (Crenshaw, 1989). As a result, Black women can sometimes be excluded from feminist theory and anti-racist discourse because researchers who take up these theoretical frames do not pay attention to the simultaneous interaction of race and gender. Within my research, a theoretical focus on gender can simplify and misrepresent the experiences of immigrant women seeking employment, and the intersecting factors of race, immigration status and language. For this reason, I use an intersectional lens to analyze how employment programs and service providers consider the intersecting factors of the immigrant women they serve and how broader socioeconomic and political systems influence immigrant women's labour market experiences and integration.

Anti-essentialism and Intersectionality

Intersectionality rejects the notion of essentialism and acknowledges intra-group differences by considering race, gender, and other axes of power. Crenshaw (1989) emphasized that Black women experience racism differently than Black men and they experience sexism differently than white women. She argued that narratives of gender and race discrimination are often dominated by white women's and Black men's experiences (Crenshaw, 1989). As a result, Black women are “protected only to the extent that their experiences coincide with those of either of the two groups” (Crenshaw, 1989, p.143). Crenshaw (1989) suggested that feminist theory sometimes produces the idea of “women's experience” and critical race theory sometimes creates the notion of “Black experience” when it is not applicable to all women or all Black people. Furthermore, Black women may experience double discrimination based on race and gender, or they may be discriminated as Black women rather than the sum of race and gender

discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989). Hence, social identities are not additive, meaning one marginalized identity cannot be added to another to examine the oppressive conditions.

Crenshaw argues that Black women's experiences are “much broader than the general categories that discrimination discourse provides” and that categorical analyses misrepresents their experiences and prevents their needs from being addressed (p.149). Crenshaw (1989) highlighted that contemporary feminist and antiracist discourses have failed to consider the intersections of racism and patriarchy. Hence, Crenshaw (1989) framed her analysis of the discrimination that Black women plaintiffs experienced in the labour market on the multidimensionality of Black women to broaden feminist and anti-racist analysis.

Structural and Political Intersectionality

Crenshaw (1991) emphasized the need to acknowledge social location “when considering how the social world is constructed” (p.1245). In her second landmark article, she discusses structural intersectionality and political intersectionality in the context of violence (battering and rape) against women of colour. She highlights how racism and sexism intersect and shape the structural and political spheres of women of colour and violence against women of colour (Crenshaw, 1991). Crenshaw (1991) argued that race and gender intersect and make experiences of violence (battering and rape) against women of colour qualitatively different from white women. She used structural intersectionality to highlight how structural discrimination (e.g. access to employment, housing, and wealth) intersect with social identities (e.g. race, gender, and class) and shape the experiences of women of colour who experience violence. Crenshaw (1991) examined battered women shelters and argued that shelters need to go beyond addressing the violence experienced in women’s relationships, to addressing the multi-layered forms of

oppression that intersect and shape their relationships. Crenshaw (1991) argued that women in shelters were often unemployed, lacked job skills, and had child-care responsibilities, and that these were “largely the consequence of gender and class oppression” and are underscored “by the racially discriminatory employment and housing practices women of color often face” (p.2). This example brings to light the ways in which social location intersects with social structures to produce differential experiences of oppression, and the importance of considering all of these factors when supporting marginalized communities. Within my research, an intersectional analysis enables me to analyze and understand the socioeconomic structures and processes that (re)produce and maintain marginalization and barriers for immigrant women in the Canadian labour market. In particular, an intersectional analysis helps to conceptualise the ways in which employment services, within the settlement sector, are designed and implemented to shape economic integration and employment outcomes for immigrant women. This lens requires an analysis of program design and policies, immigration processes, and labour market practices as well as the intersections of clients from the perspectives of service providers.

Crenshaw (1991) also used political intersectionality to argue that women of color are “situated within at least two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas” (p.1252). This can be seen within feminist scholarship that does not always interrogate race discrimination and anti-racist scholarship that does not always interrogate sex discrimination (Crenshaw, 1991). Crenshaw (1991) argued that the political interests of women of colour are dismissed when political strategies do not consider intersectional issues. In the context of violence against women, she discusses the political costs of revealing statistics on domestic violence in the Black community and minority communities. The political costs of these statistics were argued by domestic violence activists and minority communities to represent

and reinforce stereotypes of African American communities as violent, which could justify discriminatory practices and “dismiss domestic violence as a minority problem (Crenshaw, 1991, p.5) Crenshaw (1991) argued that while these statistics can be used to portray African Americans as violent, the absence of domestic violence statistics in Black communities and minority communities can prevent women of colour from receiving the support and intervention they need. She suggests social issues are complex and an analysis of intersecting axes of power can offer more insight into the multidimensionality of social issues (Crenshaw, 1991).

3.3 Defining Intersectionality

Intersectionality is an analytical tool for analyzing the ways in which an individual’s social location (race, gender, class, sexuality, etc.) shape experiences of discrimination and oppression. Cho et al. (2013) argue that using the term “intersectionality” does not make an analysis intersectional but rather requires that the researcher engages in “an intersectional way of thinking about the problem of sameness and difference and its relation to power” (p.795). Intersectionality emphasises that identities, specifically marginalized identities, intersect to create varied types of oppression (Cho et al., 2013). Collins (2000) uses the notion of a “matrix of domination” to argue that through intersectionality researchers can analyze how power and intersecting oppressions are organized within society. Collins (2000) suggests that intersectionality is a lens through which researchers can examine marginalized and privileged identities simultaneously, and that both types of identities are important for understanding interlocking oppressions because individuals have different access to power. Lee and Brotman (2013) add to this and highlight that individuals’ social location “intersect and operate at the

structural/institutional, cultural, and interpersonal levels, resulting in differential access to social power” (p.171).

3.4 Intersectionality and Immigrant Women Seeking Employment

Crenshaw’s use of intersectionality to analyze Black women’s experiences of discrimination in the labour market has influenced me to use intersectionality within my research. Previous studies on immigrant women’s labour market outcomes have applied an intersectional lens to analyze intersections of gender and immigration status (Yeung Leung et al., 2019) and gender, race, and mother tongue (Fitzsimmons et al., 2020). An intersectional framework is applicable to my research because from my ontological perspective it is difficult to understand the barriers and facilitators for immigrant women trying to obtain work within the context of employment services through one single social identity such as race or gender or class. Immigrant women include newcomers, refugees, and single mothers, and these intersecting identities can create different challenges to finding employment. For example, I am an immigrant woman, but I understand through the lens of intersectionality that my experiences in finding employment will differ significantly from newcomer women in Canada who do not have Canadian employment experience or education. Grounding my research theoretically in intersectionality and using this theoretical framework in my analytic process allows me to ask how service providers perceive the different barriers that immigrant women experience when seeking employment and the support that immigrant women may require in the context of these employment services. Revealing these differences can offer guidance to services that support women seeking employment. Crenshaw (1991) highlights that women of colour are “differently situated in the economic, social, and political worlds” (p.1250) and reforms in micro, meso, and macro levels do not consider an intersectional lens and therefore cannot effectively meet the

needs of women of colour. Intersectionality applies to my research because it allows me to question structures, processes, and policies that create and maintain unequal opportunities for immigrant women, through patriarchal norms and racialization. Previous research suggests that “race and gender are interrelated in employment marginalization and poor economic achievement” and that there are “gendered practices in institutions and the labour market” (Liu, 2019, p.169) whereby immigrant women are significantly disadvantaged. Hence, an intersectional analysis is necessary to truly understand why immigrant women may face barriers to employment, what these barriers are in the context of employment services, and how they can be addressed.

Intersectionality is widely used for analyzing the ways in which intersecting identities (race, gender, class, sexuality, etc.) shape experiences of social injustice. Although there are questions that remain on how to practically apply an intersectional lens in research, it is a useful theoretical lens to go beyond unidimensional or singular analyses of social phenomena such as unemployment, poverty, and health disparities. In relationship to my research, intersectionality has the potential to uncover how race, gender, immigration status, and language can create barriers for immigrant women seeking employment in the context of settlement, integration, and employment support. Grounding my research in intersectionality can highlight the barriers and facilitators for immigrant women trying to obtain jobs, so that employment services and policies can address the different needs of immigrant women.

3.5 Research Questions and Objectives

The purpose of this research was to contribute to and build upon the existing literature by examining the ways in which employment services and service providers support immigrant women in overcoming barriers to secure employment. The specific research questions are:

- 1) What are service providers' perspectives of challenges immigrant women experience in finding, obtaining, and maintaining jobs in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA)?
- 2) How do service providers and employment services support immigrant women in overcoming challenges to employment and obtaining secure jobs?

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

This chapter explores my rationale for selecting critical ethnography as my research methodology, and intersectionality as an analytical lens to conduct the research. I will provide an overview of the research design including participant selection, research methods, data collection, data analysis, the researcher's role, and ethical considerations. In addition, I will define critical ethnography and intersectionality, and discuss the ways that my methodology and methods align and how I position myself within the research. Firstly, this research explores the perspectives of service providers on barriers for immigrant women seeking employment and secondly, the ways in which service providers facilitate employment opportunities for immigrant women facing challenges. This research required a methodology that could reveal the ways in which power and oppression operate in the context of immigrant women's services. Furthermore, in applying the methodology I aim to examine how service providers can empower immigrant women to resist the oppressive conditions within settlement and economic services.

4.1 Critical Ethnography

My research is grounded in critical ethnography which focuses on increasing awareness of the oppressive conditions that individuals or groups experience. It also aims to bring about social change (Jamal, 2005). Ethnography is an approach to qualitative research that enables the researcher to study cultures or similar concepts (Mason, 2002). Ethnographic research is “based on an epistemology which says that culture can be known through cultural and social settings” (Mason, 2002, p.55). Critical ethnography is a type of ethnography that has been used to “marry structural analyses with cultural production explanations in order to highlight human agency in the face of structural constraints” (Castagno, 2012 p.374). In other words, critical ethnographers attempt to explain the ways in which structures produce power and oppression and how individuals or groups can resist these sources of oppression. Structures refer to social, political, economic, and cultural institutions operating to constrict individuals or groups (Castagno, 2012).

There are a number of distinctions between conventional ethnography and critical ethnography. A defining one is that conventional ethnographers often speak for their participants while critical ethnographers give voice to participants and use knowledge for social change (Castagno, 2012). In addition, conventional ethnography generally describes and interprets cultural or social phenomenon, while critical ethnography uses a value-laden critical social science orientation to describe what is and what brings change within the cultural or social phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). In particular, “critical ethnography begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain” (Madison, 2005, p. 5). Critical ethnography can be seen as “ethnographic studies that engage in cultural critique by examining broader political, social, and economic issues that focus on oppression, conflict, struggle, power, and praxis” (O’Mahony et al., 2012, as cited in Schwandt, 1997, p. 22). In addition to providing rich descriptions and accurate interpretations of a social

phenomenon, critical ethnography focuses on revealing power and oppression within structures for social change. Recent critical ethnographers have used this method to explore the intersections of various oppressions and social identities such as race, gender, and class (Castagno, 2012). My choice of critical ethnographic research stems from the use of this methodology to examine culture within organizations as well as to examine how power operates within structures and institutions to produce oppression. Critical ethnography methodology is well-aligned with the use of an intersectional theoretical lens to examine multiple intersecting identities and how these identities shape experiences of marginalization. This research explores the barriers and facilitators for immigrant women seeking employment by examining the structural barriers which disadvantage immigrant women in the labour market. In addition, I examined how employment services and programs facilitate economic integration for immigrant women struggling to find, obtain, and maintain jobs. My choice of research questions was influenced by gaps in existing literature on the role of employment services in shaping employment outcomes for immigrant women in Canada.

There are primarily three key elements of critical ethnography (Castagno, 2012). The first is that critical ethnographers highlight the relationship between structural and institutional constraints on the agency of individuals and groups (Castagno, 2012). Through data analysis, critical ethnography demonstrates the ways structures (social, political, economic, historical, and cultural institutions) oppress and marginalize individuals and groups (Castagno, 2012). Second, the goal of critical ethnographers is to work against power and oppression by revealing, critiquing it, and recommending pathways for equity and social justice (Castagno, 2012). Critical ethnographic research acknowledges that “power is differently distributed among and between racial, social class, gender, linguistic, and other groups, resulting in patterns of oppression and

privilege” (Castagno, 2012, p.379), which aligns with my theoretical framework. Lastly, critical ethnographers make their research transparent by revealing their biases, assumptions, and theoretical backgrounds (Castagno, 2012). They do “not attempt to prove basic assumptions that are grounded in previous research but rather [they] attempt to move from these points” (Castagno, 2012, p. 384). This ethnographic study is grounded in previous research that demonstrates how immigrant women experience challenges to obtain employment related to their credentials and skills. Thus, the assumption that guided this study is that power shapes immigrant women’s experiences and everyday lives.

In keeping with the third element of critical ethnography, Madison (2005) suggests that “positionality is vital because it forces us to acknowledge our own power, privilege, and biases just as we are denouncing the power structures that surround our subjects” (p. 7). I am taking an activism stance within critical ethnography by raising awareness of the structural and institutional processes and policies that contribute to the marginalization of immigrant women in the labour market. As previously mentioned, my activist stance emerged from watching my immigrant mother struggle to find secure employment in the past and from working with immigrant women whose lives were impacted by the barriers they faced when trying to obtain secure employment. My stance is further influenced by my own positionality, as a social worker and an immigrant woman.

Critical ethnographers acknowledge issues of representation, including how we describe our participants, data, and our own positionality and how this connects to issues of power and domination (Castagno, 2012). As the ethnographer, my positionality and social location played a role in the development of the research and the analysis. As a social worker and immigrant woman, I was interested in the possibility of this research influencing policy and practice so that

women arriving in Canada could have the same access to employment afforded to Canadian-born women and men. I was interested in this research because I wanted to ensure that within the realm of settlement agencies and immigrant-serving community services, immigrant women were having their needs met. By considering my positionality, I acknowledge my power as a researcher in interpreting and representing the knowledge obtained from participants. Through reflexivity, I ask myself “Who is this research going to benefit?” and “How can I bring about change within service delivery and policy to improve labour market outcomes for immigrant women?” This research presumes that immigrant women have different experiences of oppression within the employment sector at the intersection of their identities. Unfortunately, what has not been examined within prior research is how employment programs and services for immigrant women facilitate job opportunities. Furthermore, there is limited research on how immigrant women’s intersecting identities influence their economic integration and attainment of employment. These are the significant questions that my research examines. To guide the research questions, methods, analysis, and interpretation, I used critical ethnography with an intersectional lens to explore both structural and institutional barriers that immigrant women face. This approach allowed me to provide a descriptive summary of service providers’ experience working with immigrant women. Most importantly, it also allowed me to examine the policies that uphold the oppressions immigrant women experience within the labour market.

4.2 Participant Recruitment and Selection

Mason (2002) states that participant selection is a procedure “used to identify, choose, and gain access to relevant data sources” (p. 120). The type of participant selection strategies used highlights the relationship between the sample and the wider population (Mason, 2002). Purposeful sampling was used to select service providers working at employment programs and

services for immigrant women. Participant recruitment began with researching employment programs and services offered to immigrant women across the Greater Toronto Area.

Recruitment was narrowed down to programs and services that were for immigrant women or primarily served immigrant women. Managers from immigrant women employment programs were contacted via email to inform them about the study and to obtain their permission to recruit program administrators. Of the thirteen potential organizations that were contacted, I heard back from ten. However, seven organizations of these ten confirmed their participation in the study. Ten service providers reflected the range of positions held within employment services including program facilitators, job counsellors, settlement counsellors, and managers in lower and upper level managerial positions. Organizations within Toronto were selected because this region has the highest number of immigrants in comparison to the other Census Metropolitan Areas (Hudon, 2015). This allowed for the data collected to be widely representative of the employment services available to immigrant women in Toronto.

In addition, qualitative research often focuses on smaller samples in depth. Rather than selecting samples that are generalizable to the larger population, purposeful sampling allows researchers to strategically select information-rich cases to acquire an in-depth knowledge about the research topic (Patton, 2002). These types of cases are samples “from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry” (Patton, 2002, p.273). To learn about the ways in which employment programs and services for immigrant women are supporting clients, the sample purposefully selected information-rich cases that provided comprehensive knowledge of how employment services are delivered to immigrant women in the Greater Toronto Area. Due to this, the research illuminated the experiences of service providers working with immigrant women who experience barriers to employment. Furthermore,

the study demonstrated how service providers work to facilitate pathways towards employment for immigrant women.

4.3 Data Collection

The majority of managers expressed interest in the research and were willing to participate in one-on-one interviews. Although interviews were originally going to focus on program administrators, managers were also interviewed to get an understanding of how services were funded, operated, and managed. The original letter of information shared during recruitment was amended due to COVID-19 social distancing restrictions. These restrictions prevented research involving participant observation or in-person interviews from being conducted. Thus, this research did not involve participant observation. Instead, the study included in-depth interviews and document analysis of funding guidelines from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) employment programs and services. Due to COVID-19, two service providers at immigrant women employment programs were unable to participate in interviews. For this reason, I began recruiting service providers from employment services that were not strictly for immigrant women but primarily served this population.

This research was approved by the McMaster Research Ethics Board after an amendment was made. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted and audio-recorded between April 2020 and June 2020, via Zoom and telephone. Field notes were taken during interviews to identify non-verbal cues and significant concepts that emerged. A total of ten service providers were selected from employment programs. During interviews, I was interested in their perspectives on the barriers that immigrant women face when seeking employment. Furthermore, I was interested in how programs and services were organized and delivered. Most importantly, I hoped to learn whether service providers were aware of the additional challenges that immigrant

women face due to the intersections of race, gender, immigration status, and language. These questions provided the basis for an analysis of broader social structures and processes that shape immigrant women's experiences of finding, obtaining, and maintaining employment in the context of employment services. Interviews were transcribed verbatim using an automatic transcription software, Otter, and then manually checked for accuracy and non-verbal communication such as pauses, laughter, and emphasised words. Transcripts were read in detail to analyze and interpret meaning from the raw data.

My data collection was grounded in intersectionality because I am particularly interested in examining barriers to employment for immigrant women and how employment services are provided to women who occupy intersecting identities related to race, gender, immigration status, and more. This allowed me to use an intersectional lens to analyze the multidimensionality of immigrant women as it relates to obtaining employment. My research questions are grounded in intersectionality because they ask who are the immigrant women that service providers work with so that I can analyze intersecting identities such as immigration status, language, etc. Furthermore, my research questions are grounded in intersectionality because from the perspectives of service providers, they look at how intersecting identities (e.g. racialized immigrants, newcomer immigrants, single mothers) interact to shape the employment or unemployment experiences of immigrant women.

4.4 Data Analysis

Intersectionality can shape how research is carried out and how findings are analyzed for social justice (Hunting, 2014). Hunting (2014) highlights that using intersectionality to analyze data prevents narrow understandings of social issues because an intersectional analysis seeks to understand how social issues are influenced by intersections of power and oppression.

Intersectionality “cautions against thinking in categories – i.e., making direct links between singular categories of identity (e.g., culture, gender, etc.) and complex social phenomena” (Hunting, 2014, p.3). Analyzing my data through an intersectionality framework will allow me to focus on the intersecting identities of immigrant women, as well as if and how employment services create barriers and facilitators to employment for women who embody these intersecting identities. The implications of using intersectionality for data analysis is being able to advocate for employment services to be more inclusive and mindful of the various differing needs of immigrant women. Using an intersectional lens within critical ethnography allows me to use the stories of service providers. These stories were analyzed to identify the ways in which structural barriers within employment services and the settlement sector continue to marginalize immigrant women.

Data analysis began during data collection which led to reframing interview questions and adjusting the interview layout. After each interview, a reflective report was made about the interview process, non-verbal communication, and early reflections regarding possible emerging themes and salient issues. Questions were slightly revised after the first interview because they did not initially capture extensive data about the clients that the service providers worked with. Furthermore, my notes enhanced the quality of data because new questions emerged, and I was able to analyze similarities and differences among service providers through personal reflection. My field notes also led to a more efficient interview process because they helped me further grasp concepts and abbreviations that were commonly used among service providers (e.g. wage subsidies; Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, or referred to as IRCC by interview participants). Data analysis software, NVivo, was used to organize, code, and create themes that

were related to my interview questions and were guided by my methodology and theoretical framework.

An inductive approach is when categories are developed “into a model or framework that summarises the raw data and conveys key themes and processes” (Thomas, 2003). Through my process of coding, I identified the types of services delivered by the employment program (e.g. resume writing, mock interviews, job placements), how programs were funded, what eligibility criteria were used to enroll women seeking employment into the programs, and what barriers and facilitators were produced or reinforced by the employment service as it relates to immigrant women seeking and maintaining employment. Following the coding, I examined similarities and differences across the employment services as it relates to funding models, eligibility for programs and services, and the nature of employment services provided to immigrant women. First, these comparisons were analyzed and coded into numerous major themes and categories that answered the research questions. Second, the numerous themes and categories were further refined into three main themes with their subsequent subcategories. Finally, codes and themes were reinterpreted to reorganize and refine quotes into the three main themes.

My data analysis was informed by my methodology and theoretical framework. Critical ethnography focuses on “unmasking dominant, social structures and the vested interests they represent, with a goal of transforming society and freeing individuals from the sources of domination and repression” (Jamal, 2005, p.235). Guided by this ontological perspective, my analytic process focused on how barriers to employment from the perspective of service providers are gendered and racialized, and attempted to illuminate through my analysis how social identities such as gender, race, class, and immigration status intersect to create barriers for

immigrant women in the labour market. I also analyzed how neoliberal discourse and policies impact employment services for immigrant women within the broader settlement sector.

Bowleg (2008) suggests that it is the researcher's role to use intersectionality and make the implicit explicit "even when participants do not express the connections" (p.322). The questions I asked of the data to make the implicit explicit included how immigration status, language, and racialization create barriers and/or facilitators to immigrant women obtaining secure jobs vis-à-vis employment service programs. In learning more about the role of employment programs for immigrant women, I also deepened my interview process to untangle how the type of jobs immigrant women obtained through the support of employment programs were shaped by their intersecting identities (e.g. immigration status, single mother, etc.). Lastly, this research looks at whether there are sociopolitical aspects that shape the pathways immigrant women take to seeking and obtaining employment. By using intersectionality as a theoretical lens, I examined how funders of employment programs and settlement services, immigration policies, labour market policies, and front-line workers create barriers and facilitators to immigrant women seeking and obtaining secure jobs.

My analysis of the data was shaped by my positionality, methodology and theoretical framework. However, I made efforts to bring service providers' voices, experiences, and perspectives to the center for analysis. My research aimed to ensure that the data was representative by including direct quotations and examples from participants. I ensured that all participants' voices were included within my thesis, although some may be more frequently quoted than others. Thomas (2003) suggests that "findings are shaped by the assumptions and experiences of the researchers conducting the research and carrying out the data analyses" and that researchers "must make decisions about what is more important and less important in the

data” (p.4). Based on this understanding, I selected quotes that best reflected certain phenomena to answer my research question.

4.5 Study Participants: Service Providers

In total, ten service providers were interviewed individually: four in managerial positions, three job counsellors, two settlement counsellors, and one program facilitator. Three service providers freely disclosed and reflected on their experiences as newcomers during interviews. Service providers were recruited from seven organizations that offered immigrant women specific programs or employment services primarily to immigrant women. Six of these organizations were offering settlement services within their organization while one partnered with other organizations to provide settlement services. Five of these organizations offered immigrant women specific employment programs, and two of these organizations offered employment services to primarily immigrant women. All of the programs were located in the Greater Toronto Area. One of the organizations that offered a three-week Monday-Friday immigrant women specific program to those with work permits ended prior to the study because it lost funding. This program was funded to support immigrant women to achieve their career goals in Canada through English language training, employment support (e.g. resume writing, mock interviews, networking), and life skills training (e.g. self-esteem, conflict resolution). One of these organizations offered training Monday-Friday for immigrant women with work permits looking for work in office administration. One of these organizations was offering two different immigrant women specific programs, which were pilot projects funded by IRCC (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2018). One of the programs was designed for skilled newcomer women with higher education (post-secondary) and English proficiency (individuals who have achieved a Canadian Language Benchmark [CLB] of level 7) to facilitate access to

labour market integration. The other was created for newcomer women with less education (high school) and English proficiency (CLB level 4) looking for jobs in the food and cleaning industry. Another organization offered the same IRCC-funded pilot program for skilled newcomer women, although it was designed very differently. The program was for five weeks Monday-Friday while the other was two weeks of workshops and ten weeks of one-to-one counselling. The two programs funded by IRCC have been established for under a year and so they were relatively new. Another organization offering an immigrant women specific program was also funded by IRCC, however, it was offering a different program that included one-to-one employment and settlement support and skills-training (e.g. food handling certificate, basic cashier). The four immigrant women specific programs funded by IRCC were limited to permanent residents and conventional refugees. The Government of Canada (2020) defines a conventional refugee as a person who fears persecution because of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion and is outside of Canada or their home country. Of the two other organizations, one was a community centre for women that offered employment services for primarily immigrants but was open to others. This organization had lost funding for an employment program and continued to provide basic employment services (e.g. resume writing, mock interviews, referrals). The other was an organization that offered skills training in office administration and accounting, which primarily served immigrant women but were open to non-immigrant applicants as well.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

The main objective of this research was to examine service providers' perspectives of barriers and facilitators for immigrant women seeking employment. I examined the work of

service providers in facilitating job opportunities for immigrant women within the Canadian neoliberal economy and how employment services are meeting or not meeting the needs of immigrant women. I identified service providers' perspectives of challenges immigrant women experienced in finding, obtaining, and maintaining jobs through an intersectional lens. Lastly, I uncovered how broader structures, institutions, and policies influence the employment, unemployment, and underemployment of immigrant women. Service providers shared their perspectives of the challenges that clients experienced in seeking employment in the Greater Toronto Area. Three service providers reflected on their immigrant identities and shared the challenges they experienced, similar to the women they serve. Each service provider shared their experiences of working with immigrant women and their goals when serving them. Each provided their perspectives on how employment services for immigrant women or settlement services can be improved.

There were three key themes that emerged from the interviews with service providers that elucidate the barriers and facilitators to employment vis-à-vis employment services and programs geared towards immigrant women: 1) the role of funding for employment programs and settlement services; 2) the categorization of immigrant women by skills; and 3) the application of individualized services to meet the needs of immigrant women. What follows is an explanation of these themes.

5.1 The Role of Funding for Employment Programs and Settlement Services

Facilitator: The Role of IRCC in Addressing Challenges to Employment

A prevalent theme within this research was the significant role of Federal government funding for employment programs and services for immigrant women. Specifically, IRCC has

recently invested in pilot projects to identify effective interventions for immigrant women struggling to obtain employment. The majority of the immigrant women-specific programs that were examined in this research were new, specifically programs funded by IRCC that were introduced in 2019. Of the six immigrant women-specific programs discussed during interviews with five different service providers, four programs were funded by IRCC, three of which are part of the new pilot project issued by the Federal Liberal government. Service providers expressed that the IRCC funded programs for skilled visible minority newcomers was a step towards supporting immigrant women in obtaining jobs related to their previous field of work.

An upper level manager at an organization explains:

“This program is interesting because it is a nationwide project. So it's being... funded through IRCC but being administered through SRDC, which is Social Research Demonstration Corporation, Canada. They do a lot of research into social innovations into government programming, research and evaluation. And so, we're delivering it within a certain model... So this program in particular is being funded as a research project to determine the effectiveness of different delivery models and program. And the reason why the government's funding it is because, frankly, a large proportion of the money that IRCC spends on employment related services does produce a lot of results. So, so they're finally, you know I think, getting serious about wanting to have some evidence-based frameworks for their programming.”

This manager's explanation articulates that the Federal government and those in decision making positions recognize that immigrant women are disadvantaged in the Canadian labour market. In addition, these government funded programs are being administered and studied for effectiveness. This suggests that the government is working towards interventions for newcomer minority women who experience challenges in the labour market. According to a news release by IRCC, the Canadian government is investing in a three-year Visible Minority Newcomer Women Pilot (VMNW) in response to various barriers newcomer minority women experience in the Canadian labour market (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2018). The goal of this pilot project is to “improve the employment and career advancement of visible minority

newcomer women in Canada by addressing the barriers they may face – gender- and race-based discrimination, precarious or low income employment, lack of affordable childcare and weak social supports” (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2018, para.2). IRCC is investing \$7 million into programs and services that support visible minority women and are working with the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) to develop programs that can produce quantitatively effective employment interventions to support visible minority newcomer women (Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2018). Of the two employment services that did not offer immigrant women specific programs, one service provider was expecting to receive funding for an immigrant women program. Although these programs are receiving funding in response to immigrant women experiencing barriers in the Canadian labour market, challenges remain because there is insufficient funding to fully meet the needs of this population.

Barrier: Lack of Adequate Funding and Outcome-Based Programs

The majority of service providers believed that the lack of funding for services limited the capacity to which they would be able to fully support immigrant women in finding, obtaining, and maintaining employment. Employment programs receiving funding from all three levels of government faced challenges in being fully accessible to immigrant women. However, smaller organizations with less Federal funding experienced more significant challenges in covering costs to support clients. IRCC’s statement acknowledges that there is a need to improve the employment of newcomer women by addressing the barriers they experience, precarious work or low-income jobs, and lack of affordable childcare. Despite this, not all employment programs funded by IRCC addressed these issues. For example, the majority of employment

programs, including IRCC funded programs, did not offer childminding services to reduce barriers in accessing services. Although service providers identified childcare was a barrier for women to access employment services, service providers shared their perspectives on why childcare was not offered as part of the employment programs to reduce barriers. An upper level manager explained:

“Maybe 10 years [ago] or so, it would be, that ability to come in 9 to 4 was actually a screening mechanism by organizations, to screen out clients who face barriers who might go into an employer and not be able to land the employment because of those barriers... the reason the client's not able to access childcare is because they don't have money to access childcare... So a lot of times, you know, if we're not focused completely on getting [clients] that job, but if we get pulled into all of these other areas of service provision delivery, yes, we can support a client with coming in to receive services at that time. But our focus then is also really, really divided on-- at a management level, leadership level, because we've got this huge childcare operation to run now. And what I need to be doing is talking to employers to get people jobs... But I think, you know, if we were to make programming more flexible and keep that same service delivery provision of you know temporary childcare services, we can serve twice as many people.”

As this manager highlights, the majority of employment programs and services were offered full-time Monday to Friday ranging from 10-2 or 9-4, reflecting the hours that women would typically work once they had obtained a job. This schedule was noted as a challenge for women who did not have access to affordable childcare. This manager identified how program schedules by design select clients who are experiencing less barriers such as having access to childcare. It is assumed that those who experience barriers such as these are likely to experience the same barriers after obtaining employment. In short, service programs deliberately give preference to women who do not require additional services such as childcare, because these very services become unavailable to them upon the completion of the program. It is assumed that without the continuation of these services, they cannot retain the jobs obtained through the program. Therefore, funders are less likely to provide funding for childcare support if the clients they serve are unable to successfully integrate into the labour market. Although IRCC recognizes

that the lack of affordable childcare is a barrier to employment for many immigrant women, temporary childcare is not included in the types of programs or provisions that are funded through their funding models. Only one immigrant women specific program offered childcare through a provider, and their seats were limited. Furthermore, this manager added that operating temporary childcare through employment programs divides the focus at management level and takes away time from service providers building connections with employers and working on getting clients employed. Hence, putting the additional load of providing childcare services on employment programs may shift their focus away from creating employment opportunities for immigrant women.

Similarly, an employment manager at a skills training organization explained:

“I have people that had problems with the childcare at the beginning, and they weren't able to secure a spot and they were ready [to join the program]. They weren't able to continue but that's the reality of the situation. If you go to work, chances are you going to have to do at least a nine to five. And if you're not able to do a nine to five for any given reason, then that means there are other things that you need to put in place before you can-- commit.”

Although employment programs and services are meant to reduce barriers to labour market participation, they are also designed in a way to support clients who are most likely able to participate in the labour market. The assumption made within employment services by design is that if childcare is a barrier for women receiving services, childcare will also be a barrier for women obtaining or maintaining employment later on. Hence, funding for childcare can be seen as money misspent by funders and service providers, especially if the chances of women being employed after the program is low. These are systemic barriers that are maintained within service provision and employment service funding models. These barriers create a cycle of immigrant women facing challenges to obtaining secure jobs because of the lack of childcare and immigrant women unable to afford childcare because of unemployment.

Further adding to these issues, lack of funding for programs and services creates additional challenges for women to attain employment because the number of seats that are funded within these programs are relatively low. Due to the lack of funding, service providers expressed that they would be unable to meet the full needs of their clients seeking employment. As one upper level manager shared:

“In an environment where you're never going to be funded to meet the full demand of your clients, right then there's not a lot of mechanisms, external mechanisms to solve those problems. Right. So it's definitely you know, sometimes kind of under funding by the funders, whether you know federal, provincial...Because you've got 100 people interested in 20 seats [for the program]. Right? So you don't like coming in between 9 to 4 every day, then, you know, what can you do? So that kind of lack of funding, oftentimes on a systems wide basis leads to client selection, and the client selection of the least barrier clients.”

This manager underscores the significant mismatch in the number of seats funded and the client demand. Hence, having less flexibility with regard to the delivery of employment service programs can result in the selection of the clients who have the least barriers. These also happen to be immigrant women who would require the least support to integrate economically. Clients who require childcare, or cannot invest seven hours into attending programs, are less likely to receive the support to attend programs. Program seating is limited and clients who cannot attend programs are not given the support because the demand for seats already remains high. Therefore, when accessibility barriers are added to low supply and high demand, the needs of the most barriered clients are dismissed because there are a number of less barriered women who can fill those limited spots.

Another issue related to the number of limited seats is the demand for free skills training programs. Two service providers working at an organization that offered skills training in administration and accounting revealed that the number of seats funded did not meet the demands of clients that needed this training. One settlement counsellor explained:

“For a very small agency, it's very, very hard to attract funding... We wish [training] could be entirely free, but... to be free it has to be funded from one source or another... So this is that challenge... So with the money we get from the city, we're able to provide training for about 90 to 100 clients. And most of those are women, immigrant women. But the demand is about three or four times that... And then we'll say, okay, you can apply for this program, but the seating program is limited. The city's funding 50 seats or 20 seats or whatever. And that's all that you can [provide]... And then [the post secondary institutions] have expanded hugely... like the colleges and universities... But it's not the answer for immigrant women trying to transition to the labour market.”

I learned from this settlement counsellor that due to the lack of funding for employment programs, employment services were unable to cover costs of training even though the majority of their clients were on social assistance. This settlement counsellor highlights that the lack of funding from the city limits the number of clients who will receive skills training for free. As a result, some clients will need to pay out of pocket for skills training programs that help to fill gaps between training received outside of Canada and the training required for the job in Canada. Some clients may also need skills training because they need to brush up on specific skills required for a job if they have gaps in their work experience. For example, these programs train clients on bookkeeping, QuickBooks, and medical billing. However, if these skills training programs are not free, they can pose challenges to immigrant women who are not financially secure. As this settlement counsellor emphasized, additional expenses related to returning to university or college for skills development is not always the answer for immigrant women. Consequently, the immigrant women who do not secure these limited seats may be unable to meet the job requirements for higher skilled jobs.

The issue of limited seats can also worsen year to year if service providers are unable to meet the outcomes required by funders. An employment manager at this skills training organization commented on this matter:

“So we're talking about clients that are unemployed, and then wanting [to] better their skill set and get some additional support in order to go back to work.... the city in terms

of the Ontario Works program, and the municipality put the program in place with a specific structure because they wanted to make sure that people will not fall back on financial assistance afterwards right ... So I have a percentage that I have to get employed by the end of the year...How it works is that the city purchases the seats, depending on the success rate. So [the city says] ... I paid for 16 people this year, if you don't get 70% of them employed inside the year, I will pay for five seats next year...[the city wants] to make sure that if they paid for the training, that person with that specific training can transition off of social assistance.”

The employment manager explains that the majority of their clients are on Ontario Works and that the City of Toronto provides funding for a number of seats to transition clients off of Ontario Works. If the skills training program trains the set number of clients and these clients can transition off social assistance as a result, the city will continue to fund more seats at this particular training program. Furthermore, these skills training programs include post-program support, which includes service providers supporting clients six months after the training ends to ensure retention of jobs. This suggests that while the goal of employment programs and services is to have clients employed, they also try to transition immigrant women off social assistance to prevent them from falling back on Ontario Works. Three service providers mentioned using wage subsidies as an incentive for employers to hire immigrant women if they are not hired at the end of work placements or internships.

Though limited funding and the possibility of a decrease in funding year by year are exceptionally challenging for service providers, an even worse outcome that was highlighted in this research is when programs lose funding completely. The elimination of funding for employment programs that serve immigrant populations negatively impacts clients who continue to receive services from organizations. A settlement counsellor who works at an organization that lost funding, but continued to provide employment supports, experienced challenges when it came to fully support clients because of the lack of employees and resources. She expressed that although she is not a trained employment counsellor, she often takes on the role of being an

employment counsellor by helping immigrant women with resumes, mock interviews, job postings, and referrals. She suggested that although employment is a part of settlement, it is difficult for one settlement counsellor to provide support in all areas of settlement, including employment. She explains:

“I’m not an employment counselor, but I often find myself falling into that role in terms of helping clients with resumes. I’ve done a lot of that. And it’s not-- I haven’t been, like, formally trained...we need an employment program...Like there’s no way I can help in the other ways that clients need me and also give my full attention to like employment... again it’s just me, like it’s not like we have, you know, a bunch of [settlement counsellors] like, I’m the one who does settlement. And everyone kind of has their own program. So it’s kind of like, we want to hit those [outcomes]... But we also have to be mindful of the community service worker themselves and how that can lead to burnout and things like that.”

This organization continues to provide employment support although it does not have funding for an employment program and employment counsellors. The lack of funding for hiring an adequate number of employment counsellors and providing training to those workers is especially problematic for those who have to compensate for this lack, and the immigrant women who receive services. In this case, one settlement counsellor is responsible for providing various settlement services, including employment. She acknowledges how being responsible for settlement and employment, especially if she pushes herself to meet high outcomes, can result in burnout. Insufficient funding for employment programs and services impacts the ratio of frontline workers to clients served, which affects the quality of service delivery. When an employment counsellor was asked how these circumstances can be improved, she responded:

“Money, money, it’s, and the reason why is because it’s a circle effect...realistically, when you look at how much we’re getting paid, right, someone from our perspective can’t live off of how much we make for a very long time...And so when I say money, it’s not that I’m going like pay me more. I’m going like you know, realistically I’ve seen this pattern of good people leaving and new people coming in that don’t have experience and so that that leads to the low [outcomes]...That leads to people not being able to do their job correctly, being overworked, being overwhelmed with like I mentioned...[employment counsellors] have 200-300 clients realistically. How are you, if

you have the number of obtaining 70 [clients] a month, it's a month, how are you going to take care of your existing clients? There's no time for that, right. So it's this. It's the funders having unrealistic points of views in terms of how we deliver.”

This employment counsellor suggests that unsustainable wages for employment counsellors and high workloads can often lead to high rates of burnout and turnover, resulting in fewer trained employment counsellors and low outcomes in the service. She suggests that funders have unrealistic expectations of service providers to support a large number of clients and successfully lead them to jobs with limited funding and resources. This same employment counsellor began working for the IRCC funded Visible Minority Newcomer Women Pilot program at her organization and describes how this program differs from the regular employment services because the ratio of employment counsellors to clients is more manageable. She explains:

“And for every month that we have a new cohort, there are 15 participants and we split those in three. So, you know, you can't compare the kind of service that we provide to five people as a coach [in the IRCC pilot program] to one employment counselor that may have 200 at the same time [in the regular program], there's a difference there in terms of attention.”

This comparison demonstrates the stark difference between the IRCC pilot program and the regular program. The IRCC funded program allows employment counsellors to give more time and support to immigrant women compared to regular employment programs. However, the IRCC funded program is a pilot project and it is difficult to determine whether the ratio of job counsellors to clients will remain the same if it becomes a permanent program. From this service provider's perspective, the quality of an employment program that assigns one employment counsellor to 200 to 300 clients and one employment counsellor to five clients is incomparable. The higher workloads for service providers, specifically employment counsellors who work directly with immigrant women, has become overwhelming at this organization. From this

provider's perspective, this results in lower numbers of immigrant women successfully obtaining jobs after completing the program. Employment programs are given the minimum resources (employment counsellors, training for workers, etc.) to meet the high demands of immigrant women seeking employment. Although funders want to see outcomes from services, this example demonstrates that without adequate funding, service providers are not given the tools to facilitate better outcomes.

Lastly, the lack of adequate funding for employment programs and services can increase competition between organizations seeking funding. A settlement counsellor expressed her concern about the potential for competition between organizations to result in negative outcomes for immigrant women. She shared an experience she had at a conference with organizations that provide employment services.

“[The service providers] were just talking about how, you know, it's hard when you're constantly pitted against each other to get funding to run a program. So that instead of working collaboratively, to help women, immigrant women...you're often in competition with them. And so that leads to poor service delivery in the end, and the client or the community not really benefiting as much as they could from the collective...And that affects the client, like that affects the community at the end of the day. Because you could be providing, like these amazing wraparound services, as they like to call them, where they're getting this holistic approach to all their varying needs.”

She went on to explain that she worked at a small women's organization that experiences difficulties receiving funding for programs. As a result, she was not equipped with the resources to provide employment support at the same level of other organizations. Despite such issues, she mentioned that service providers in similar situations may feel less confident in referring their clients to other organizations that could meet the needs of their clients. This was because of the chance of losing these clients permanently, which would only result in further cuts to program funding. This level of competition leads to a lack of collaboration between employment

programs and settlement services, which can result in immigrant women not having various needs met in order to obtain employment.

As part of the document analysis that was conducted following interviews to contextualize my understanding of what the service providers were sharing, I examined the IRCC Visible Minority Newcomer Women (VMNW) pilot program funding guidelines (Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2018). In connection with the issue of a lack of Federal funding, I discovered that for the VMNW program, the preferred outcomes include:

“Immediate outcome: Clients acquire knowledge, skills, and connections to prepare for the Canadian labour market.

Intermediate outcome: Clients participate in the Canadian labour market.

Ultimate integration outcome: Successfully integrated and settled clients benefit Canada.”

Although the Federal government requires organizations to report outcomes, including the number of immigrant women employed after completing programs, the outcomes that are reported do not specify whether immigrant women are being employed in jobs related to their skills even if the program is funded to do so. The upper level manager at an organization explains:

“I think that’s what the funders at the highest levels of leadership want to see the system producing [women being employed]...Because the system is built around outputs... so when you sign a contract with the Federal government to deliver with IRCC, to deliver employment related services, you agree to serve a certain number of clients, a certain amount of service, certain number of workshops , a certain number of job fairs right... So but there is a narrative reporting framework where you can report outcomes... on the Federal level, wherever that would be reporting on...there would just be employed or not employed. So the funding mechanism may be trying to, and the training mechanism is steering people towards [employment or training in a sector], but the reporting is not actually able to differentiate just between employment and the sector... And what we connect to with the funder is, an employment target. That a certain percentage of clients out of the program will be employed at a level that uses their skills and experience...And frankly we should see much much better outcomes...when we look across the sector, we should see much much much better results for clients that we see...within the service

delivery environment there are real real systems issues, around how we support people fully.”

Although the Federal government is funding employment programs that can demonstrate effective outcomes related to participation and integration of immigrant women in the labour market, gaps remain with regard to removing barriers to connect immigrant women to secure, well-paying jobs that are directly related to their education, skills, and training. As was highlighted in the quote above, there is an expectation of program participants obtaining employment that matches their skills, and that these program outputs are reported to the funder. As this manager explains, however, there are gaps in how this information is reported back to funders as part of the narrative report that is prepared. Organizations have an agreement on the number of services they provide and the number of clients they service, however, funders are unable to determine the exact jobs that clients will obtain after receiving those services. Without this information, funders are focusing on outputs (e.g. number of workshops, number of job fairs) and are only able to determine whether clients were employed or not at the end of the program. This gap in the narrative reporting framework can lead to misrepresentations of effective interventions because funders can only distinguish between employed or unemployed. This narrative reporting framework cannot explain whether the jobs are related to immigrant women’s skills or education. If an employment program is funded to ensure that clients are employed at the end of the program as a way of economic integration, the program may not be focused on whether the jobs will be short-term, contract positions, or precarious work, all of which can be issues for some immigrant women. Some service providers expressed that challenges to labour market integration is not limited to getting any type of job, it is getting a job that matches immigrant women’s education, experience, and/or their career goals. Currently IRCC is funding employment programs that facilitate jobs that match the credentials and work

experience of skilled immigrant women. Although these programs were created to address precarious or low-income employment, given the current reporting framework, it is not apparent that these programs are addressing these barriers because of the inability to distinguish between the types of jobs that program participants obtain.

5.2 The Categorization of Immigrant Women by Skill

Facilitator: Matching Immigrant Women to Jobs in Their Field of Expertise

IRCC has invested in employment programs for immigrant women who have higher education and English proficiency but are unable to find jobs in their field of expertise. This group of immigrants have been described and categorized as highly skilled immigrants. Service providers working with skilled immigrant women reported having some success in facilitating jobs related to their client's field of expertise. They worked with immigrant women with higher education by identifying gaps in skills and knowledge of the Canadian labour market and working with clients to fill those gaps. An employment counsellor working with skilled immigrant women explained:

“So this particular program that I work for, deals with highly skilled, very educated minority newcomer women that have been here either arrived recently or have been here for a long time, and have been struggling with their job search here in Canada... Most of them have at least a bachelor's degree or a specialty in their field. And about 50% of them, I would say have quite a bit of experience, extensive experience in their field... There's a big difference between finding work, a survival job and you know, a job in your field, and then there's another difference as well as finding a job that you know, is your position and your level that you have before you know, in your previous hometown... And we've been, I would say relatively successful with that, not in terms of the numbers, but with the women that have succeeded to do it, they have succeeded to do it in a way where they have a paid employment in their field at their level. And so it proves that... how you facilitate things, how you, you know, provide feedback, and the kinds of things you should be exposing newcomer women to, can make a huge difference.”

This employment counsellor acknowledged that there are differences between working with immigrant women to find them survival jobs, jobs related to their previous field of work prior to immigration, and positions at their level (e.g. management). She states that, essentially, the ability to match immigrant women with a job at the appropriate level in their previous field of work comes down to how well service providers facilitate the process. Along with this, the majority of service providers believed that immigrant women needed to obtain an entry-level or lower-level position in their field of work and to move up to a position that matched their previous position. This employment counsellor also mentioned that supporting clients to obtain a lower level position within their field was a strategy to get a client's foot in the door. The majority of service providers used the terms "foot in the door" and "stepping stone" to describe the first jobs that immigrant women obtained after completing employment programs. These jobs would sometimes be related to their field of work, offer Canadian experience, increase connections, and be a first step to labour market integration in Canada. These jobs were considered important to open up new doors for career advancement and higher-level positions.

A manager of a program explained:

"Our main goal in my particular program is employment and we want to see the woman that we're working with employed and employed in their field of study, if not directly, then at least in the same pathway. So an example is we had a woman who was a lawyer back in her home country who came here, [but] because accreditation and licensing is so different here for a lot of those types of employment, it takes a lot longer for them, for people in general and especially women, to actually become a lawyer here. So, what we do is, we provide them with the ability, through their portfolio building...for them to see that they can actually gain employment in their field. Maybe not necessarily as a lawyer, but maybe as a law clerk or working in a law office, as a stepping stone, so that they can be employed and earn a living while they work towards the goal of becoming a lawyer."

This manager illuminates the systemic barriers that exist in the labour market that prevent immigrants from obtaining employment in their field of work without Canadian experience or education, especially in jobs that require licensing in Canada. She suggests that, while the goal of

IRCC funded pilot programs is to support clients in finding employment related to their field of expertise, sometimes that means clients will need to work in lower-level positions before they can achieve their career goals. This program supports immigrant women who are unable to get an opportunity to work in a sector related to their field of expertise so that they can eventually move up within that sector. This allows immigrant women to also gain Canadian experience in their field of work while also getting accreditation or licensure.

Another program funded by a municipality was designed to transfer the skills of immigrant women and apply them to office administration. An employment counsellor at this program explained that although the clients she worked with had lower English proficiency, they were still able to participate because the program was funded to support those with less English proficiency in getting employed. The minimum requirement for these immigrant women to participate in office administration training was the ability to understand the information at the program. If women did not have the English proficiency for this, they were referred to English classes within the organization so that they would eventually be able to join the training program. By supporting immigrant women in working on gaps such as lack of English proficiency, this program gave immigrant women the chance to participate in a training program for office administration. This municipal program is open to those without post-secondary education and refugee claimants with work permits, which is a group that is left out of the Federally funded IRCC programs. By not turning away clients who may not be eligible based on a higher CLB level and supporting them in getting to where they should be to participate in programs, this program is lifting barriers to labour market integration. The employment counsellor at this program explains why office administration is being offered to immigrant women.

“[The reason] we are targeting office administration...is because office administration, they have lots of transferable skills. So it doesn't matter which careers, occupations or

education background you have in your home country, then you can get into office admin easier than other occupations because if you have customer service skills, communication skills, and data entry or computer skills... [these jobs are] more stable...and may be more [in] demand like in different sectors or different companies. They do require receptionists, they do require office administrative positions, so [this gives clients] more opportunities... So most of [the] time [clients that] participate in this program, they have college or above education in their home country... And also, before they joined the program, most of them do not have a Canadian working experience in office administration. Though a few them have working experience in Canada, [they are more] likely doing a labour job or a position that's not related to what they did in their home country.”

This employment counsellor suggests that office administration is a job in demand and that training in this sector would provide more opportunities for immigrant women because the skills they have in their field of expertise tend to be transferable to office administration. Furthermore, the majority of the clients at this program did not have Canadian experience and were working in labour jobs unrelated to their field of expertise. While this program is not directly facilitating jobs that relate to immigrant women’s education and previous work experience, it is offering training for clients looking to easily transfer their skills to a job deemed in demand. This training program offers opportunities for immigrant women to obtain jobs that do not require Canadian work experience, thereby mitigating one major barrier that prevents immigrant women from entering the Canadian labour market.

Barrier: Channelling Immigrant Women into Job Sectors

There are implications due to the ways in which IRCC funded pilot programs are designed to differentiate women who have higher education and English levels and women who have less education and lower English levels. Consequently, the ways in which immigration processes select and favour immigrants based on human capital is reflected in some of these IRCC funded programs. Two specific programs funded by IRCC pre-determined that those with

higher education and English levels would receive services that supported them in obtaining jobs related to their field of expertise, and those with less education and English levels would receive training in specific job sectors. This categorization of immigrant women by skill can lead immigrant women into segregated sectors within the labour market. As I learned from one upper level manager, the categorization of immigrant women by skill is connected to their immigration process.

“So most [clients] are spouses of economic class immigrants... there's typically more challenges with employment services for people who have immigrated through family class immigration. So typically, if we just look at an overall demographic of women who have come through family class immigration, there's typically lower English language skills, lower amounts of work experience, etc.”

The majority of immigrant women receiving employment services are spouses of economic class immigrants and while they experience barriers to employment, immigrant women who arrived in Canada through family class immigration experience further barriers to employment. Those arriving through family class tend to have lower English levels and less work experience. Immigrant women who are more likely to be eligible for the IRCC funded pilot program for skilled immigrants are spouses of economic class rather than family class immigrants because they are more likely to have higher education and English levels. As was outlined by an upper level manager, one of the employment programs funded by IRCC is designed specifically for immigrant women with post-secondary education and a high English proficiency of CLB level 7.

“So this program specifically looks at clients who already have post secondary education but who are facing barriers to labour market integration, a lot of times through needing to make a career change or through barriers because of licensure and certification. So they all are coming to us with experience, so with education, and then we are working to help them either redirect the path that short term path that is going to connect them with their medium and long term goals or help them decide what steps they need to take to continue on in the profession that they were in prior to immigration.”

As described in this quote, immigrant women who already have higher education and work experience in their field of expertise require minimal support from service providers. These less barriered clients receive support mainly through employer engagement opportunities and information about the Canadian culture and workplace. In contrast, immigrant women without post-secondary education are ineligible for support through this employment program to explore potential job opportunities. IRCC has created a pathway towards employment for immigrant women with lower education and English proficiency through a program that offers training for entry-level jobs in commercial cleaning and institutional food service, such as cleaning offices and baking. Unlike the former program, the latter does not attempt to match these lower skilled immigrant women with secure well-paying jobs. This demonstrates how employment programs do not give the same opportunities to women who may face significant barriers as compared to the support that is provided to clients with fewer barriers.

There are clear differences between the two programs funded by IRCC to address barriers to employment for immigrant women. These differences determine the employment trajectory and type of jobs clients will obtain after completing the programs, as one employment counsellor described:

“We chose two high demand industries; that's cleaning and food services and [clients] grow within these companies or their own self employed business...So these [are] for the lower level ladies...So they're going to do entry level cleaning, not residential, just commercial cleaning. And the heavy duty [cleaning] is the one that has big vacuums or washing floors [with] those big machines. And for food, we have baking, so they're going to bake. We have food services, that's like a kitchen assistant that will help with prep of food and serve, and the other one is like food manufacturing, so it's all entry level for these ones. And for the [skilled immigrant women] one, [job outcome] varies because we have doctors, dentists, accountants, IT, you know HR, a lot of different areas. So it would not be entry level but management level jobs in those varied areas.”

This employment counsellor highlights how immigrant women with less education and English proficiency are limited to two job sectors that are segregated. There are different pathways to

economic integration that IRCC funded pilot programs are channelling immigrant women into based on education and English proficiency. As previously mentioned, employment programs by design lead to client selection through eligibility restrictions. In order to economically integrate those with less education and English proficiency, the Federal government has designed a program that is channelling immigrant women into jobs that are deemed high in demand. While immigrant women can choose to participate in this program, by not offering other pathways towards employment, this is a way of further segregating women into specific sectors of the labour market. Similar to the two IRCC funded programs, the municipal funded training program mentioned above also channels immigrant women into office administration jobs, a sector that is highly feminized. By creating an immigrant women program that offers training in a segregated job sector, the labour market is further segregated and racialized as jobs are being saturated by immigrant women. More importantly, the majority of immigrant women at this program have college or above education and either lack Canadian experience or are already in jobs unrelated to their previous field of work. This program does not address these barriers that immigrant women are experiencing to obtain employment in their previous field of work. As a result, this program can prevent immigrant women from accessing jobs related to their career goals and create a cycle of women in jobs unrelated to their field of expertise.

Contradictory to these jobs deemed high in demand, an upper level manager suggests that there is a demand in different sectors.

“So now that we've transitioned into this kind of post COVID [pandemic] environment, we still do see a need... We see supply chain positions, human resources, IT very strong IT demands right now, still hiring in financial services and banking. So we're still seeing hiring going on.”

While there may be a demand in office administration, food service, and commercial cleaning, this manager suggests that there are demands in sectors that are not highly feminized. However,

there are no programs specifically for immigrant women who are interested in these fields, which limits opportunities for immigrant women and segregates the labour market. One organization offers programs in those high demand fields and are open to both newcomer women and men.

5.3 Individualized Services

Facilitator: Meeting Individual Needs and Going Beyond Employment Services

While eligibility and design of employment programs posed challenges for immigrant women to access employment services, the majority of service providers worked with immigrant women and catered to their individual needs to find and obtain employment. Organizations typically offered a range of employment support that could be tailored and responsive to women's individual employment seeking needs, including job search strategies, resume writing skills, mock interviews, professional networking, job placement, and workshops. Service providers promoted connection and engagement between immigrant women and hiring managers. These connections were essential to building employment opportunities for immigrant women, whether through job placements or job offers.

Workshops were often offered in partnership with other agencies to provide various information on employment and health. For example, some organizations partnered with Legal Aid to provide employment standards and health and safety information. Other service providers partnered with Toronto Public Health and brought in nurses to provide information on women's health. Furthermore, some organizations partnered with other employment agencies and community services so that they could fill gaps in services that they themselves could not offer. For example, if some employment programs did not offer skills training, they would refer clients to other training programs to upgrade their skills for a job. While all of these organizations

offered settlement services, one organization partnered with settlement agencies to provide settlement support at their organization. Although all of these services are essential to building the skills necessary for employment, there are two components that are significant in relation to immigrant women finding, obtaining, and maintaining employment: Canadian culture and professional networking.

A manager of an immigrant women program explained the importance of teaching about Canadian workplace culture:

“Sometimes, particularly immigrant women, when they come in, they have all of their educational backgrounds and their technical skills. But sometimes learning Canadian culture and Canadian workplace culture is a soft skill that they may not be aware of...So what we do as part of our curriculum, as part of our cohort, is actually go through different scenarios of what [Canadian culture] could look like, and what that can sound like, and actually give women the opportunity to see examples of what those are. So we are able to provide them with a better understanding when they do enter the Canadian workplace... [including what they will] encounter and... how to deal with different situations when they do arrive.”

As described here, the majority of the service providers taught immigrant women about the Canadian culture and workplace because a significant part of economic integration was understanding professional etiquette and attitudes. This knowledge of Canadian workplace culture was often referred to by participants as “soft skills” that immigrant women lacked. Information on the Canadian culture was a way to inform clients about expectations within the workplace, for example, what was expected of them when they were at work and what they should expect within the workplace. Service providers explained that immigrant women were unaware of the workplace culture that Canadians are already aware of. Knowledge of the Canadian culture and workplace was described as essential to obtaining and maintaining jobs.

A program facilitator at another immigrant women program echoed this manager and described the Canadian culture.

“They didn't know how to do a LinkedIn profile. They didn't know how to do a resume. They didn't know the Canadian culture. That's one of the biggest workshops that I do. And especially for refugees, for example, to understand the culture, like, what are the expectations? What are the norms? How do you greet somebody? You know, why are people [behaving a certain way]? What does that say?...They're trying to understand the world. And that's a new world that they're entering, which is Canada... sometimes people didn't know why an employer was unhappy or they didn't understand why other employees weren't friendly...Again, that was the Canadian culture piece that they were kind of missing. So they wanted to know, why do people act like this? Or if they're giving me these cues, what does that mean?”

This awareness of the Canadian culture and workplace was especially helpful to clients who obtained employment but struggled to maintain the job because of conflicts within the workplace that resulted from misunderstandings. Service providers remarked that in their experience of supporting immigrant women, some women sometimes came across differently to their coworkers or managers from what they intended, or that they were sometimes unaware of why people behaved in certain ways. The knowledge of the Canadian culture prepared immigrant women for what is culturally acceptable in the Canadian labour market so that they could overcome the challenges to integrating in the labour market.

Another major factor that service providers identified in their work was supporting immigrant women in developing professional networks through employer engagement and mentoring opportunities. A manager at an organization illustrated:

“We do a lot of social capital development through speed mentoring opportunities, through labour market panels, and bringing in guest speakers. Because as an organization, one of the things that we think is a key factor is just making connections for people. So, we know from all available research that when international experience and international education are evaluated outside of a personal context, that they receive very little compensation or very little value in the labour market. But we know from our experience over programming that once you are in a face to face environment with someone, you can make a much more informed judgment about their ability to quote on quote, fit in your organization. So it's very important to us that we work with clients on that strategic communication and then put them in front of people who can give them direct insight and direct connection into the labour market... If you are confined to searching online through public job boards because you have childcare duties, which are

keeping you at home outside of social settings where you can engage with other professionals, then you are in a pool of individuals with the least returned effort.”

Through employer engagement and professional networking opportunities, immigrant women have increased access to jobs because they have access to potential hiring managers. This manager described how immigrant women can experience challenges to finding employment if their only access to the labour market is through online job boards. Access to employment programs that offer employer engagement opportunities lifts this barrier that immigrant women experience to employment because they are in a larger pool of competitive applicants. These opportunities also close the gap between immigrant women and employers so that employers have a chance to go beyond making judgements from a resume that does not provide a full picture of the job applicant. Immigrant women who experienced challenges in getting interviews are now put in front of employers. Even if these employer engagement opportunities do not open doors to a job immediately, they can still support immigrant women in finding other job opportunities. Service providers suggested that employers who are connected to other hiring managers may refer immigrant women to them or they may offer a job placement which allows clients to obtain Canadian experience. These types of programs were designed to address these challenges specific to immigrant women.

The majority of service providers working directly with immigrant women reported that each client they served was different. Therefore, there was not one general approach or method that would work to meet the needs of all clients. Service providers recognized that often immigrant women experienced multiple barriers when seeking employment (e.g. childcare, English proficiency, marital issues) and that they had to work with each woman differently to address those barriers. The majority of service providers offered intake assessments or needs assessments to understand the challenges immigrant women were experiencing and to support

their needs. When asked to describe a typical day at work, an employment manager responded that settlement counsellors book individual appointments with immigrant women for specialized and individual services. Service providers expressed many times during interviews that the type of support given depended on who the immigrant woman was, how she was positioned socioeconomically, where she was in her search for employment, and where she wanted to be in terms of career goals. When asked about the supports provided in relation to employment, a program facilitator responded:

“Yes, I think really what you want to do is a sort of a holistic kind of approach where you want to see the woman for who she is uniquely and sort of understand her language skills, you want to understand communication. You want to understand her self esteem, where she's coming from. She may be having cultural issues around her own living conditions, [what her] partner wants [for] her [or] doesn't want for her, how much support does she need, does she need housing, finance...And then you're saying to yourself, what are your dreams and goals? So let's look at some exploration around your own career. What are you wanting? Some of them need a job right away, and you have to really be cognizant of that. So we may need to get you a survival job right away. And how fast can we do that? But some of them can explore and maybe look at mentorship, look at apprenticeship, maybe look at different ideas, and see what's out there before making choices.”

Often through intake assessment service providers are able to understand where clients are coming from and how their personal differences influence their experiences in the Canadian labour market. This understanding is important so that service providers can meet clients where they are at and identify the areas in which they need support. Through this holistic approach, this program facilitator highlights that immigrant women are able to explore career options that fit their lifestyle and needs. She suggests that service providers need to be able to meet immigrant women where they are at in order to support them in where they want to be. She touches on multiple points of intersection, including culture, financial security, and marital status, which shape the types of job that clients may need.

These individualized services offered by service providers differed from services offered by other employment programs. A manager of an immigrant women employment program explained how these immigrant women specific programs differ from Employment Ontario programs that do not offer needs assessments to clients because they do not target the specific needs that need to be met in order for immigrant women to successfully integrate into the labour market.

“So there's no really one shoe that fits all the feet of the women that we, that we serve. And I think that's the way it needs to be. I think the flexibility has to be on our end to accommodate their needs. And they're the ones who have to tell us what is it that they're looking for. What is it that they think they need? And it's our role to listen, and to try to do the best to understand... It's because their needs are very specific and very unique compared to the majority of job seekers... If [an immigrant woman] was to show up in an Employment Ontario program [where] everybody's treated equally, she will have to start basically minus two as opposed to even ground zero because the transferable skills are not even there... she will be at a disadvantage [compared to] others. The programs like mine... help them bring up to at least ground zero, ignore level one or level two, right? The environment is more conducive, because of the way the services are structured, and our agreements with IRCC right, where we would do needs assessment. In EO programs, they don't do needs assessment, they, they just do skills matching. They need to get a job and you need to start at ground zero, at least to work through an EO program... We are given other opportunities to do basic training, including language training, that, you know, you will have to get through some other program link or somebody something else to actually be at ground zero.”

This manager suggests that in order for immigrant women to be at the professional working level of native-born Canadians, the various needs of immigrant women need to be met through language services and basic training. She highlights that there is no one model of service delivery that can meet the needs of immigrant women and that it is essential for service providers to accommodate the needs of clients. She suggests that immigrant women are not at “ground zero” compared to others such as native-born Canadians. Specifically, newcomer women face challenges in the labour market that differ from native-born Canadians who may also use Employment Ontario services. As a result, this disadvantage makes it less likely for immigrant

women to find success through Employment Ontario programs because they lack the basic training and language skills that native-born Canadians hold. This manager described that skill matching immigrant women is not sufficient in addressing challenges to labour market integration because it does not address needs. This may explain why immigrant women struggle to find jobs related to their skills and credentials because even if they are matched to jobs related to their specific skills, they may not have the other skills or knowledge required to obtain or maintain employment. As such, employment programs specifically for immigrant women were designed to address barriers to employment and to support immigrant women in overcoming challenges to labour market integration.

Although these employment services and programs offer similar support such as job search strategies, resume and cover letter writing support, mock interviews, job placement opportunities, and employer engagement opportunities, service providers often find themselves providing various other supports through referring services that meet the needs of clients. These supports can include English classes, mental health support, family services, childcare support, domestic violence support, or housing support. Furthermore, service providers working with immigrant women have introduced workshops and information that are geared towards the needs of their clients. Some service providers provided information on potentially inappropriate questions that may be asked by employers during interviews, and how to navigate those situations. For example, some service providers informed immigrant women to not share their SIN numbers, which was sometimes requested by employers before hiring. This demonstrates how the majority of their work with immigrant women was specialized for their clients. Additionally, some service providers and employment services have individualized services where it was possible to accommodate clients. Some service providers acknowledged that there

are challenges immigrant women experience in attending employment programs. Specifically, immigrant women who are primary caregivers and have less supportive partners are more likely to experience challenges in attending programs that run full-time Monday to Friday.

Furthermore, some immigrant women who are financially insecure may experience challenges in taking transportation to attend programs. Consequently, a few programs have recognized this gap in services and have offered tweaked program hours and transportation coverage. Due to COVID-19, one program has become more flexible and reduced the hours of online programming so that clients could take a break for their children. The majority of service providers reported that transitioning to online programs during the COVID-19 pandemic has reduced the barriers to accessing services which can facilitate employment. Furthermore, a settlement counsellor at a smaller organization mentioned that she works around eligibility to prevent turning anyone away from receiving services. She acknowledged that those without stable immigration status are a vulnerable group and that she directs and supports those clients to obtain status, so they are eligible to receive employment services as clients and obtain work.

Barrier: Disregard for Cultural and Religious Practices

While a holistic approach in employment programs allows service providers to address the challenges clients experience in the labour market, offering services that are individualized for immigrant women based on what is seen as gaps comes with limitations. The idea that immigrant women need to practice certain professional etiquette to integrate economically raises questions about whether employers are open to immigrant women's cultural and religious beliefs. Based on service providers' perspectives, it was deemed a personal barrier at an individual level if immigrant women were reluctant to behave in ways that were more acceptable

in the Canadian labour market. Although service providers offered information and workshops on Canadian culture and the workplace, some participants recognized the limitations in offering such services. A manager in an upper level managerial position explained:

“We also have a number of clients...who have their own personal barriers against engaging with men in networking situations and professional situations. And for them to figure out how we are going to navigate the labour market in Canada is quite difficult. So there are, you know, something simple maybe after COVID, we won't go back to shaking hands... But, you know, cultural and religious practices around a handshake surrounding —. You know, we've had clients, [not at this organization], but I've had in my previous experience, declined or leave interviews when there were hiring managers and HR staff because they wouldn't be allowed in the room with the two men. So there's a lot of those kinds of, I wouldn't say there's a lot of that that's actually not a huge problem but where it is a problem it's a big problem.”

This manager acknowledged that there are challenges for immigrant women who practice certain religions or are from a cultural background that prevent them from shaking hands or being alone with men with whom they do not have a familial relationship. The lack of awareness of client's religious beliefs and the lack of other options provided to clients to navigate these situations poses barriers to employment. Although this manager admitted that this issue did not occur frequently, it was considered to be an important issue for those immigrant women on the receiving end of these experiences. This manager also suggested that while physical contact such as shaking hands may be a significant issue, there were simple solutions to address the issue. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals were required to social distance and job interviews were held via online platforms or telephone. This delivery model could be an important way to lift barriers for immigrant women who cannot make physical contact with men.

Similarly, an employment manager shared:

“So we were teaching [clients] more cultural information in the workplace... some of those [highly skilled immigrant] ladies they even get a job by themselves, but then to keep it, is harder because they don't know how to behave...So culturally, we, inside a workplace, there's some things that you might perceive or you think is common sense, but in somebody that grew up and was raised in a different [country]... So a typical

example for women, if you have somebody that's a man as your coworkers, or somebody that's a man that will report to you. Some of them might be oh, I can't do that, I can't do that because he's a man right. So those kind of, they get intimidated by this cultural bias that they have, you know. And they need to understand, you might have a boss that's younger than you and that's okay...But eye contact, something basic, a lot of women they can't do that because of their religion, but you have to do [it]... so they need to understand those little things. Right? These are very basics.”

This manager suggests that immigrant women who do not have the cultural awareness necessary in the Canadian labour market may struggle to maintain their jobs. She also highlights that although clients cannot do certain things because of their religion, such as make eye contact with men, they have to engage in these behaviours to maintain professional relationships in the workplace. Although service providers suggested that the lack of awareness of the Canadian culture among immigrant women can lead to situations where immigrant women are not coming across as they intend, service providers did not offer other ways to navigate these situations. While educating clients about the Canadian culture may be viewed as a facilitator to prepare clients for the work environment, this practice did not completely remove barriers for those who experience challenges in the workplace due to religious and cultural practices.

Although challenges remain for service providers to fully meet the needs of immigrant women, there has been growing awareness around the importance of recognizing the intersecting identities of immigrant women. While an intersectional approach was acknowledged and supported by the participants in this study, challenges do remain with regard to accommodating immigrant women's individual needs and barriers to employment. One settlement counsellor explained how her organization was working towards integrating an intersectional lens in their work to truly understand the challenges that client's experience during economic integration and settlement:

“So when I say systemic [barriers] like that, those are the things I'm talking about, how can we as community service workers incorporate, you know, our understanding of

barriers in terms of like race, gender, ability, sexuality, etc., so that we can better address it with our clients. It's nice to say like, oh, yeah, of course, we welcome everybody... [but] if you're not really trans inclusive or if you're not understanding of how their barriers to accessing work and employment are going to be different from, you know, someone who identifies as a cis straight woman...those are two completely different experiences. And so, systemically, they'll experience those things differently...as an organization, and we need to do more of that...Of course, we're inclusive, but not necessarily, like not if we're not really understanding the fact that systemic barriers are more than just like race it's more than just like, you know, there's so many different facets to it and...how are we going to address that.”

This settlement counsellor explains that using an intersectional lens can lead to a greater understanding of how barriers to employment are different for immigrant women, depending on their social location. For example, this settlement counsellor described how gender identity can create different experiences for women in the labour market and different barriers to employment. She suggests that understanding systemic barriers is not limited to acknowledging just race and that multiple factors shape the experiences of immigrant women. Therefore, examining one factor such as race leaves out various other factors that can shape the labour market experiences and barriers to employment for clients. She suggests that in order to address the barriers, in terms of race, gender, ability, and others, service providers need to be able to understand the ways in which power and oppression operates. The following chapter will draw from the literature to discuss the three major themes in this study.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I discuss the main findings of this study and situate this research within previous literature. First, I consider the role of macro-level funding and structures at all three levels of government that maintain unequal opportunities for immigrant women in the labour market. I then discuss how immigration processes impact the employment trajectories and

outcomes of immigrant women. Lastly, I consider the processes and policies operating at the meso level, within employment services for immigrant women.

6.1 Summary of Key Findings

The ten qualitative interviews with service providers led to the development of three overarching themes. First, it was revealed that IRCC is increasingly allocating funding for immigrant women-specific employment programs, which are designed to minimize barriers to employment through job counselling, building professional networks, and providing information about the Canadian culture and workplace. However, lack of funding for employment programs restrict immigrant women's access to services due to insufficient childminding support and limited seating for programs. The second theme, the categorization of immigrant women by skill, demonstrated the ways in which employment services and service providers aim to support immigrant women in obtaining jobs that are related to their field of expertise. Nonetheless, some programs by design categorize immigrant women by credentials and English proficiency, which can result in racialized and gendered occupational segregation. The final theme, individualized services, highlights how service providers' ability to cater to the specific needs of immigrant women was a major factor in creating pathways to employment and reducing labour market barriers. Even so, due to neoliberal restructuring of employment services, the quality of service provision is often hindered.

6.2 Situating My Research in Employment Services Literature

My research adds to the existing literature on employment services within the settlement sector. Previous research with newcomer immigrants in Canada suggests that although settlement agencies offer pre-employment support (e.g. resume writing, interview preparation), there are

gaps in services to meet the differing needs of immigrants and refugees (Huot et al., 2016; Senthanaar et al., 2019; Zuberi, 2018). One study examining immigrants' experiences of utilizing employment services in Vancouver revealed that support was not tailored to meet the full needs of clients (Zuberi, 2018). Another study found that immigrant women considered information provided by agencies to be helpful, but also overly general and short (McCoy & Masuch, 2008). My research found that the majority of service providers acknowledged that the immigrant women they worked with had differing needs. Most providers utilized needs assessment or intake assessments to understand where clients were coming from, who they were, and what they needed. This holistic approach considered the intersectional identities of clients, including the intersecting multi-faceted barriers to employment that they experienced. Service providers were able to support immigrant women by going beyond employment services and also offering a range of settlement and social supports including supporting clients within the organization, and referring them to mental health, domestic violence, and housing supports. The majority of service providers who were interviewed offered individualized services to immigrant women because they believed there was no one-size-fits-all model within employment services. However, many participants acknowledged that due to funding constraints, they were unable to meet the full demands of clients.

6.3 Funding for Outcome-Based Programs and Neoliberal Restructuring

The majority of service providers who were interviewed worked for outcome-based employment programs. These are programs that receive funding for their ability to produce outcomes or clinical performance (Gewurtz et al., 2015), such as employing clients. This research demonstrates that service providers and employment programs play an essential role in

reducing the various barriers immigrant women face in securing employment. Neudorf (2016) explains that outcomes indicate the successfulness of service provision. As was revealed in my document analysis, IRCC funded programs must contribute to outcomes that lead to: “Clients acquire[ing] knowledge, skills, and connections to prepare for the Canadian labour market,” “Clients participat[ing] in the Canadian labour market,” and the “Successful[] integrat[ion] and settl[ment] [of] clients” (Immigration, Refugees, Citizenship and Canada, 2018, “Outcomes,” para.1). Under this model, in order to receive funding, programs had to demonstrate that their services could effectively employ immigrant women. Sector-specific employment programs for immigrant women had to produce outcomes that reflected the number of clients employed in those positions. For programs that focused on immigrant women finding general employment, outcomes could include any job position. Furthermore, for programs that prepared immigrant women for jobs related to their skills, they had to produce outcomes that included entry level positions, or as some service providers described, lower level positions.

Rudman et al. (2017) suggest that “given the narrow definition of successful outcomes, service providers [can] simultaneously manage the numbers and exercise discretion so that they can achieve other outcomes that are preparatory for system-defined outcomes” (p.72). My research echoes Rudman et al.’s assertion and highlights that the ambiguous nature of reporting outcomes shapes the way in which we view the effectiveness of employment programs. Specifically, outcome-based employment programs can appear effective, when in fact, they may not accurately match immigrant women to their field of expertise. Moreover, these programs may disseminate and showcase outcomes that are not actually meaningful for immigrant women with regard to obtaining secure well-paying jobs within the sectors that they want to work in. My research reveals that within outcome-based employment programs, funders are limited in their

knowledge of the type of jobs that immigrant women obtain after completing the programs.

Creese and Wiebe (2012) suggest that government directives under the outcome-based model measure accountability of programs as the number of clients employed at the end of programs, rather than the types of jobs clients are employed in. This is a concern because it implies the limited capacity of employment programs to match immigrant women's skills and education to their field of expertise. As my research found, though some service providers have had success with preparing immigrant women for positions related to their field of work, there are gaps in the outcome reporting process. Although outcomes are being presented as indicators of successful economic integration and employment, the jobs that are reflected in these outcomes can represent precarious work for some clients. As indicated by Rudman et al. (2011), it's necessary to go "beyond an overall valuing of numerical performance targets to critical considerations of what 'outcomes' come to be valued and counted and who has a say in defining outcomes" (p.73).

Outcome-based employment programs under a neoliberal system are performance management techniques for governing and "disciplining" service providers, to improve the effectiveness of services (Rudman et al., 2017). Neoliberal tenants such as "privatization, devolution of government responsibilities in social welfare production to non-state actors, the promotion of free-market principles in the non-profit sector, and the marketization of social service provision" have significantly shaped the settlement service and employment service sector (Mukhtar et al., 2016, p.391). As a result, neoliberal restructuring has led to underfunding (Mukhtar et al., 2016), work intensification, and increased insecurity for service providers and service users (Rudman et al., 2017). My research highlights how neoliberal restructuring has led to underfunding, increased workloads, reduced capacity of service providers, competition between agencies for funding, and decreased collaboration, which all impact the quality of

employment service delivery. This was apparent in my study when service providers discussed the ways in which organizations competed for funding and how this impacted the effectiveness of services in meeting the needs of immigrant women. Due to increased competition for funding, service providers experienced situations in which other organizations were reluctant to refer and potentially lose clients. Outcome-based programs also impacted service delivery because in order to meet outcomes or the numbers set by funders, some service providers expressed how caseloads intensified and negatively impacted their ability to give their full attention to all clients. This finding also echoes Rudman et al. (2017) who found that service providers trying to meet the expected numbers as outlined by their funders resulted in work intensification and higher caseloads; the authors connected these circumstances to the introduction of neoliberal values in employment services. This impact has been noted by Creese and Wiebe (2012) who suggested that due to neoliberal restructuring, immigrant employment services now focus on government directives that provide funding on the basis of outcomes, such as the number of service users employed after the program, regardless of the type of job. As a result, Creese and Wiebe (2012) argue that settlement services and employment programs channel immigrants into low-wage jobs as a way to boost the success of their programs and justify their funding and existence. In short, and as ways illuminated through my research, employment programs work to meet unrealistic outcomes and as a result, immigrant women are more likely to be employed in jobs that can lead to quick employability or allow for the transference of skills, regardless of whether it matches their field of expertise.

Hence, some service providers are falling short in matching immigrant women to positions related to their field of expertise or skills. This gap in service delivery shifts the moral responsibility onto individuals (immigrant women). Neoliberalism reinforces that “what happens

to an individual is their personal responsibility and ‘choice’” (Harvey, 2006, as cited in Gerlach, 2018) and that social issues, including unemployment or underemployment, are shaped by individuals. This type of social, political, and economic philosophy puts the onus on the immigrant woman to overcome structural and institutional barriers and independently obtain employment. In a neoliberal context, immigrant women are left with the “choice” of accepting low-paying, precarious, or entry level jobs, or taking on the individual responsibility of obtaining additional support (e.g. skills training) to find the secure, well paying employment they had initially sought. Essentially, neoliberalism individualizes the issue of unemployment (Rudman et al., 2017). Immigrant women must demonstrate that they are “responsible” by participating in programs that offer resume writing, job counselling, and networking (Rudman et al., 2017). This notion of “responsibilizing” individuals is the idea that interventions should prevent individuals from depending on welfare and transform individuals into self-reliant and productive citizens (Schram et al. 2010, as cited in Rudman et al., 2017). To summarize, when barriers to employment for immigrant women are considered through a neoliberal lens, individuals are positioned as having full autonomy over their labour market outcomes. This lens is problematic because it does not take into consideration the sociopolitical and economic conditions, that my research highlights, which may hinder immigrant women’s efforts to obtain well-paying secure employment.

6.4 Immigration Processes and Immigrant Selection Based on Human Capital

As was highlighted through this research, Canadian immigration processes tend to create a pool of immigrant women arriving as dependents of male principal applicants, which creates various challenges for immigrant women during settlement. A Statistics Canada report shows

that in 2013, of the 54.1% of female economic class immigrants, 19.7% were principal applicants and 34.4% were spouses or dependents of a principal applicant, and 34.3% arrived through family class immigration (Hudon, 2015). As these statistics demonstrate, the majority of immigrant women are arriving as dependants of primary applicants and this creates challenges for those women. Immigrant women arriving in Canada as spouses of economic class applicants experience disadvantages in the labour market compared to primary male and female economic principal applicants (Bonikowska & Hou, 2017). Additionally, wives and common-law partners of family class immigrants experience more barriers to labour market integration than spouses of economic class applicants; spouses of economic class applicants have higher levels of education and English levels, and higher employment and earnings than family class immigrant women after arriving to Canada (Bonikowska & Hou, 2017). This suggests that when economic class applicants are selected based on human capital, their spouses tend to have higher levels of human capital and labour market involvement as well, compared to immigrant women arriving through family class. As a result, immigrant women arriving to Canada through family class immigration tend to experience more challenges to obtaining employment. Employment programs that select immigrant women with higher education, work experience, and English proficiency indirectly continue to marginalize immigrant women, especially those arriving as family class immigrants. The ways in which immigration processes select and favour immigrants based on human capital is reflected in some IRCC funded programs. This categorization is produced when Federal funding for programs create different eligibility requirements for programs that work on skills matching or career exploration for skilled immigrant women, and programs that work on transferring skills or training for jobs deemed high in demand. To summarize, the immigration

processes mentioned above create a pool of immigrant women who are already at a disadvantage when they enter the labour market.

6.5 Channeling Immigrant Women into Racialized and Gender Segregated Sectors

Adding to the issue mentioned above, my research found that program design can direct immigrant women into racialized and gendered sectors such as office administration, food service, and commercial cleaning. This finding aligns with previous research, which found that employment programs channel immigrants into any job (Creese and Wiebe, 2012). As participants articulated in my study, one method used by IRCC funded programs is to categorize immigrant women with lower education and English proficiency as unskilled. Bauder (2003) argues that settlement agencies and service providers “all exert a certain, if varying, degree of influence over matching immigrants with jobs” and “become labour market gatekeepers” (p. 416). In a Vancouver study examining service provider’s perspectives of immigrants’ work motivation, Bauder (2003) found that skilled workers were perceived to be professionally ambitious while refugees and family class immigrants were represented as apathetic. This skewed perception justifies not giving them the same opportunity to explore career goals and job options. Instead, immigrant women with lower education and English proficiency are channelled into entry level positions, or as Creese and Wiebe (2012) describe, the “lowest echelons of the labour market” (p.59). Similarly, Senthanaar et al. (2019) found that refugees with lower English proficiency were referred to low-skilled and low-income positions by employment programs. This raises questions about the government’s role, specifically IRCC, in facilitating economic integration of immigrant women. Currently, government funding initiatives are directed at training immigrant women with less education and lower English proficiency for two sectors

perceived to be high in demand: food and cleaning services. These two sectors can be described as cheap labour that is highly feminized and that reinforces gender normative domestic responsibilities (Premji et al., 2014). Premji et al. (2014) argues that “precarious types of jobs are systematically offloaded to women, particularly immigrant women and women from racialized backgrounds” and that the “feminization and racialization of such occupations trigger a further decline in the wage rate, job security and social value of these occupations” (p.136).

Organizations that design employment programs for immigrant women, to train them in specific sectors that are already segregated, can further divide the labour market and reinforce these gender norms.

Compared to non-racialized women, racialized immigrant women are over-represented in administrative support, waste management, and remediation services (Block & Galabuzi, 2011, as cited in Liu, 2019). As my study found, one municipal program offered training in office administration for immigrant women and served a majority of clients with post-secondary education. Rather than offering employment programs for job sectors that are not highly feminized or were related to their skills, this organization promoted the uptake of a low-skill and low-wage job. The increased saturation of immigrant women in office administration, as Premji et al. (2014) argues, can decrease the income, security, and social value of feminized jobs. Additionally, McCoy and Masuch (2008) suggest that the “predominance of women in clerical and low-level administrative work, and the long association of these jobs with women, make them plausible entry-level jobs for immigrant women with employment backgrounds in business professions and management” (p.201). McCoy and Masuch (2008) argue that although low-level administrative work is an improvement from food service and retail jobs, these positions offer little growth and are a form of underemployment for immigrant women who have previously

held jobs in higher positions prior to immigration. Hence, training immigrant women for jobs in office administration, food service, and cleaning remains an issue because it creates a cycle of precarious work or low-wage jobs.

6.6 Perceiving Immigrant Women as Insufficiently Skilled

My research found that immigrant women with higher education and English proficiency levels are deemed to have the potential to obtain jobs related to their previous field of work. However, these immigrant women are still seen as lacking in some areas, specifically their soft skills and knowledge of Canadian culture. It was also widely acknowledged by service providers in my study that it is unlikely for immigrant women to obtain jobs related to their previous field of work, beyond entry level, when they first enter the labour market. While the service providers in my study suggested that this can be attributed to immigrant women's lack of Canadian work experience, some researchers suggest that service providers focus on getting these women into entry level jobs because they may lack the training to support immigrant women in obtaining higher positions (Gewurtz et al., 2015).

An older study with immigrant women found that government funded settlement and employment programs did not support immigrant women in finding jobs related to their previous field of work, including entry-level positions (McCoy & Masuch, 2008). As a result, some of the immigrant women sought survival jobs in retail, food service, and cleaning (McCoy & Masuch, 2008). My research suggests that employment programs that focus on facilitating jobs related to immigrant women's field of expertise can decrease unemployment and underemployment among immigrant women. Service providers suggested that immigrant women can work their way up to higher positions because an entry-level position was their foot in the door. However, it is not

guaranteed that they will move up, especially because immigrant women also face systemic barriers in moving to higher positions. Previous studies demonstrate that immigrants experience a “glass ceiling,” which is a desired management position that cannot be attained (Wong & Wong, 2006, as cited in Guo, 2013) and this can be driven by “glass doors” which are barriers that prevent immigrants from accessing higher wage jobs (Pendakur & Woodcock, 2010, as cited in Guo, 2013).

Lastly, portraying immigrant women as lacking the “soft skills” necessary raises questions about multiculturalism and inclusivity in the Canadian labour market. Sakamoto et al. (2010) suggests that acquiring soft skills requires “individual expressions of culture (including linguistic variations when speaking English) [to] be toned down in order to fit into the Canadian work environment” and “knowing how and when to express cultural and/or linguistic difference may also be part of demonstrating competencies in soft skills” (p.148). Employment programs were designed to provide information on the Canadian culture and workplace. However, some service providers suggested that it is the responsibility of immigrant women to act and behave in ways deemed professional in the Canadian workplace. Some of the behaviours that were discussed in this research included shaking hands and making eye contact with men, which could pose serious challenges for some women due to their religious and cultural practices and beliefs. Encouraging immigrant women to conform to Canadian culture and the workplace is highly problematic. Rather than suggesting other ways of navigating these challenges and offering culturally sensitive services, immigrant women are taught to conform to the Canadian culture in ways that conflict with their religious and cultural practices.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

In this final chapter, I present the implications of my research for service delivery and social work, as well as policy recommendations to improve labour market outcomes for immigrant women in the GTA. The limitations of my research and possibilities for future research are also considered.

7.1 Implications and Recommendations

There are some significant policy and practical implications of my research findings for employment services, labour market policies, immigration processes, social work practice, and other related policies. These implications will indicate the importance of applying an intersectional lens when examining the barriers that immigrant women face when seeking employment.

Increase Access to Employment Services and Improve Job Outcomes

Employment programs, through design and eligibility, remain flawed in being accessible and meeting the full needs of immigrant women. Immigrant women experience barriers to employment because of family caregiving obligations, lack of supportive male partners, and the lack of affordable childcare (Premji et al., 2014; Premji & Shakya, 2017). These barriers to employment are also the challenges immigrant women face when accessing employment programs and services. Employment programs funded by IRCC state that their goals are to decrease barriers such as gender and race discrimination, reduce precarious and low-income work, and address issues related to affordable childcare (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2018). In order to do this, IRCC funded programs need to first ensure that barriers to accessing employment programs are truly addressed. Programs and services should take an

intersectional approach that highlights how immigrant women experience various challenges in accessing services. My research indicates that employment services that are not tailored to meet the specific needs of immigrant women, may remain inaccessible to them. Some of the ways that programs can negate these challenges is by offering online employment assistance or supporting immigrant women in accessing subsidized childcare. My research found that due to COVID-19, service providers delivering employment services online reported greater participation by mothers. This demonstrates how online programs reduce the barriers to accessing employment services for women with childcare and family obligations. Through such flexible program delivery, programs can ensure that the needs of some of the most disadvantaged clients are being met. Programs can also improve eligibility by offering services to immigrants with work permits because IRCC funded programs were limited to permanent residents and conventional refugees.

My research signifies the necessity of employment programs and services to move away from providing general employment support, which promote job sectors that are gendered and racialized. They can do this by creating immigrant women specific programs that do not facilitate the attainment of jobs in highly segregated sectors of the labour market. Instead, programs should offer opportunities that match the skills of immigrant women and labour market demand. This would improve the chances of career advancement for immigrant women. Programs for skilled women can become more inclusive by offering career exploration services to women with lower education, rather than training them for racialized and gender segregated jobs, to break the cycle of women in precarious work. Services can provide English training for those with lower CLB levels so that clients are able to understand the labour market information and participate in programs. Lastly, incorporating post-program supports to follow

up with clients can help determine the effectiveness of employment programs in supporting clients with long-term secure employment.

Increase Government Funding and Long-Term Agreements for Programs

Though service providers continue to work with immigrant women to overcome challenges to labour market participation and integration, they are constrained by government funding and policies. Funding towards more skills training programs and paid job placements can help connect immigrant women to their field and bridge foreign credentials. Funding should not focus on entry-level positions that cannot guarantee career advancement. Instead, funding should be directed towards training job counsellors to improve professional networks beyond low-level and entry-level positions. This practice can move clients beyond the glass ceiling. Along with this, adequate funding should be provided to ensure that the ratio of employment counsellors to clients is manageable. This can prevent the quality of services from being hindered by higher workloads and burnout among service providers. Additionally, funding should be directed to programs that educate employers about the benefits of employing immigrants and the skills they bring.

Furthermore, adequate funding should be consistent for long-term employment programs that are not solely based on program outputs (e.g. number of participants who completed the program) or arbitrary outcomes that do not tell the whole story about program effectiveness (e.g. number of participants who were employed post-program). Program effectiveness should also take into consideration the support provided through services and referrals for housing, subsidized childcare, mental health support, and more, because these services all intersect with meeting the needs of immigrant women who are seeking employment. Additionally, rather than

meeting certain targets for employment outcomes, funding should go towards programs that focus on matching immigrant women to their career goals and skills. Reports on outcomes should consider the types of jobs clients are employed in after programs are done, to really ensure that services are improving the well-being of clients through secure employment.

Increase Minimum Wage

New policies should be put in place to address issues related to precarious work and how to improve the conditions of these jobs, including increasing minimum wage and introducing a living wage. Government officials should reassess the living wage within the Canadian labour market and employers should offer employment benefits for part-time workers, contract workers, and live-in care workers. While the goal of employment programs should be to support immigrant women in obtaining and maintaining employment, it is necessary to acknowledge that some immigrant women may need a job immediately, and often those jobs are characterized by precarious work and a low-wage. In some cases, immigrant women may be in abusive relationships and/or may be financially insecure and therefore require a job immediately; these women need jobs that are accessible. In order to support immigrant women with these types of jobs, minimum wage needs to be increased so that women can earn a living wage.

Implement a Universal Childcare Program

Rather than pushing the responsibility to provide childcare support onto employment programs, a universal childcare program should be implemented to reduce barriers for women. The majority of service providers highlighted that the lack of affordable childcare was a significant challenge for immigrant women to obtain work and attend employment programs

because they are usually the primary caregivers. Furthermore, many immigrant women lack social networks and the support of family to help provide childcare after immigrating to Canada. In order for immigrant women with children to participate in the labour market, they require access to affordable childcare.

Improve Immigration Processes

Immigrant women arriving through family class experience the most disadvantages in the labour market because they typically arrive with lower levels of English and educational attainment. Additionally, there are more immigrant women arriving as dependents or spouses of economic class primary applicants, rather than as primary applicants. As a result, they too may not have the level of education and English proficiency necessary to qualify for higher-wage jobs. Immigration processes should work towards creating more equitable selection by ensuring that more immigrant women are arriving as primary applicants. Furthermore, immigration embassies should provide more realistic information about the realities of employment in Canada and the challenges that immigrants may experience.

Address Labour Market Discrimination

Due to lack of Canadian work experience, newcomers struggle to find jobs in their previous field of work (Wilson-Forsberg, 2015). My research highlights the need for policies to address the discrimination that immigrant women experience in the labour market due to requiring Canadian experience to secure employment. The requirement of Canadian experience is argued to portray skilled immigrants as deficient without explicitly referring to race and social factors (Bhuyan et al, 2017; Sakamoto et al. 2010). Along with previous researchers (Bhuyan et

al., 2017; Creese & Weebie, 2012; Taylor, 2018) and the Ontario Human Rights Commission (2013), I consider the requirement for Canadian experience in non-regulated jobs as a form of discrimination whereby immigrants are deskilled and their skills are devalued. To address this discrimination, it is necessary to improve the Canadian Multiculturalism Act and Employment Equity Act, to acknowledge this requirement for Canadian experience as discrimination. Under the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (1985), Federal institutions must “ensure that Canadians of all origins have an equal opportunity to obtain employment and advancement in those institutions” (Ministry of Justice, 2020a, p.4). However, the requirement for Canadian experience by employers removes equal opportunities to obtain employment and career advancement.

Furthermore, the purpose of the Employment Equity Act (1995) is to:

“achieve equality in the workplace so that no person shall be denied employment opportunities or benefits for reasons unrelated to ability and, in the fulfilment of that goal, to correct the conditions of disadvantage in employment experienced by women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities by giving effect to the principle that employment equity means more than treating persons in the same way but also requires special measures and the accommodation of differences” (Ministry of Justice, 2020b, p.1).

This Act claims to improve the oppressive conditions of women and members of visible minorities within the labour market by acknowledging that these groups require accommodations for their differences. However, my research highlights that immigrant women experience disadvantages due to their differences in the labour market and that employment programs and service providers maintain these disadvantages by channeling immigrant women into segregated jobs. Furthermore, employment service providers encourage immigrant women to assimilate by behaving in ways that are accepted in the Canadian culture and workplace. Improving these legislations by implementing anti-discriminatory policies would encourage employers to

recognize the foreign credentials and job experience of immigrants. This could ensure a more inclusive labour market that accepts religious and cultural practices of immigrant women, rather than requiring immigrant women to conform to Canadian culture in the labour market.

Implications for Social Work Practice

As social workers, understanding the intersections of race, gender, immigration status, language, and more, can shed light on issues facing immigrant women in the context of employment. More importantly, this understanding can reveal the ways in which broader structures, including immigrant-serving employment services, labour market practices, and immigration processes are implicated in the employment trajectories of immigrant women. My research signifies the importance of applying an intersectional lens for examining immigrant women's access to the labour market. In practice, it is critical for social workers to be mindful of the intersectionality of the immigrant women they work with in order to better understand and meet their needs. My research highlights the broader structures and systems that shape immigrant women's employment experiences, in the context of employment services, and barriers that are (re)produced and maintained in relation to race, gender, immigrations status, language, culture, and religion. My research suggests that immigrant women's employment experiences and outcomes cannot be separated from intersecting social factors and the broader sociopolitical and economic context.

Furthermore, my research highlights the consequences for service delivery when hiring untrained frontline workers who are tasked with supporting clients that experience complex barriers to employment. Without professional training and the use of critical frameworks, frontline workers may not have the additional knowledge and skills necessary for navigating the

impacts of structural barriers within employment services. For this reason, it is essential to provide work-related training or to hire trained frontline workers in strength-based approaches, case management, intake assessments, and referrals, to meet the needs of clients. Moreover, during my research and Bachelor of Social Work, I discovered the low representation of social workers within the employment services sector compared to other community-based services (e.g. mental health, domestic violence, family and children). For this reason, schools of social work should consider filling educational gaps and increasing field practicum experience for future social workers in the employment services sector. Such efforts can advance the field of social work and improve the employment outcomes for marginalized individuals. Lastly, social workers can increase advocacy efforts to raise minimum wage and implement a universal childcare program to support immigrant mothers and individuals with survival jobs.

7.2 Possibilities for Further Research

In the process of conducting my research on these relatively new immigrant women-specific employment programs, I felt that further research was required. Future research about how immigrant women perceive and benefit from immigrant women-specific employment programs are necessary to determine their effectiveness.

7.3 Limitations and Reflections

This study has some limitations that should be noted. First, I believe that as the ethnographer, my positionality and social location played a role in how I was perceived by service providers and how they interacted with me, including what they were willing to share or not share with me. For example, service providers may have been hesitant to share certain opinions with me because they may have worried about how I would use their words.

Furthermore, some participants may have withheld some opinions due to my position as an outsider to employment services within the settlement sector. Despite this, within my research, I represented the voices of service providers and maintained my ethical responsibility to use this knowledge to best support immigrant women.

Second, there were limitations related to the sample size. The sample size was not limited to employment programs specifically for immigrant women. This meant that there were inconsistencies in the type of services offered between employment programs for immigrant women, employment services for women, and skills training programs that were accessible to non-immigrant clients. Furthermore, due to COVID-19 restrictions, service providers from two other immigrant women specific programs that I originally recruited were unable to share their experiences and perspectives. This limited the data collected and may have resulted in a less complete picture of the ways in which employment programs for immigrant women operate. However, the two other organizations that were included in the study primarily served immigrant women. This provided a unique perspective of the ways in which different service providers across Toronto are facilitating employment opportunities for immigrant women even if their agency is not specifically targeting immigrant women.

Third, there were limitations related to the service providers and their capacity to speak on their work and issues related to the employment of immigrant women. I had less access to the employment counsellors who worked directly with immigrant women. I was only able to speak to managers in certain organizations who are not currently working directly with immigrant women. This may have been due to COVID-19 and increased demand for service providers working directly with clients and managers feeling they would best be able to offer insight into this research topic. However, these managers provided very important perspectives on the ways

in which programs were organized and delivered. Furthermore, some of the service providers I interviewed had limited time. This was due to the global pandemic and their continuing support of clients. This may have impacted how much they were able to discuss their experiences working with immigrant women. Not to mention, the IRCC funded pilot projects for visible minority immigrant women were relatively new. This meant that service providers may still be developing the ways in which their programs facilitate employment for immigrant women. For instance, some immigrant women may have obtained jobs but their success in retaining these jobs is not yet known.

Most importantly, I was unable to include the immigrant women receiving services from these programs due to time constraints. This meant that I was unable to learn about clients' experiences firsthand. My use of an intersectional lens was limited by the fact that I did not interview the immigrant women. It would have been beneficial to have compared the second-hand perspectives of service providers with the first-hand experience of immigrant women using employment programs and services. In practice, the critical ethnographic methodology should have bridged this gap since it would have included participant observation. Participant observation shows that "social forms is a result of what people do" in comparison to what people intend to do (Simon & Dippo, 1986, p.157-158, as cited in Allan, 2013). Participant observation would have provided additional details of how programs were administered, whether programs matched information provided on organization websites, and how clients were receiving and experiencing the information shared. Unfortunately, this was amended from the study due to COVID-19 social distancing restrictions. This limited the immersion into the context of employment programs and services for immigrant women. Immersion in ethnography allows the researcher to see "from the inside how people lead their lives, how they carry out their daily

rounds of activities, what they find meaningful, and how they do so” (Emerson et al., 1995, p2). Although I was unable to observe the program and the work of service providers, I included additional questions to my in-depth interview to elucidate a picture of how service providers operate in their agencies and do their work with immigrant women. In order to become immersed in the social context, I asked service providers to describe a typical day at work, including what happened at the program, what immigrant women witnessed, what information women received, and how the group was facilitated. This provided invaluable information in the absence of being able to directly observe the program.

Lastly, there are limitations to using intersectionality that should be acknowledged. Although intersectionality allows the researcher to analyze social locations and its relation to power and oppression, it can sometimes be problematic to infer and make the implicit explicit. I reduced the possibility of misinterpreting by asking participants to clarify during interviews. Furthermore, a shortcoming of using intersectionality is that it can be difficult to apply within data collection. For example, it is not practical to ask service providers about all the different immigrant women they have worked with including all their intersecting identities (class, disability, etc.). Hence, in my analysis I focused on the intersections that service providers discussed, including race, gender, immigration status, language, culture, and religion.

7.4 Final Thoughts

As mentioned in my introduction, my interest in this research is rooted in the experience of my own immigrant mother and the many mothers I worked with during my social work placement. The similar experiences and challenges they underwent demonstrated how, despite decades between my mothers’ experiences and theirs, not much has changed in the types of

barriers that immigrant women face when trying to obtain and maintain secure and well-paying jobs in Canada. What has changed is the increasing number of immigrant women specific services. Though this is a step in the right direction, it is only the first step. The recommendations made at the end of this study highlight the need for many more steps, before immigrant women will be treated equally to their Canadian-born counterparts. Until then, I hope to increase my own professional experience by pursuing a career working with immigrant women. This will put me on the frontline of community services so that I can support immigrant women directly, as well as continue to advocate for them through further research. After all, it is easy to conclude a study by demanding change, but it is a lot harder to personally be part of that change.

References

- Allan, K. (2013). Skilling the self: The communicability of immigrants as flexible labour. *Language, migration and social inequalities: A critical sociolinguistic perspective on institutions and work*, 56-78.
[https://books.google.ca/books?hl=en&lr=&id=sD8YAgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA56&dq=Allan,+K.+\(2013\).+Skilling+the+self:+The+communicability+of+immigrants+as+flexible+labour.+Language,+migration+and+social+inequalities:+A+critical+sociolinguistic+perspective+on+institutions+and+work,+56,+78.&ots=sLL5Ua74AS&sig=owj2dlsR2c4FAE1ZmnI9vzCYK7I#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.ca/books?hl=en&lr=&id=sD8YAgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA56&dq=Allan,+K.+(2013).+Skilling+the+self:+The+communicability+of+immigrants+as+flexible+labour.+Language,+migration+and+social+inequalities:+A+critical+sociolinguistic+perspective+on+institutions+and+work,+56,+78.&ots=sLL5Ua74AS&sig=owj2dlsR2c4FAE1ZmnI9vzCYK7I#v=onepage&q&f=false)
- Akkaymak, G. (2017). A Bourdieuan Analysis of Job Search Experiences of Immigrants in Canada. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 18(2), 657–674.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-016-0490-0>
- Bauder, H. (2003). Cultural representations of immigrant workers by service providers and employers. *Journal of International Migration and Integration / Revue de l'integration et de La Migration Internationale*, 4(3), 415–438.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-003-1028-9>
- Bhuyan, R., Jeyapal, D., Ku, J., Sakamoto, I., & Chou, E. (2017). Branding ‘Canadian Experience’ in Immigration Policy: Nation Building in a Neoliberal Era. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 18(1), 47–62. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-015-0467-4>
- Bowleg, L. (2008). When black + lesbian + women = black lesbian woman: The methodological Challenges of qualitative and quantitative intersectionality research. *Sex Roles*, 59, 312-325. doi:10.1007/s11199-008-9400-z

- Branker, R.R. (2017). How Do English-speaking Caribbean Immigrants in Toronto Find Jobs?: Exploring the Relevance of Social Networks. *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 49(3), 51-70. doi:10.1353/ces.2017.0021.
- Caragata, L., & Cumming, S. J. (2011). Lone Mother-led families: Exemplifying the structuring of social inequality. *Sociology Compass*, 5(5), 376-391. doi:10.1111/j.1751-9020.2011.00368.x
- Collins, P. H. (2000). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Creese, G., & Wiebe, B. (2012). “Survival Employment”: Gender and Deskilling among African Immigrants in Canada. *International Migration*, 50(5), 56–76.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2435.2009.00531.x>
- Cranford, C. J., Vosko, L. F., & Zukewich, N. (2003). The gender of precarious employment in Canada. *Relations Industrielles*, 58(3), 454-482. doi:10.7202/007495ar
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). ‘Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics’, *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989, 139-167. Retrieved from
<https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1052&context=ucLf>
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43, 1241-1299. doi:10.2307/1229039
- Danso, R. (2009). Emancipating and empowering de-valued skilled immigrants: What hope does anti-oppressive social work practice offer? *British Journal of Social Work*, 39(3), 539-555. doi:10.1093/bjsw/bcm126
- Davis, A. Y. (1983). *Women, Race & Class*. New York: Vintage Books.

- Davis, K. (2008). Intersectionality as buzzword: A sociology of science perspective on what makes a feminist theory successful. *Feminist Theory*, 9(1), 67-85.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700108086364>
- Dean, J., & Wilson, K. (2009). “Education? It is irrelevant Dean, J., & Wilson, K. (2009). “Education? It is irrelevant to my job now. It makes me very depressed ...”: exploring the health impacts of under/unemployment among highly skilled recent immigrants in Canada. *Ethnicity & Health*, 14(2), 185–204.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13557850802227049>
- Dlamini, N., Anucha, U., & Wolfe, B. (2012). Negotiated Positions: Immigrant Women’s Views and Experiences of Employment in Canada. *Affilia: Journal of Women & Social Work*, 27(4), 420–434. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886109912464479>
- Evans, P. M. (2009). Lone mothers, workfare and precarious employment: Time for a Canadian basic income? *International Social Security Review*, 62(1), 45-63. doi:10.1111/j.1468-246X.2008.01321.x
- Fitzsimmons, S. R., Baggs, J., & Brannen, M. Y. (2020). Intersectional arithmetic: How gender, race and mother tongue combine to impact immigrants’ work outcomes. *Journal of World Business*, 55(1), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2019.101013>
- Flippen, C. (2014). Intersectionality at Work: Determinants of Labor Supply among Immigrant Latinas. *Gender & Society*, 28(3), 404–434. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243213504032>
- Gerlach, A. J., Teachman, G., Laliberte-Rudman, D., Aldrich, R. M., & Huot, S. (2018). Expanding beyond individualism: Engaging critical perspectives on occupation. *Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 25(1), 35–43.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/11038128.2017.1327616>

- Gewurtz, R. E., Cott, C., Rush, B., & Kirsh, B. (2015). How Does Outcome-Based Funding Affect Service Delivery? An Analysis of Consequences Within Employment Services for People Living With Serious Mental Illness. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 42(1), 19–28.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-014-0534-8>
- Gibb, T., & Hamdon, E. (2010). Moving across borders: immigrant women’s encounters with globalization, the knowledge economy and lifelong learning. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 29(2), 185-200. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02601371003616616>
- Government of Canada. (2020). *Guide for Convention Refugees and Humanitarian-Protected Persons Abroad (IMM 6000)*. Retrieved August 19, 2020, from <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/application/application-forms-guides/guide-6000-convention-refugees-abroad-humanitarian-protected-persons-abroad.html>
- Guo, S. (2013). Economic Integration of Recent Chinese Immigrants in Canada’s Second-Tier Cities: The Triple Glass Effect and Immigrants’ Downward Social Mobility. *Canadian Ethnic Studies Journal*, 45(3), 95-115. doi:10.1353/ces.2013.0047.
- Guo, S. (2015). The colour of skill: contesting a racialised regime of skill from the experience of recent immigrants in Canada. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 37(3), 236–250.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0158037X.2015.1067766>
- Hira-Friesen, P. (2018). Immigrants and Precarious Work in Canada: Trends, 2006–2012. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 19(1), 35–57.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-017-0518-0>
- hooks, b. 1984. *Feminist theory: From margin to center*. Boston: South End.

- Hudon, T. (2015). *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report*. Statistics Canada.
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-503-x/2015001/article/14217-eng.htm#a9>
- Hunting, G. (2014). Intersectionality-informed qualitative research: A primer. *Criminology*, 4(1), 1-16. Retrieved August 19, 2020, from
<https://www.ifsee.ulaval.ca/sites/ifsee.ulaval.ca/files/b95277db179219c5ee8080a99b0b91276941.pdf>
- Huot, S., Xiaojie Chen, Christiana King, Painter-Zykmund, E., & Watt, K. (2016). Making difficult decisions: Immigrants' experiences of employment preparation and participation. *Work*, 54(3), 709–720. <https://doi-org.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/10.3233/WOR-162316>
- Jackson, S., & Bauder, H. (2014). Neither temporary, nor permanent: The precarious employment experiences of refugee claimants in Canada. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 27(3), 360-381. doi:10.1093/jrs/fet048
- Kosny, A., Yanar, B., Begum, M., Al-khooly, D., Premji, S., Lay, M. A., & Smith, P. M. (2019). Safe Employment Integration of Recent Immigrants and Refugees. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 21(3), 807–827. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-019-00685-w>
- Ku, J., Bhuyan, R., Sakamoto, I., Jeyapal, D., & Fang, L. (2019). “Canadian Experience” discourse and anti-racialism in a “post-racial” society. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 42(2), 291–310. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2018.1432872>
- Lee, E., & Brotman, S. (2013). SPEAK OUT! Structural Intersectionality and Anti Oppressive

- Practice with LGBTQ Refugees in Canada. *Canadian Social Work Review / Revue Canadienne De Service Social*, 30(2), 157-183. Retrieved August 19, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/43486768
- Li, P. S. (2008). The Role of Foreign Credentials and Ethnic Ties in Immigrants' Economic Performance. *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 33(2), 291-310. <https://doi.org/10.29173/cjs903>
- Liu, J. (2019). The Precarious Nature of Work in the Context of Canadian Immigration: An Intersectional Analysis. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 51(2), 169-185. doi:10.1353/ces.2019.0013.
- Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative Researching*, 2nd Edition. London: Sage Publications.
- McBride, A., Hebson, G., & Holgate, J. (2015). Intersectionality: are we taking enough notice in the field of work and employment relations? *Work, Employment & Society*, 29(2), 331–341. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017014538337>
- McCoy, L., & Masuch, C. (2008). Beyond “Entry-level” Jobs: Immigrant Women and Non-regulated Professional Occupations. *Journal of International Migration and Integration / Revue de l'integration et de La Migration Internationale*, 8(2), 185–206. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-007-0013-0>
- Ministry of Justice. (2020a). Canadian Multiculturalism Act. R.S.C. 1985, c. 24. <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/PDF/C-18.7.pdf>
- Ministry of Justice. (2020b). Employment Equity Act. S.C. 1995, c. 44. <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/PDF/E-5.401.pdf>
- Mukhtar, M., Dean, J., Wilson, K., Ghassemi, E., & Wilson, D. H. (2016). “But Many of These Problems are About Funds...”: The Challenges Immigrant Settlement Agencies (ISAs)

- Encounter in a Suburban Setting in Ontario, Canada. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 17(2), 389–408. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-015-0421-5>
- Ng, R., & Shan, H. (2010). Lifelong learning as ideological practice: an analysis from the perspective of immigrant women in Canada. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 29(2), 169–184. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02601371003616574>
- Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2013). *Policy on removing the “Canadian experience” barrier*. Ontario Human Rights Commission. <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-removing-%E2%80%9Ccanadian-experience%E2%80%9D-barrier>
- Oreopoulos, P. (2009). *Why do skilled immigrants struggle in the labor market: a field experiment with six thousand resumes*. Metropolis British Columbia. https://books-scholarsportal-info.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/en/read?id=/ebooks/ebooks0/gibson_cppc/2010-08-06/3/10298809
- Oreopoulos, P., & Dechief, D. Y. (2011). *Why do some employers prefer to interview Matthew, but not Samir?: New evidence from Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver*. Metropolis British Columbia. https://books-scholarsportal-info.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/en/read?id=/ebooks/ebooks0/gibson_cppc/2011-12-20/1/10506938
- Premji, S., Shakya, Y., Spasevski, M., Merolli, J., Athar, S., & Immigrant Women and Precarious Employment Core Research Group. (2014). Precarious Work Experiences of Racialized Immigrant Woman in Toronto: A Community- Based Study. *Just Labour*, 22, 122-143. <https://doi.org/10.25071/1705-1436.8>
- Premji, S., & Shakya, Y. (2017). Pathways between under/unemployment and health among

- racialized immigrant women in Toronto. *Ethnicity & Health*, 22(1), 17-35.
doi:10.1080/13557858.2016.1180347
- Premji, S. (2018). “It’s Totally Destroyed Our Life”: Exploring the Pathways and Mechanisms Between Precarious Employment and Health and Well-being Among Immigrant Men and Women in Toronto. *International Journal of Health Services*, 48(1), 106–127.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0020731417730011>
- Rashid, R., & Gregory, D. (2014). ‘Not Giving Up on Life’: A Holistic Exploration of Resilience among a Sample of Immigrant Canadian Women. *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 46(1), 197-214. doi:10.1353/ces.2014.0010.
- Rudman, D. L., Aldrich, R. M., Grundy, J., Stone, M., Huot, S., & Aslam, A. (2017) "You Got to Make the Numbers Work”: Negotiating Managerial Reforms in the Provision of Employment Support Service. *Alternate Routes: A Journal of Critical Social Research*, 28, 47-79. Retrieved August 19, 2020, from
<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/36af/c6996d1b52c0b8029920db7f07b7f984e08e.pdf>
- Sakamoto, I., Chin, M., & Young, M. (2010). “Canadian Experience,” Employment Challenges, and Skilled Immigrants. *Canadian Social Work*, 12(1), 145-151. Retrieved August 19, 2020, from <http://www.beyondcanadianexperience.com/sites/default/files/csw-sakamoto.pdf>
- Senthanar, S., MacEachen, E., Premji, S., & Bigelow, P. (2019). “Can Someone Help Me?” Refugee Women’s Experiences of Using Settlement Agencies to Find Work in Canada. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 21(1), 273–294.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-019-00729-1>
- Shan, H. (2009). Shaping the re-training and re-education experiences of immigrant women: The

- credential and certificate regime in Canada. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 28(3), 353-369. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370902799150>
- Smith, D. (1993). The Standard North American Family: SNAF as an Ideological Code. *Journal of Family Issues*, 14(1), 50–65. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X93014001005>
- Statistics Canada. (2019). *Canada's population estimates: Age and sex, July 1, 2019*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/190930/dq190930a-eng.htm>
- Wilson-Forsberg, S. (2015). “We Don’t Integrate; We Adapt:” Latin American Immigrants Interpret Their Canadian Employment Experiences in Southwestern Ontario. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 16(3), 469-489. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-014-0349-1>
- Yeung Leung, V. W., Zhu, Y., Hsin-Yun, P., & Tsang, A. K. T. (2019). Chinese Immigrant Mothers Negotiating Family and Career: Intersectionality and the Role of Social Support. *British Journal of Social Work*, 49(3), 742-761. <https://doi-org.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/10.1093/bjsw/bcy081>
- Yssaad, L & Andrew, F. (2018). *The Canadian Immigrant Labour Market: Recent Trends from 2006 to 2017*. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-606-x/71-606-x2018001-eng.pdf>
- Zuberi, D., Ivemark, B., & Ptashnick, M. (2018). Lagging behind in suburbia: Suburban versus urban newcomers’ employment settlement service outcomes in Metro Vancouver, Canada. *The Social Science Journal*, 55(4), 443–454. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.soscij.2018.03.001>