IMMIGRANT EMPLOYMENT INTEGRATION IN A MID-SIZED CITY

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Lay Abstract

Canada relies on immigration to drive population and economic growth. It ranks as a top destination for international migrants worldwide with some of the most highly educated, highly skilled immigrants entering the country each year. Yet, evidence suggests that recent immigrants perform poorly in the labour market when compared to their Canadian-born counterparts. Where immigrants settle can impact on how they effectively integrate into employment. Regionalization policies have resulted in a larger share of immigrants settling in small and mid-sized cities across the country. This dissertation examines the employment integration of recent immigrants to the mid-sized city of Guelph, Ontario. It uses a systems approach to map the connection between immigrant services and the local labour market and provides a descriptive analysis of immigrants' early experiences on the pathway to employment. As the immigrant population grows, cities will face the greatest pressures to facilitate the effective and efficient employment integration of immigrants.

Abstract

With international migration on the rise and the critical need for labour in the global north, countries are increasingly focused on the economic integration of immigrants. In Canada, the federal government has significantly increased immigration levels for the next several years. Although decisions related to immigrant selection are made nationally, integration into employment occurs locally. It is important to examine how local systems within cities influence the integration of immigrants into the labour market. Using a case study of the mid-sized city of Guelph, Ontario, this dissertation aims to identify the issues facing new immigrants who settle in smaller urban centres on their pathway to employment and examine the spatial context within which they effectively integrate into employment.

First, this dissertation synthesizes quantitative evidence to examine what is known about immigrant employment outcomes in Canada. By examining the contradiction between selection policies that favour highly skilled applicants and the reality of immigrant employment in Canada, policy recommendations to improve employment outcomes are presented. Second this dissertation analyzes the role of cities in the employment integration of recent immigrants to Canada. Using a systems approach, the complex connections between settlement services and the employment context in the mid-sized city of Guelph are analyzed and mapped. Challenges and opportunities are identified and focused on systemic change. Third, this dissertation explores recent immigrant experiences of finding meaningful employment in the early years after settling in the city. A model of immigrant employment strategies is provided and implications for

policy are presented. Findings from this dissertation provide timely evidence of how small and mid-sized cities can create an environment where immigrants can rapidly transition into employment commensurate with their skills and qualifications. With an anticipated increase in immigration over the next several years, it is critical that policymakers create targeted initiatives tailored to meet the local needs of immigrants and the communities where they choose to settle.

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Preface

This dissertation is a collection of three manuscripts (Chapters 3-5), an introductory chapter (Chapter 1), a methods chapter (Chapter 2) and a concluding chapter (Chapter 6). Chapter 3 has been published in *Canadian Ethnic Studies* and Chapter 4 is accepted for publication in *The Canadian Geographer*. Chapter 5 has been submitted to the *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies.* I, Mary Crea-Arsenio, am the lead author of each co-authored chapter. With input from my supervisor and committee members, I developed the research questions, collected data, conducted the analyses, and lead the writing of each manuscript. The substantive manuscripts included in the dissertation are as follows:

(1) Chapter 3: Crea-Arsenio, M., Newbold, K.B., Baumann, A. and Walton-Roberts, M. (2022). Immigrant Employment Integration in Canada: A Narrative Review. *Canadian Ethnic Studies= Études ethniques au Canada, 54(2)*, 99-117.

(2) Chapter 4: Crea-Arsenio, M., Newbold, K.B., Baumann, A, and Walton-Roberts, M. (2023). A few "big players" – Systems approach to immigrant employment in a mid-sized city. *The Canadian Geographer/Le Géographe Canadien. https://doi.org/10.1111/cag.12833*

(3) Chapter 5: Crea-Arsenio, M., Newbold, K.B., Baumann, A, and Walton-Roberts, M. National policies, local realities: Employment experiences of recent immigrants to Canada. *The Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies,* (Under Review, January 2023).

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List of Abbreviations

AIP	Atlantic Immigration Pilot
CA	Census Agglomeration
CCSA	Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse
CD	Census Division
CEC	Canadian Experience Class
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CIC	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
CMA	Census Metropolitan Area
CSD	Census Subdivision
ESL	English as a Second Language
GAR	Government-Assisted Refugee
GWLIP	Guelph-Wellington Local Immigration Partnership
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRCC	Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada
IRPA	Immigration and Refugees Protection Act
LIP	Local Immigration Partnership
LQ	Location Quotient
MCU	Ministry of Colleges and Universities
MLTSD	Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development
MREB	McMaster Research Ethics Board
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NOC	National Occupational Classification
OAC	Ontario Agriculture College
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
O*NET	Occupational Informational Network
OVC	Ontario Veterinary College
PBA	Points-Based System
PNP	Provincial Nominee Program
PRISMA	Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses
PSR	Privately Sponsored Refugee
RAP	Resettlement Assistance Program
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math
USA	United States of America

Declaration of Academic Achievement

This dissertation presents three original research studies (Chapters 3-5), an introductory chapter (Chapter 1) and a concluding chapter (Chapter 6). Chapter 3 has been published in the *Canadian Ethnic Studies= Études ethniques au Canada* journal and Chapter 4 has been accepted for publication in *The Canadian Geographer/Le Géographe Canadien.* Permission has been provided to reprint these two articles as part of this dissertation. I, Mary Crea-Arsenio, am the lead author of each co-authored chapter. I conceived of all research questions with input from my committee members, completed all data collection, analyses and writing of the manuscripts. Drs. Bruce Newbold, Andrea Baumann and Margaret Walton-Roberts co-authored Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

CHAPTER 1. Introduction

This dissertation includes three original research studies that examine factors affecting

the employment integration of recent immigrants in the mid-sized city of Guelph,

Ontario. As with many Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

(OECD) member countries, Canada relies on immigration to drive population and

economic growth. It ranks as a top destination for international migrants worldwide with

some of the most highly educated, highly skilled immigrants entering the country each

year (OECD, 2019). Despite this, evidence suggests that recent immigrants perform

poorly in the labour market when compared to their Canadian-born counterparts (Kaushik

& Drolet, 2018; Newman et al., 2018; Yssaad & Fields, 2018). Unemployment rates are

high and entry wages are low relative to domestic workers (Crossman et al., 2021; Wong,

2020).

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic created unprecedented challenges for

international migration as borders were closed to limit the spread. According to the

OECD, permanent migrant flows to member states decreased by more than 30% in 2020

(OECD, 2021). In Australia, Canada, and the United States, the number of new

immigrants fell by more than 40% (OECD, 2021). At the same time, public health

measures imposed within countries resulted in a record number of job losses, particularly

in precarious and low-paid positions (OECD, 2021). As countries struggle to recover

from the effects of the pandemic, many are faced with severe labour shortages across all

sectors (Causa et al., 2022).

The disruption in migration flows, coupled with an increase in post-pandemic

labour shortages, has created renewed interest in immigration globally. To offset losses,

the Canadian government has increased immigration levels for the next three years (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada [IRCC], 2022b). In 2021, over 405,000 new permanent residents were admitted, a record number in Canadian history (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada [IRCC], 2022a). In 2022, the government is set to welcome 430,000 immigrants with increases each year to reach a total of 500,000 new immigrants by 2025 (IRCC, 2022b). As the immigrant population grows and the need for labour persists, it is becoming ever more important to address the employment integration challenges experienced by newcomers in their first few years after arrival.

Employment integration has been defined as the process by which individuals enter the workforce efficiently, effectively, and with productive employment (Baumann et al., 2011). Although decisions related to the number and category of immigrants are made at a national level, integration into employment occurs locally. Studies demonstrate that where immigrants settle impacts how effectively they integrate into employment (Ali & Newbold, 2020; Frank, 2013). In recent years, both federal and local regionalization policies have resulted in a geographic shift in immigrant settlement patterns away from gateway cities towards small and mid-sized communities across the country (Bonikowska et al., 2017; Statistics Canada, 2022b). While cities such as Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal have a large, funded network of services to support new immigrants, small and mid-sized cities may not be as well positioned to support their integration (Dauphinais et al., 2022; St-Cyr & Bouchard, 2013). As a result, it is important to examine the factors that contribute to the integration of immigrants into these cities and the related employment experiences of newcomers choosing to live there.

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the employment integration of recent immigrants in the mid-sized city of Guelph, Ontario. Using a case study approach, it aims to identify the issues facing new immigrants who settle in smaller urban centres on their pathway to employment and examine the spatial context within which they effectively integrate into employment. This dissertation provides timely evidence about immigrant employment experiences and the important role of local systems within cities that influence the integration process.

A review of the literature is provided in the following sections, beginning with an overview of immigration in Canada and a description of how immigration policy has changed over time. Next, an examination of prominent theories used in the economic migration literature is presented, followed by empirical evidence of the main barriers to employment for recent immigrants to Canada. Regionalization policies and the role of small and mid-sized cities in immigrant integration is also discussed. Finally, a summary of how this dissertation aims to address the gaps in existing literature is offered.

1.1 Literature Review

Overview of Immigration in Canada

Immigration in Canada is driven by population growth and economic growth. Like many developed countries, Canada is experiencing fertility rates far below the replacement level. The ageing population coupled with low birth rates means fewer Canadian-born workers to fill labour shortages and support dependent populations. As a result, the Canadian government has established and maintained immigration flows at high levels. By 2034, it is estimated that 100% of Canada's population growth will be driven by immigration (Conference Board of Canada, 2022). According to the 2021

census, immigrants comprise 23% of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2022b).

Over 1.3 million are recent immigrants (i.e., those arriving in the last five years),

representing 3.7% of Canada's total population (Statistics Canada, 2022b).

Immigrant characteristics have changed considerably over time. In the early

1900s, immigrants from the British Isles accounted for over 80% of the foreign-born

population (Statistics Canada, 2022b). Immigration from other European nations began to

increase in the early to mid-part of the twentieth century, with a peak occurring in the

1970s and continuing into the 1980s and 1990s. In 2021, the majority of new immigrants

were from Asia and Africa (62.0%), with decreasing numbers from European regions

(10.1%) (Statistics Canada, 2022b).

In Canada, there are four main categories of immigrants: economic immigrants

are individuals who have been selected for their ability to contribute to the Canadian

economy; family-class immigrants are individuals who have a relation to people residing

in Canada; refugees are defined as people escaping persecution or who have a real fear of

returning to their home country, and the other category includes immigrants who do not

fall under one of the other categories (Statistics Canada, 2019). In 2021, 56.3% of

immigrants admitted to Canada were in the economic class, 26% were in the family class,

and 16% were refugees or protected persons (Statistics Canada, 2022b).

Immigrants in the economic class can apply to enter Canada under a variety of

programs including the federal skilled worker program, federal skilled trades, the

Canadian experience class, the provincial nominee class and the Quebec skilled worker

class (Statistics Canada, 2019). However, to be considered for entry they must meet a

minimum requirement in three key areas: language, education, and work experience. In

2015, Express Entry was introduced as a management tool to screen and quickly process applicants with the necessary education and skills required to fill labour market demands. The comprehensive ranking system identifies individuals who are most likely to achieve high employment earnings and maximize performance in the Canadian labour market (IRCC, 2020).

Immigration Policy and the Selection Process

Three major reforms in Canada's immigration policy have had a significant impact on the type of immigrants entering the country (Anwar, 2014; Ferrer et al., 2014; Picot et al., 2016). The first change occurred in 1967 when Canada's process shifted from selecting immigrants based on preferred regions to selecting using a points system, based on criteria established to meet the labour needs of the nation (Anwar, 2014). Points were assigned to specific in-demand occupations and reviewed continuously as needs changed. During this time, the number of immigrants admitted to Canada fluctuated "based on the perceived needs of the economy, with immigration targets falling in times of rising unemployment, and vice versa" (Hiebert, 2019, p. 2). In the late 1980s the federal government chose to raise immigration levels and set annual targets to increase immigration to Canada. This resulted in a substantial increase in the number of applicants and created a significant backlog in processing times (Hiebert, 2019).

The second changed occurred in the 1990s when the points system shifted from a focus on occupational demand to a human capital model, where applicants were rewarded points for personal characteristics such as education and language proficiency (Ferrer et al., 2014). This approach was based on a long-term perspective that immigrants with higher human capital would fare better in the Canadian labour market (Ferrer et al.,

2014). The final change occurred in 2002, with the introduction of the Immigration and Refugees Protection Act (IRPA) legislation designed to strengthen the human capital model and reward higher points for education, experience, and language (Picot et al., 2016). Although these changes had the desired effect of increasing the number of highly skilled, highly educated individuals admitted to Canada, there were unintended consequences that followed (Clarke et al., 2019; Picot, Hou & Qiu, 2016). Research revealed that newcomers were experiencing greater difficulty finding commensurate employment and delayed integration into the Canadian labour market (Hou & Picot, 2016; Sweetman & Warman, 2013; Wong, 2020).

To that end, various initiatives have been implemented to support the economic integration of immigrants to Canada. Federally, pre-arrival programs have been created and funded to provide potential applicants with information and orientation to the Canadian labour market prior to arrival. Additionally, applicants under the economic class are required to have their credentials assessed in Canada prior to applying for immigration. The Canadian Experience Class (CEC) was created to help temporary foreign workers and international students use their work experience and education towards their application for permanent residency. The Express Entry system was introduced to improve processing times for economic applicants, rebalance employment and human capital selection criteria and enable employer input (Hiebert, 2019). Provincial nominee programs have been established to allow provinces and employers to participate in the selection of immigrants (Flynn & Bauder, 2015). Integration occurs locally; therefore, it is important to allow provinces to select immigrants that meet their specific labour market needs. .

Provincially, bridge training programs have been developed to offer newly arrived immigrants' education, language, and skills training for highly skilled immigrants looking to work in their fields (Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities [MCU], 2022). Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Quebec, and Ontario introduced the role of a Fairness Commissioner to ensure fair and transparent processes in the assessment of regulated professions and trades (Augustine, 2015). Municipally, settlement services and Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) have been funded to support cities in immigrant integration at a local level (Shields et al., 2016).

Critics of Canada's immigration selection policies argue that the state's assumptions that immigrants are prepared for entry into the labour market upon arrival are biased and exclusionary (Anwar, 2014; Branker, 2017; Chatterjee, 2019, Clarke et al., 2019). Immigrants who arrive in Canada after being rewarded points for their skills and education find themselves undergoing extensive retraining to be considered employable in Canada (Anwar, 2014). Research has consistently shown that a significant barrier to employment for skilled immigrants is a lack of Canadian experience, leading to underemployment and deskilling (Banerjee & Phan, 2014; Bhuyan et al., 2017; Boyd & Tian, 2018; Hira-Freisen, 2018).

To remedy the devaluation of foreign skills, policies have been created to bridge the gap between foreign credentials and some appropriate standard for the Canadian workplace (Chatterjee, 2019). For example, in the province of Ontario the bridge training program was designed to offer short-term training to help immigrants meet the necessary requirements for "licensure and/or registration in regulated professions, and employer needs in non-regulated, high-skill occupations" (MCU, 2022). However, by investing in

retraining programs, governments assume immigrants are deficient of skills and focus on correcting the individual problem rather than changing the biased practice. In doing so, discriminatory practices that exclude immigrants due to a lack of "Canadian experience" are reinforced rather than removed (Chatterjee, 2019, p. 4). In response, the Ontario government passed legislation that eliminates Canadian work experience requirement for professional registration and licensing and ensure faster processing times for licensure (Government of Ontario, 2021).

Another approach proposed by several scholars is to shift toward a more employer-driven model similar to the United States of America (USA) (Anwar, 2014; Lu & Hou, 2020; Picot et al., 2016). Studies comparing employment outcomes of skilled in immigrants in Canada and the United States have consistently shown that immigrants fare better in the US (Bonikowska et al., 2011; Clarke et al., 2019; Lu & Hou, 2020). Authors argue that by creating an employment-based immigration selection system, there may be a more effective balancing of immigrant supply with local labour market demand (Lu & Hou, 2020). Notwithstanding other challenges that may arise from an arranged employment model (e.g., employers hiring temporary foreign workers instead of using Canadian workers), this discussion sheds light on the tension between Canada's selection policies and the employment realities of economic immigrants. There is a need to shift the immigration discourse from one that places the onus on immigrants to one that addresses how the system operates to create barriers against them.

Theoretical Considerations

Several theories have been used to explain the economic disadvantage facing immigrants in Canada. These theories include human capital, social capital, and ethnic

economies (Chuatico, et al., 2022; Lightman & Gingrich, 2018; Majerski, 2019; Ojo & Shiza, 2018). Human capital theorists argue that the employment challenges experienced by immigrants are a result of the disparity between the value placed on foreign credentials compared to Canadian credentials (Frank, 2013; Picot et al., 2016). Indeed, numerous studies have identified issues of foreign credential recognition and limited language proficiency as barriers to the transfer of immigrant human capital (Aydemir, 2011; Hou & Picot, 2016; Imai et al., 2019). In one study, short-term labour market outcomes of immigrants across visa categories were assessed to examine the efficacy of Canada's immigration system (Aydemir, 2011). Findings indicate that education and work experience among the highly skilled immigrants did not translate into increased labour force participation or better employment rates (Aydemir, 2011). The author concludes that "[t]he fact that 2 years after arrival these characteristics do not significantly alter labor market outcomes indicates major difficulties in transfer of foreign human capital" (p. 473).

In another study, Imai et al (2019) analyzed immigrants' ability to transfer occupational human capital to the Canadian economy. The authors focused on occupational mismatch, defined as the "non-equivalence of pre- and post-immigration occupation" (p. 916). Results indicated that despite being highly skilled pre-migration, many immigrants seek or settle for low-skilled occupations upon arrival to Canada (Imai et al., 2019). This finding was more pronounced among those immigrants with limited language skills in either English or French. The authors conclude that language proficiency acts as a hinderance to the complete transfer of occupational human capital in Canada (Imai et al., 2019). Overall, the human capital literature suggests that regardless

of their higher levels of education, skilled immigrants often accept lower-skilled jobs upon arrival. However, over time they are able to accumulate knowledge, improve their language skills, and effectively integrate into the Canadian economy (Chuatico et al., 2022; Picot et al., 2016; Yassad & Fields, 2018;).

While human capital theory focuses on the accumulation of education and knowledge, social capital theory emphasizes the transferable value of social ties in the labour market (Chuatico et al., 2022; Majerski, 2019; Nakhaie & Kazemipur, 2013). Social capital is the accumulation of resources embedded in networks that are created through personal relationships and maintained through mutual exchange (Chuatico et al., 2022). These social investments are instrumental in helping migrants integrate into employment and the broader society (Majerski, 2019; Nakhaie & Kazemipur, 2013).

Two types of social capital have been examined in the immigrant employment integration literature with varying results. Bonding ties, defined as those based on common characteristics such as ethnicity or culture, have a limited scope of resources and thus provided limited opportunities in the labour market (Chai et al., 2018; Li, 2003; Nakhaie & Kazemipur, 2013). Bridging ties, defined as connections made through membership in diverse groups, have a wider and more varied scope of resources that can provide broader employment opportunities for immigrants (Chai et al., 2018; Nakhaie & Kazemipur, 2012). According to Nakhaie & Kazemipur (2012) "bonding ties help with "getting by" and are important for access to jobs. Bridging ties help with "getting ahead" and are important for access to jobs" (p. 420).

Studies examining the impact of social networks on immigrant employment demonstrate that bonding ties (friends and family) are the most important relationships

for entry into the Canadian labour market (Majerski, 2019; Xue, 2008). However, the jobs are often low-paying and offer limited opportunity for career growth. In a recent study, Chuatico et al. (2022) examine the effect of human capital, social capital and participation in an ethnic economy on immigrant income in Canada. The authors distinguish between social capital and ethnic economies, defined as a relationship between individuals of the same ethnic background that is economically advantageous for both worker and business owners (Chuatico et al., 2022; Rosales, 2014; Valenzuela-Garcia et al., 2017). Results indicate that immigrants who engage in bonding ties (social capital) experience income penalties initially but that these negative effects decline over time. However, those who participate in an ethnic economy had a negative impact on their income both initially and longer-term (Chuatico, et al., 2022). Ethnic economies are more likely to form in metropolitan areas with large diverse groups who create smaller economies based on entrepreneurship (Teixeira, 2001). While they may help new immigrants attain employment soon after arrival, they can be detrimental for those who are highly educated and skilled (Chuatico et al., 2022).

Regionalization, Migration, and the Role of Cities

In Canada, immigration is a shared federal-provincial responsibility. Selection falls primarily under federal jurisdiction, while settlement is shared between the federal and provincial/territorial governments (Government of Canada, 2022). Where immigrants choose to settle has important implications for policymakers, service providers, immigrants, and employers.

Immigrants tend to settle in larger cities because of greater opportunity for employment, as well as the existence of co-ethnic communities (Sano et al., 2017). Over

53% of immigrants settle in one of the three largest cities – Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver (Statistics Canada, 2022b). Although this has been the trend historically, there has been a geographic shift in the pattern of new immigrants settling in cities outside the nation's largest urban centres (Statistics Canada, 2022b). This shift can be partially attributed to regionalization policies that have been designed to promote a more balanced geographic distribution of immigrants (Bonikowska et al., 2017; Citizenship and Immigration Canada [CIC], 2001; Walton-Roberts, 2007; 2011). The goal of regionalization is to encourage local governments to actively engage in developing initiatives that will attract immigrants to small and mid-sized cities (Kaushik & Drolet, 2018). It emerged out of the need to "address population decline in remote and rural areas" and as a way to boost "regional economic development" (Walton-Roberts, 2007, p. 4).

An interest in regionalization began over 20 years ago when the share of immigrant landings in the three largest urban centres increased from 52.2% in the early 1980s to 74.7% in the late 1990s (Walton-Roberts, 2007). In 2001, the Canadian government tabled the report, *Towards a More Balanced Geographic Distribution of Immigrants* (CIC, 2001). The report documented a growing interest to evenly disperse immigrants across the country to reduce the pressures facing the three largest cities. At the time, it was recognized that policy levers could be used to encourage a shift in the distribution of the immigrant population. However, it was also noted that to be successful, economic growth and employment opportunities needed to be considered (CIC, 2001). To that end, provinces were given a greater role in selecting immigrants.

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The Provincial Nominee Program (PNP), launched in 1998, allows provinces and territories to nominate individuals based on their economic and labour market needs (Government of Canada, 2022). British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba were the first provinces to sign agreements with the federal government. By 2009, all provinces and territories with the exception of Quebec and Nunavut had established agreements with the federal government (Seidle, 2013). Initially, the PNP was intended to include a modest share of the total immigrant landings in Canada. Over time, however, the number grew as provinces began to show more interest in attracting immigrants (Seidle, 2013). As a result, the federal government imposed annual limits on the number of admissions allowable through the PNP. Bonikowska, et al. (2017) examined the impact of the PNP on the geographic dispersion of immigrants over the 2000s and found significant increases in the number of immigrants settling in the smaller provinces of Manitoba, Prince Edward Island, and New Brunswick. During that same time period, both Ontario and Quebec had no immigrants enter under the PNP, although they did receive a large share of immigrants through the federal skilled worker streams. The authors conclude that the PNP has successfully increased the share of immigrants who settle outside the largest urban centres in Canada (Bonikowska et al., 2017). In 2017, IRCC launched the Atlantic Immigration (AIP) Program, an employer-driven program designed to increase skilled migration in key sectors in the four provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador (IRCC, 2021). As a result of the AIP, the share of recent immigrants settling in one of these four provinces has tripled from 1.2% in 2006 to 3.5% in 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2022b).

Increasing immigration to non-traditional settings (i.e., outside the urban centres of Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal) places demand on the availability and provision of services to assist in the settlement and integration process (Esses & Carter, 2019; Mukhtar et al., 2016; Shields et al., 2016). Settlement and integration are two different but related concepts. Settlement refers to the initial steps in the integration process where immigrants organize their basic needs such as housing, schooling for children, and language training (Kaushik & Drolet, 2018). Government-funded settlement services are available in cities across the country to meet needs such as language and skills development, information and orientation, assessments and referrals, community connections, and employment services. Although these services are beneficial for immigrants and refugees, they are primarily delivered by the non-profit sector based on contractual agreements with the government (Flynn & Bauder, 2015; Shields et al., 2016; Thomas, 2015). Programs are funded on a competitive basis and require a larger network of services in order to be successful, which may be more challenging for smaller cities (Drolet & Teixeira, 2022).

Integration refers to the immigrant's full participation in the social, political, and economic aspects of society (Li, 2003; Shields et al., 2016). It places the responsibility on the receiving country to ensure that immigrants have the opportunity to participate in every aspect of Canadian society (Entzinger & Biezeveld, 2003; Wilson-Forsberg, 2015). Integration is viewed as a desirable outcome and is used to judge the success or failure of immigrants in Canada (Kaushik & Drolet, 2018; Li, 2003). The concept of integration first emerged in the early 1980s as one of four strategies identified by Berry in his seminal work on immigrants' sense of belonging in Canada. According to Berry (1980),

the process by which an individual adapts to a new country is referred to as acculturation, and how individuals relate to the larger society and their own cultural group is based on four acculturation strategies. Integration was defined as a high sense of belonging to the source country and to Canada; assimilation involved a high sense of belonging to Canada and low to the source country; separation referred to a low sense of belonging for Canada and high for the source country; and marginalization signified a low sense of belonging for both Canada and the source country (Berry & Hou, 2016).

Building on Berry's strategies, the concept of integration has been defined in several ways and across multiple disciplines. For policy, integration is defined as a desirable outcome related to the "process by which immigrants become productive members of and develop close relations with mainstream society" (Li, 2003, p. 318). Canada's multicultural approach to immigration promotes integration rather than assimilation and encourages immigrants to maintain their cultural identity. Multiculturalism as a policy was introduced in 1971 and became law under the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in 1988.

Economically, integration has been defined as an immigrant's ability to match or outperform the labour market performance of the domestic-born population (Li, 2003). According to Ager and Strang (2008), employment is a key indicator of integration for newcomers to Canada and can be viewed as a means to achieve integration and as a marker of successful integration. It can provide an opportunity for immigrants to develop language skills, encourage self-reliance, connect with members of the host society, and promote economic independence (Ager & Strang, 2008). Studies have shown that employment integration promotes self-esteem and improves the health and well-being of

newly arrived immigrants to Canada (Foo et al., 2018; Subedi & Rosenberg, 2016). When immigrants do not find suitable employment, the way they interact with society may result in a lack of full integration (Wilson-Forsberg, 2015).

Studies suggest that immigrant employment outcomes are better in smaller and mid-sized cities (; Fong et al., 2015; Frank, 2013; Haan, 2008; Hall & Khan, 2008; Sano et al., 2017). For example, Bernard (2008) discovered that the incomes of immigrant were lowest in large urban centres and highest in small urban centres across Canada, even after controlling for immigrant characteristics. Fong et al. (2015) also compared immigrant earnings in gateway versus non-gateway cities and found that immigrants always fared better in non-gateway cities. Sano et al. (2017) compared immigrant earnings in non-traditional settings (i.e., outside the cities of Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver) in Atlantic Canada to the three gateway cities and found that returns to post-graduate education were higher in Atlantic Canada.

Several reasons have been offered to explain these findings. Studies demonstrate there is less competition for jobs and fewer immigrants to compete against in smaller cities (Fong et al., 2015; Frank, 2013; Haan, 2008; Hall & Khan, 2008; Sano et al., 2017). In addition, the regional recruitment of immigrants through the PNP to fill local labour market needs increases the efficient and effective integration of newcomers into employment within these regions (Sano et al., 2017). Furthermore, studies have shown that limited language ability is not a significant factor in the employment integration of recent immigrants in smaller cities (Bernard, 2008; Sano et al., 2017). Despite the data to suggest that immigrants fare better in smaller urban centres, they continue to be attracted to larger centres based on the notion that jobs are easier to find in bigger cities

(Bonikowska et al., 2017). Consequently, cities have an important role to play in the attraction, integration, and retention of immigrants.

Various policy initiatives have been developed to assist cities in taking a greater role in planning for and guiding immigration and settlement (Walton-Roberts, 2011). The Welcoming Communities Initiative (CIC, 2010) and the LIPs (CIC, 2008) are two examples of locally based efforts to improve immigrant settlement in cities across Canada. A welcoming community is defined as "a location that has the capacity to meet the needs and promote inclusion of newcomers, and the machinery in place to produce and support these capacities" (Esses et al., 2010, p. 9). Welcoming communities can be evaluated on 17 rank-ordered characteristics, including factors such as employment opportunities; fostering of social capital; access to affordable housing; presence of newcomer-serving agencies; opportunities for social, political and economic participation; educational opportunities; and the ethno-cultural and religious networks (Esses et al., 2010). The LIPs are community-based partnerships that seek to engage local stakeholders in the "development of a local settlement strategy and targeted action plan to produce a more welcoming and inclusive community" (CIC, 2008, p. 6). An objective of LIPs is to promote a welcoming community by developing relationships between community stakeholders and to ensure immigrant integration becomes the responsibility of a variety of actors.

There is wide agreement that employment is the most important characteristics of a welcoming community (Esses et al., 2010; Esses & Carter, 2019). Evidence suggest that immigrants choose where to settle based on two factors: (i) economic opportunities and (ii) social ties such as the presence of friends and families (Sethi & Williams, 2019;

Wilson-Forsberg, 2015). For highly skilled immigrants, employment opportunities are the greatest driver of settlement decisions (Esses & Carter, 2019). However, lower-skilled immigrants choose where to settle based on the presence of family and friends. Regardless of where they settle, participation in the labour market is an important indicator of settlement and integration (Ager & Strang, 2008). Communities that provide meaningful employment that matches the immigrants' skills fare better in attracting newcomers than communities with fewer suitable employment opportunities (Esses & Carter, 2019).

The Employment Landscape

Globalization and the increase in new technologies have resulted in significant changes in the nature of work over the past 30 years. The traditional employment contract that included full-time work with a single employer has diminished in response to structural changes in society (Manville, 2008). To meet the demands of a changing global economy and compete in global markets, employers have moved away from offering long-term employment to relying more on a contingent workforce (Shalla, 2007). Employers are reluctant to commit to long-term salaried employees. According to Beck (2000), "[p]aid employment is becoming precarious . . . [while] 'labor market flexibility' has become a political mantra" (p. 3).

In Canada, employment post-World War II was characterized by a secure, permanent full-time position that provided stability for white male workers (Fuller & Vosko, 2008; Shalla, 2007). At that time, women, migrants, and people with disabilities were disproportionately employed in part-time, nonstandard, or seasonal jobs with relatively insecure status (Lewchuk, 2017; Shalla, 2007). With the rise of 24-hour jobs,

there was a change in the employment relationship that increased the precariousness of employment for all groups (Fuller & Vosko, 2008; Hira-Friesen, 2018; Lewchuk, 2017). Additionally, corporate downsizing, globalization, and multiple recessions have all had an impact on the type of jobs available in Canada. How people enter the labour market and the types of jobs available for workers across all sectors, race, and ethnicity has changed dramatically since the mid-twentieth century (Fuller & Vosko, 2008).

For immigrants, the situation is further complicated by employer's reluctance to recognize foreign credentials and the experience immigrants bring to Canada (Banerjee & Phan, 2014; Fuller & Vosko, 2008). Entry earnings are deteriorating, as are immigrants' employment and labour market rates (Clarke, et al., 2019; Crossman et al., 2021; Lu & Hou, 2020; Wong, 2020). Studies show that recent immigrants have lower employment rates than earlier cohorts who arrived in Canada in the 1980s (Picot et al., 2016). This downward trend in labour market performance can be attributed to several factors, including lack of official language knowledge (Aydemir & Skuterud, 2005), lack of Canadian job experience (Reitz, 2007a; 2007b) and discrimination and bias (Lightman & Gingrich, 2018; Schmidt, 2010; Syed & Pio, 2010). As a result, highly skilled immigrants in Canada are either unemployed or underemployed and struggle to "catch-up" to their domestic-born counterparts (Clarke et al., 2019; Crossman et al., 2021; Lu & Hou, 2020; Wong, 2020).

Factors Affecting Immigrant Employment

There is a vast body of literature related to the labour market integration of immigrants in Canada. It has been a focus of policy and research since the changes to immigration regulations and legislation in the 1960s. Researchers have consistently

documented that highly educated newcomers to Canada are less likely to find a job commensurate with their skills and qualifications upon arrival (Ci et al., 2020; Manuel & Plesca 2020).The underutilization of immigrant skills emerged as an issue in Canada in the 1990s and has persisted up to present day. According to 2021 census data, the percentage of university-educated recent immigrants working in a job requiring a university degree decreased from 45.7% in 2001 to 37.7% in 2016 (Hou, et al., 2019).

Underutilization refers to the devaluing of immigrant human capital in the Canadian labour market and the resulting employment disadvantage facing highly skilled immigrants (Reitz, 2007b). Studies suggest that immigrants not only face lower employment rates compared to the Canadian born but also have lower wages and are more likely to work in precarious employment. According to Banerjee (2009), there are two factors that contribute to labour market success of new immigrants. The first is entry wage defined as "the wage at which they begin their Canadian careers" (p. 466). The second is the assimilation effect known as immigrants' ability to catch-up to Canadian-born workers (Banerjee, 2009). While there is consensus that immigrant entry earnings are low compared to domestic workers, there is less agreement about whether their earnings eventually converge or "catch-up" (Crossman, et al, 2021; Wong, 2020).

The major factors identified as the greatest challenges to economic integration of immigrants are related to both individual and contextual factors. On an individual level, studies have identified changing immigrant characteristics, low rate of returns to foreign experience, education and credentials, and poor language skills (Akbari & Aydede, 2011; Banerjee & Phan, 2014; Frenette, 2018). The shift from immigrants coming from European to non-European regions has been identified as a barrier to employment.

Visible minorities face labour market discrimination based on race and ethnicity, which have an impact on their rates of employment, entry earnings, occupation, and income, especially in their first five years of settlement (Akbar, 2019; Branker, 2017; Lightman & Gingrich, 2018).

Additionally, the low returns to foreign education, credentials, and work experience for immigrants places them at a disadvantage when competing for jobs against Canadian-born workers. For example, immigrants educated in the STEM fields outside of Canada are less likely to be employed in a STEM occupation compared to Canadian-born, Canadian-educated workers (Boyd & Tian, 2017; 2018). The devaluation of foreign education and credentials is further exacerbated in the regulated professions (e.g., engineering, nursing) where foreign-trained immigrants face additional barriers to employment related to licensure/registration.

Contextual factors are related to the Canadian labour market and include economic cycles, changes in occupational demand, and labour supply of Canadian-born and immigrant workers. The cyclical nature of the economy and the ebbs and flows of recessionary periods have had a significant impact on the employment and earnings of immigrants in Canada (Hou & Picot, 2014; Reitz et al., 2014). In the short-term, immigrants who entered Canada during a recession were at a disadvantage compared to those who entered Canada during times of economic expansion. The negative impact of the current pandemic on employment of recent immigrants demonstrates what might happen when Canada opens its borders to over 400,000 immigrants while dealing with the economic aftermath of the pandemic (Lamb et al., 2022).

1.2 Rationale

The recent geographic shift in immigrant settlement patterns in Canada has resulted in an increase in the number of new immigrants settling in cities outside the largest urban centres. This creates an opportunity for cities to actively engage in the integration of newcomers. Research demonstrates that one of the most important components of the integration process is gaining meaningful employment soon after arrival. However, the effective integration into employment requires several actors, a range of community services, and engaged political systems (Caidi et al., 2010). As demonstrated in the review of the literature, there is extensive research on the employment outcomes and economic integration of immigrants to Canada. The majority of these studies are quantitative, national in scope, and limited by the use of secondary data sources (Boyd & Tian, 2018; Frank, 2013; Lamb et al., 2022; Picot, et al., 2016 2022; Sweetman & Warman, 2013) .

Among studies that do include city-level data, the focus is on the three largest urban centres where most immigrants live (Akbar, 2019; Branker, 2017; Frenette, 2018; Somerville & Walsworth, 2010). Few studies compare immigrant employment and earnings in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver to other urban centres (Fong et al, 2015; Haan, 2008; Sano et al., 2017). Qualitative studies on immigrant employment experiences in small and mid-sized cities have begun to emerge (Lo & Teixeira, 2015; Thomas, 2021; Wilson-Forsberg, 2015), but few address the local system as a driver of employment integration. This study fills the gap in the current literature by examining employment at a local level to gain an in-depth understanding of how recent immigrants integrate into a mid-sized city in Ontario, Canada.

The study of employment is often conducted by economists who use large national databases to analyze the association between immigrant characteristics and labour market outcomes. The majority of studies are quantitative in design and focus on macro-indicators of employment success (e.g., wages and earnings). Although the findings are useful to inform policymakers about the settlement and integration of newcomers to Canada, there are limitations to the use of secondary databases in understanding immigrant experiences and how local employment systems operate. For example, there is a lag between the collection of the data and the access and availability of the databases for research purposes. Currently, the most recent dataset used in many of these studies was the 2016 Canadian census. It may be that the most recent groups of immigrants to Canada experience employment differently than those identified in these earlier datasets. Additionally, few studies synthesize the evidence to provide an overall assessment of how recent immigrants fare in the Canadian labour market. Reitz's (2007a and 2007b) analysis was the last comprehensive review of immigrant employment literature in Canada. Therefore, this dissertation begins with a systematic narrative review of quantitative research published between 2010 and 2020 to identify and synthesize what is known about the employment outcomes of recent immigrants to Canada (Chapter 3).

Another limitation of the existing literature is that the majority of quantitative analyses are conducted at a national level with few studies reporting on provincial or city-level data (Akbari, 2011). There may be important differences within provinces and across cities that could highlight other factors that influence an immigrant's ability to integrate into employment successfully. Chapter 4 of this dissertation uses a systems

approach to map key stakeholders and organizations and to identify how a local system can create a context within which immigrants can effectively integrate into employment.

Finally, quantifying immigrant employment ignores the lived experiences of immigrant groups at a local level. Although qualitative studies that identify immigrant perspectives and experiences integrating into Canadian cities exist (Sano et al., 2017; Sethi & Williams, 2015; Subedi & Rosenberg, 2017), most address employment alongside other settlement needs such as housing (Drolet & Teixeira, 2022) and health (Subedi & Rosenberg, 2017). Therefore, Chapter 5 explores recent immigrant experiences in finding commensurate employment in a mid-sized city and examines how they actively engage in the pathway to employment.

1.3 Objectives

The overarching aim of this study is to examine the process of employment integration of recent immigrants through a local level analysis of one mid-sized city in Ontario. The specific objectives of the dissertation are to:

(1) Synthesize current evidence that examines employment outcomes of recent immigrants in their first five years after arrival (Chapter 3).

(2) Identify local services and stakeholders involved in the immigrant employment integration process, examine how they are interconnected and analyze their perspectives about potential challenges and opportunities for system change (Chapter 4).

(3) Explore the early employment experiences of recent immigrants to Guelph to identify strategies used and challenges confronted along the pathway to commensurate employment (Chapter 5).

1.4 Dissertation Organization

Six chapters comprise this dissertation. Chapter 1, the introduction, sets the context for the study by providing an overview of the current literature and identifying limitations and gaps. Chapter 2 includes the overarching research design and methodology used in this study. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 consist of manuscripts that address the main research objectives and are published (Chapters 3), accepted for publication (Chapter 4), or submitted to a peer-reviewed journal (Chapter 5). Chapter 6 offers a discussion of key findings and overall conclusions including research contributions, implications for policy, limitations of the study, and directions for future research.

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CHAPTER 2. Research Design and Methodology

This chapter provides a description of the methods used in Chapters 3, 4, and 5. It begins with an overview of the study design and methods used. Next, a summary of the city of Guelph is provided followed by a discussion of data collection and analysis. Finally, a summary of key ethical considerations is presented.

2.1 Research Design

A case study design was used to explore how recent immigrants integrate into employment in the mid-sized city of Guelph, Ontario. Case study is an inductive approach to research that focuses on the examination of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 2009). This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of one city to investigate how immigrants integrate into local society with a particular focus on the role of employment in the integration process. The study included a narrative review of published literature, systems map of immigrant employment in Guelph, a stakeholder analysis of representatives involved in the employment integration process, and semi-structured interviews with recent immigrants.

2.2 Case Selection

Guelph was chosen as a case study because it exemplifies the key characteristics that research has shown to be attractive to immigrants. The presence of a large immigrant population, the high-performing labour market, and its size and location relative to other large urban centres, including Toronto, make it an ideal case to study the employment integration of newly arrived immigrants (Esses et al., 2010; Haan, 2008; Hyndman et al., 2006).

The city of Guelph, with a population of 165,588, is a census metropolitan area

(CMA) located in southwestern Ontario (see Figure 2.1) (Statistics Canada, 2022a).

Based on Statistics Canada (2018) definitions, CMAs are cities with a population of more

than 100,000 and a central core that is geographically, socially, and economically

integrated with adjacent areas (see Appendix A. Census Definitions). According to the

2021 census, there are 41 CMAs in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2022a). Urban centres can

be further classified based on the number of residents (Bernard, 2008). Very large urban

centres include the three main CMAs of Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. Large urban

centres include CMAs with a population that exceeds 500,000. Mid-sized centres are

those with a population between 100,000 and 500,000 and small centres are those with

fewer than 50,000 residents (Bernard, 2008). Based on this classification, Guelph is

considered a mid-sized urban centre.

Figure 2.1

Map of Guelph CMA, 2022
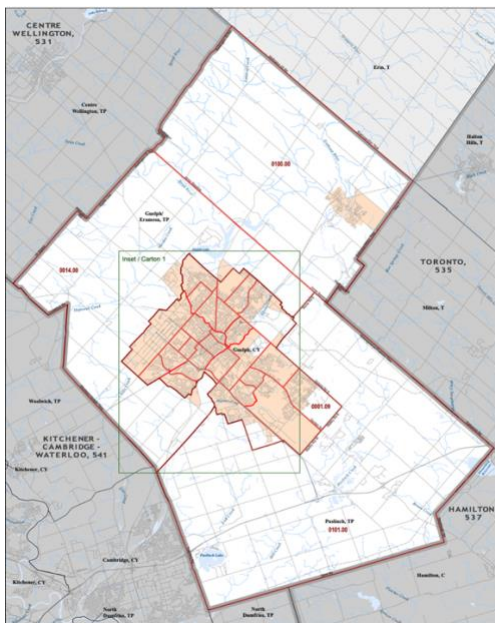
Source: *Statistics Canada, 2022b.*

As Figure 2.1 shows, the city is surrounded by other urban centres including Toronto (95 kilometres east), Hamilton (52 kilometers south), and Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo (29 kilometres west). According to the most recent census, Guelph was one of the fastest growing cities in Ontario with a 9% growth in population between 2016 and 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2022a). This growth is higher than the provincial (5.8%) and national levels (5.2%). Immigrants comprise 22.7% of the population, which is less than the provincial level of 30% and slightly below the national level of 23% (Statistics Canada, 2022c; 2022d). However, among the immigrant population, 16.9% (6,005) were recent immigrants who arrived between 2016 and 2021. This percentage is higher than both the provincial level of 13.9% and the national level of 15.9% (Statistics Canada, 2022c; 2022d).

The composition of immigration to Guelph has changed over time. In 2021, the top places of birth for all immigrants in Guelph were India, the United Kingdom, the Philippines, and Vietnam. Among recent immigrants, the top places of birth were India, Eritrea, the Philippines, and Syria (Statistics Canada, 2022d). Before 1980, the immigrant population in Guelph was primarily from Europe, with the United Kingdom, Italy, the Netherlands, and Germany composing the top source countries (Statistics Canada, 2022d). Although the immigrant population in Guelph has becomes more diverse over time, the racialized population (23.4%) remains below the national level of 26.5% and the provincial level of 34.3% (Statistics Canada, 2022e).

Among immigrants in Guelph, the largest percentage are economic applicants (45.7%), followed by the family class (29.9%) and refugees (23.8%). (Statistics Canada, 2022d). Interestingly, the proportion of refugees in Guelph is higher than both the

national (15.2%) and provincial levels (17.6%) despite not being a designated

Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) for refugees (Immigration, Refugees and

Citizenship Canada [IRCC], 2019).

Guelph is one of the leading cities in Canada in terms of job growth and low

unemployment (Singer, 2022). In September 2022, Guelph's unemployment rate was

3.9%, which was below the national rate of 5.2% and the provincial rate of 5.8%

(Statistics Canada, 2022f). The workforce participation rate was 67.9%, one of the

highest in the province (Statistics Canada, 2022f). The city has been identified as having

one of the best performing labour markets in Canada (Singer, 2022; Kavcic, 2022).

Three key sectors dominate Guelph's economy including advanced

manufacturing, agri-innovation, and biotechnology (City of Guelph, 2022). These

industries have been identified as having above average proportions of employment

based on labour force location quotients (LQs) (City of Guelph, 2022). LQs are used in

regional economic analysis to measure the percentage of jobs in a sector in a community

relative to the provincial and national percentages. A large LQ indicates that the share of

local jobs is greater in that sector than they are in the province or country, "indicating a

higher level of economic dependence locally on that sector" (City of Guelph, 2022, p.

30). A low LQ indicates that the share of local jobs is less than that in the province or

country, indicating the community is not economically dependent on that sector.

In addition, three other sectors have been identified as having rapid growth in

recent years. They include cleantech, information and communications technology, and

tourism (City of Guelph, 2022). Combined, these sectors provide opportunities for both

skilled and unskilled employment. The city also includes the University of Guelph, a

leading public research university and home to the Ontario Veterinary College (OVC) and Ontario Agriculture College (OAC). Enrolment comprises over 30,000 students, of which 1,750 are international students from across 30 countries (University of Guelph, 2022). The university is one of the city's largest employers and provides diverse opportunities to work in education, administration and the life sciences (Mulholland, 2006).

2.3 Systems Map

A systems map of immigrant employment services in Guelph was developed to identify key actors (organizations and individuals), explore the connections and relationships between them, and assess gaps in system functioning. System mapping is "an approach to identify and present a system in a structured way" (Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse [CCSA], 2014, p. 1). It connects the actors and their relationships to the larger system to understand how it responds to external factors (de Savigny & Adam, 2009). Within this context, a system is assumed to be self-organizing, constantly adapting, non-linear, governed by feedback, history dependent, counter-intuitive, and resistant to change (de Savigny & Adam, 2009). By taking a systems approach, the emphasis shifts away from the individual to identify and analyze the structures, mechanisms and interrelated elements that function to create barriers.

Using the CCSA method of system mapping, the following steps were undertaken: definition of the problem, clarification of the goals, determination of information to be collected, determination of how to collect the information, identification of who will be involved, creation of the map, interpretation of the results, and communication of the findings (CCAS, 2014). The goal of the mapping exercise was

to identify all community-based services available to new immigrants to aid in their integration into employment. Despite Guelph's high performing labour market, immigrants do struggle to find employment in their first few years after arrival. An understanding of how the system is organized and functions would provide insight into where there may be potential challenges and opportunities to improve.

The required information included an inventory of immigrant service providers/non-governmental organizations (NGOs), municipal government actors involved in policy and programming for new immigrants, language training programs and services, a list of employers who hire new immigrants, and census information on the socio-demographic characteristics of recent immigrants settling in the city. A search of grey literature was conducted to identify all existing immigrant-related organizations in the city of Guelph and relevant documents to support the researcher's understanding of the local context.

Government and non-government organizational websites were searched for policy documents, research reports, and any other relevant information that could be used to develop the systems map. Service provider websites were searched to identify all existing immigrant-related organizations in the city of Guelph. A snowball technique was then used to identify language training programs and other services that support employment for newcomers. Once a list of all services was developed, representatives from key organizations were contacted to participate in an interview (see stakeholder analysis for details). An analysis of all information gathered was used to construct the map and identify gaps in services and programs. Results were triangulated with other data sources to ensure the map was a valid depiction of the immigrant employment system in

Guelph. Findings from the map were shared with service providers to validate the map and to obtain feedback on its relevancy.

2.4 Stakeholder Analysis

A stakeholder analysis was conducted to obtain the perspectives of key actors on the employment integration of newcomers to the city of Guelph. Stakeholders are actors with a vested interest in a policy or program and include individuals or groups who influence policy or are affected by policy (Burgha & Varvasovszky, 2000; Schmeer, 2000). A stakeholder identification framework was used to ensure a systematic approach that includes representation of diverse perspectives (Schiller et al., 2013). Five categories with sub-groups were identified: (1) Policymakers and governments, (2) Settlement service providers, (3) Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), (4) Language services, and (5) Employers. Purposive sampling was used to recruit stakeholders (Schiller et al., 2013). A total of 14 stakeholders were interviewed (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1

Interview Participants by Stakeholder Groups

Category	Number	Percent
1. Policymakers and government	2	14.2
2. Settlement service providers	2	14.2
3. NGOs	3	21.4
4. Language services	1	7.1
5. Employers	6	42.8
Total	14	100

Stakeholders were contacted via email and asked to participate in a virtual interview using Zoom. All participants were emailed an information letter in advance and consent was obtained verbally before each interview. Interviews were conducted between March and August 2021. Semi-structured guides were constructed according to stakeholder analysis guidelines to obtain perspectives of potential challenges and opportunities for system change (Schmeer et al., 2000). Service providers and NGOs were interviewed about their role in the employment process, their perspectives on the challenges in the system, and their ideas for system-level improvements. Employers were asked about their strategies for hiring and integrating newcomers into their workplaces (see Appendix B for complete interview guide).

Interviews lasted 40 to 80 minutes and were recorded and transcribed verbatim. All interview data were coded into QSR N-Vivo 12.0. Themes were abstracted using a constant comparative method of analysis (Fram, 2013). Preliminary coding was carried out by two members of the research team who coded several texts independently. Team members then collaborated to develop a refined scheme for coding the texts. Major themes were highlighted, and key findings were categorized appropriately under each thematic heading. Results from the document review and stakeholder interviews were triangulated to complete the systems map. Finally, member checking was used to ensure the map was a valid depiction of the local system.

2.5 Semi-Structured Interviews

Grounded theory methods were used to interview immigrants who arrived in Canada within the last 10 years and were either employed or seeking employment in the city of Guelph. Grounded theory focuses on building theory from data that is

systematically gathered and analyzed (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Data is collected and analyzed simultaneously through a process of constant comparison (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As Charmaz and Belgrave (2012) explain, because grounded theory seeks to identify issues of importance to participants, qualitative interviews "fit grounded theory methods particularly well" (p. 676). Interviewing provides researchers with the flexibility to allow ideas and issues to emerge during the interview that can be pursued immediately and in subsequent interviews (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012).

Sample and Data Collection

Participants were recruited through the federally funded Guelph-Wellington Immigrant Services and other employment agencies serving immigrants. Recruitment flyers were emailed to immigrants who met the inclusion criteria for participation in the study (see Appendix C for recruitment poster). Table 2.2 presents the inclusion/exclusion criteria for participation.

Table 2.2

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria for Immigrant Sample

Inclusion	Exclusion
Immigrated to Canada in the last 10 years	Immigrated to Canada over 10 years
Economic, family, refugee, student	Temporary foreign workers
Employed or actively seeking employment	Individuals not employed and not seeking employment
Conversational English	Unable to speak English in a conversational capacity
Female/Woman Male/Man Trans Woman Trans Man Two-Spirit Non-binary	
Between 18 and 64 years	
Resident of Guelph CMA	

A total of 20 immigrants were purposefully sampled. Purposeful sampling allows for the identification and selection of information-rich cases and involves selecting individuals that are experienced with the phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2007). Interviews took place between August and October 2020. A semi-structured interview guide was developed based on key ideas from the literature and in consultation with the research committee. Immigrants were asked about their experiences settling in a mid-sized community, their perceptions and use of settlement services, and their experiences related to finding employment including barriers and facilitators to employment integration (see Appendix D for full interview guide). A demographic data form was completed at the beginning of each interview (see Appendix E). Interviews lasted between 40 and 60 minutes, were conducted via Zoom and were transcribed verbatim.

Data Analysis

A constant comparative method of analysis was used to compare immigrants based on gender, age, immigrant category, and employment status (employed/unemployed) (Fram, 2013). Specifically, the procedures employed throughout the data collection phase followed a sequence of interview, transcription, analysis, reflection, and modification. As Strauss and Corbin (1990) explain, the first stage of analysis involves open coding wherein the goal is "to discover, name, and categorize phenomena . . . [and] to uncover as many potentially relevant categories as possible" (p. 181). The first few interviews followed a semi-structured interview guide with questions focused on key ideas discovered from the existing literature.

Data from these initial interviews were coded using line-by-line analysis in order to name categories relevant to the research question. As Morse (1994) argues, "line-by-line analysis of an interview transcript from one participant is the primary mechanism by which understanding is achieved" (p. 29). It also allows the researcher to reflect on the questions being asked and modify or adapt the interview guide based on the responses. This "analytic sensitivity" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 183) helps to focus the subsequent interviews in order to gain better understanding of immigrants' perceptions.

As new categories emerge from the data, axial coding replaced open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Throughout this phase, relationships between salient categories were connected and integrated. The last phase of coding involved selective coding and included abstraction and organization of the main categories to form a conceptual framework of immigrant employment integration (Fram, 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Trustworthiness

According to Polit and Beck (2014) trustworthiness is related to the quality of a research study and refers to confidence in the data collection, interpretation of the findings and rigour of the methods used. Lincoln and Guba (1985) outline four criteria for establishing trustworthiness of a study: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility determines how close findings are to the reality of the participants (Connelly, 2016). To assess credibility, this study used member checking and conducted periodic checks with the participants during each interview to verify interpretations of what was being said and to ensure their meanings are not misunderstood. Additionally, peer debriefing was used to "probe, explore meanings and clarify interpretations" and to "test working hypotheses that emerge" (Lincoln & Guba,

1985, p. 308). Two members of the research committee coded five interview transcripts and engaged in a debriefing session to explore interpretations of the ideas emerging from the data.

Dependability refers to the consistency of the data over time and across participants (Polit & Beck, 2014). This was achieved by ensuring transparency of the research steps through record-keeping and maintaining memos throughout the study. Confirmability involves neutrality and determines the degree to which findings can be confirmed by other researchers (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To establish confirmability, an audit trail of records that emerge throughout the research process was kept (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Memo writing was employed as the primary method of tracking emerging themes and ideas throughout the data collection and analysis process. Memos represent a written form of the dialogue occurring between the researcher and the data and represent a ". . . crucial intermediate step that moves the analysis forward" (Charmaz, 2002, p. 687). Immediately following each interview, ideas that arose throughout the interview process were documented in a reflexive journal to track any personal biases and/or assumptions.

Finally, transferability was considered. Transferability measures the extent that findings can be generalized to other contexts and participants. For this study, transferability was achieved by the development of a thick detailed description of the context of the setting including details of the settlement services and employment landscape of the selected city. The detail provided allows readers of the study to determine whether the overall findings apply to other contexts and settings.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethics approval was received from the McMaster Research Ethics Board (MREB#: 5302) on March 8, 2020. Information and consent forms provided participants with information regarding the purpose of the study, procedures involved, potential harms or risks, potential benefits, and their right to withdraw at any time during the study (see Appendix F). As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews were conducted via Zoom and consent to participate was obtained verbally. Following the interviews with immigrants, a list of resources was made available to participants with information about local counselling and employment services (see Appendix E).

Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study. All participant information was de-identified and each participant was given an alpha-numeric code that was linked to their demographic data and audio recording. The data and participant codes were stored on a secure, password protected computer. Any quotations used in the study findings were anonymized.

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CHAPTER 3. Immigrant Employment Integration in Canada: A Narrative Review

Preface

This chapter is published in the *Canadian Ethnic Studies= Études ethniques au Canada* journal. I was responsible for conceptualizing the research question, study design, and methods, through consultations my supervisor Dr. Bruce Newbold. I conducted the search and selection of relevant papers for the review, the thematic analysis of the included studies and the writing of the manuscript. Drs. Andrea Baumann and Margaret Walton-Roberts provided feedback on the drafts, which were incorporated into the final version of the chapter. Permission has been provided to McMaster University to reprint this article as part of this dissertation.

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Original Research Paper

A Narrative Review of Immigrant Employment Integration in Canada

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Abstract

International migration has increased globally over the past two decades with migrants currently representing 3.5% of the world's population. As a top destination country, Canada's immigration policy selects some of the most highly skilled and educated migrants. Yet, upon arrival, many face challenges finding employment that matches their skills and qualifications. Extensive research has emerged that seeks to identify barriers to immigrant employment and the determinants of their success in the labour market. This article presents the results of a narrative review of literature on the employment outcomes of recent immigrants to Canada. A total of 33 articles published between 2010 and 2020 were reviewed. Results indicate both individual and contextual causes for a lag in commensurate employment. Characteristics such as immigration class, education and experience, place of settlement, gender, and visible minority status were identified as significant variables. Changing local labour markets, underemployment and underutilization of immigrant skills, and the impact of social networks on attaining employment also emerged as important factors. Canada's immigration policy is widely perceived as an exemplar model for attracting skilled migrants. However, when compared to countries like Australia and the United States, newcomers to Canada face challenges integrating into employment efficiently and effectively. Findings from this review offer insight for policymakers to improve employment outcomes through innovations adaptable to local labour markets that promote immigrants' rapid entry into commensurate employment.

Keywords: Immigrants, employment, integration, narrative review, immigration policy.

3.1 Introduction

International migration has increased globally over the past two decades. Currently, migrants represent 3.5% of the world's population (International Organization for Migration [IOM] 2019). Like many Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, Canada ranks as a top destination for international migrants. Likewise, it relies on immigration to drive population and economic growth. The country's long-established labour migration program has been designed and modified over time to attract highly skilled, highly educated immigrants who are more likely to succeed in the labour market. As a result, the migrant population is one of the highest educated in the OECD (OECD 2019). Yet, evidence suggests that new immigrants perform poorly in the labour market when compared to their Canadian-born counterparts (Kaushik and Drolet 2018; Newman, Bimrose, Nielsen, and Zacher 2018; Yssaad and Fields 2018). Although there are reports of slight improvements in employment rates of immigrants over time, unemployment rates are high and entry wages are low relative to the Canadian-born population (Crossman, Hou and Picot 2021; Wong 2020).

There is extensive research focused on the factors that affect immigrant employment in Canada (Aydemir & Skuterud, 2005; Banerjee, 2009; Fuller & Martin, 2012; Green & Green, 2004; Hou & Picot, 2014; Reitz, 2007a; 2007b). The goal of this paper is to review the evidence to identify what is known about immigrant employment in the first five years after arrival. When examining employment, most authors focus on economic integration, defined as the extent to which the labour market performance of

immigrants converges to the Canadian-born population (Ali & Newbold, 2020; Frank, 2013; Fuller & Martin, 2012; Hira-Friesen, 2018a; Li, 2003). For this review, studies that include a measure of employment such as employment rates, wages, and earnings as an outcome of economic integration were examined. Findings offer insight for policymakers to improve employment outcomes through innovations adaptable to local labour markets that promote immigrants' rapid entry into commensurate employment.

Context

Immigrants comprise 21.9% of the Canadian population and this number is expected to rise substantially over the next few years (Statistics Canada, 2018). Many immigrants enter Canada under the economic class through a variety of programs including the federally based Express Entry, which includes three streams: Federal Skilled Worker Program, Federal Skilled Trades, and Canadian Experience Class; the Provincial Nominee Program and the Quebec Skilled Worker Class (Statistics Canada, 2017). Over the past few decades, Canadian immigration legislation has undergone significant changes that have had an impact on the types of immigrants entering the country. In the 1960s, the selection process shifted away from assessing eligibility based on preferred regions of the world to assessing individual skill levels to meet the labour needs of the nation. The Points-Based Assessment (PBA) system was introduced in 1967 to evaluate applicants based on human capital categories such as age, education, and work experience (Anwar, 2014). This policy reform was driven by the growing recognition that Canada's economic challenges could be solved in part by increasing the pool of skilled immigrants.

Over time, the system evolved to prioritize immigrants with high educational credentials and skills. Studies indicate that changing selection criteria have favoured individuals who are more likely to succeed in the labour market (Aydemir, 2011; Ferrer & Riddell, 2008; Reitz et al., 2014). Yet, many face significant challenges integrating into commensurate employment upon arrival (Akbari & Aydede, 2013). The demand for Canadian experience, challenges to credential recognition, a lack of recognition of previous work experience and limited language proficiency have been consistently identified in the literature as barriers to employment for new immigrants (Banerjee & Phan, 2014; Fuller & Vosko, 2008).

An early review of the immigrant employment literature identified four determinants of success: (i) policy and settlement patterns; (ii) immigrant assimilation over time; (iii) devaluation of foreign education and experience; and (iv) place of origin of immigrants and the possibility of discrimination (Reitz, 2007a and 2007b). Findings from this research provided a framework for policy to improve immigrant employment outcomes. More than a decade since the review was published, data continue to show a lag in employment for newly arriving immigrants to Canada (Kaushik & Drolet, 2018; Newman et al., 2018). An updated review of the research is needed to assess emerging trends and identify significant factors associated with immigrant employment outcomes.

This study addresses the broad research question: what is known about the employment outcomes of immigrants in their first five years in Canada? The article presents an overview of the changing characteristics of immigrants to Canada, the nature of their employment after arrival and how their employment outcomes compare to new immigrants in other countries. It assesses how employment is measured and the

contextual factors that contribute to immigrant integration into the Canadian economy. Results indicate that newly arrived immigrants are at a disadvantage when integrating into employment. At a national level, they are more likely to be underemployed and work in precarious jobs when compared to Canadian-born workers. However, their employment outcomes vary regionally and when compared across immigrant groups.

3.2 Methodology

A systematic review using a narrative synthesis approach to analysis was conducted to identify studies focused on immigrant employment outcomes (Popay et al., 2006). Narrative synthesis is a technique used to systematically review and organize data from different study designs (Ryan, 2013). A narrative rather than statistical method was employed for several reasons. First, a meta-analysis was not possible due to the limited number of interventional or experimental studies available. Second, due to the variety of research designs and analytic techniques used, it was not possible to pool data statistically. Third, the heterogeneity of studies identified meant that a quantitative comparison of outcomes was problematic. Therefore, the use of a narrative synthesis approach was chosen to summarize and explain the findings of the studies reviewed through words and text (Popay et al., 2006).

Search Strategy

Electronic databases were searched systematically and comprehensively to identify observational studies published in peer-review journals. The following databases were searched: EBSCOhost, ProQuest, Web of Science, Social Sciences Abstracts, and Sociological Abstracts. Keywords included 'immigr*' OR 'migrant*' AND 'employ*' AND 'integration' OR 'labour market participation' OR 'labour market outcomes'.

Backward and forward citation searches were completed for the included studies. Reference lists from relevant research articles were also reviewed for potential research studies. Duplicate articles were removed from the original database interfaces. All studies identified were from electronic databases.

This review focused on Canadian literature published in English between 2010 and 2020. Studies were eligible for inclusion if the target population included recent immigrants, defined as having immigrated within five years of the study period through the economic, family, or refugee class. Temporary foreign workers, children of immigrants and international students were excluded. Studies that included a measure of labour market participation such as earnings, wages, or employment were eligible for inclusion. Any study with outcomes related to unpaid labour or indicators of health and well-being were excluded. As the aim of the review was to examine factors associated with employment outcomes of new immigrants, only quantitative studies were included. Although qualitative studies provide important insights into immigrant employment experiences, they generally do not focus on outcome measures of employment. Additionally, we were interested in studies that allowed for the generalization of outcomes across populations.

Study selection was done based on the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) Flow Diagram (Moher et al., 2009). Titles and abstracts were screened for relevance using the inclusion/exclusion criteria to remove ineligible articles. Full texts of selected articles were retrieved and subjected to a full review. Data were extracted and documented in an Excel spreadsheet with the following information: author(s) last name, date of publication, title of study, title of the journal,

research question, study design, methods employed (including the name of secondary databases), key variables included in the models, overall findings, and limitations.

The framework for analysis included three stages: (1) development of a synthesis of findings; (2) exploring relationships within and between studies; and (3) assessing the robustness of the synthesis (Popay et al., 2006). A preliminary synthesis was developed to describe the results of the included studies and identify patterns in the factors affecting immigrant employment outcomes. As patterns emerged, relationships within and between studies were examined to further understand the factors that facilitate or delay immigrant employment. The analysis led to an overall assessment of the strength of the evidence for making conclusions based on the synthesis (Popay et al., 2006).

3.3 Results

The combined search strategy yielded 1,175 citations (Figure 3.1). The search was narrowed by applying the following filters: Region = Canada, Language = English, Date Range = 2010-2020, Type of article = Peer-reviewed. Once duplicates were removed, a total of 555 citations remained. The records were screened for eligibility based on titles and abstracts. After the inclusion/exclusion criteria were applied, 514 citations were removed because they did not include a quantitative study design, did not report on employment as an outcome or did not focus on newly arrived immigrants (less than five years in Canada). The remaining 41 full-text papers were downloaded and reviewed for relevance. Of those, eight articles were removed because they did not measure employment as an outcome. A total of 33 articles were included in the narrative review.

Figure 3.1

PRISMA Flow Diagram of Study Selection.
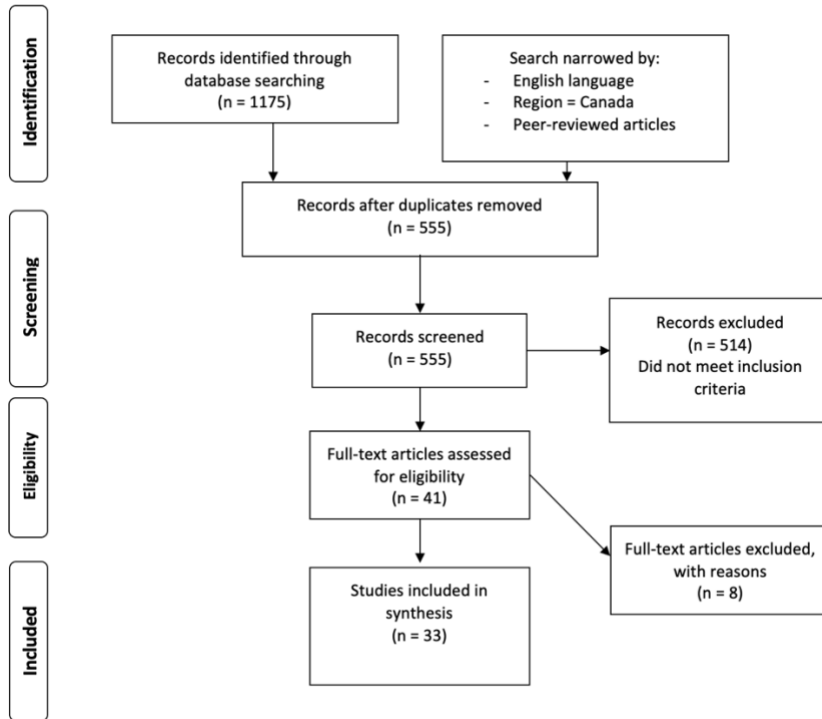
Description of Selected Studies

In all studies except one, the authors analyzed national datasets to examine and compare representative samples of immigrants to the domestic-born population. Many studies focused on participants between 18 and 64 years of age. Twenty-seven of the studies included both male and female immigrants in their sample, four studies targeted only male immigrants and three studies included only female immigrants (Adsera & Ferrer, 2016; Buhr, 2010; Clarke et al., 2019; Esmaeilzadeh et al., 2018; Fang & Heywood, 2010; Imai, et al., 2019; Majerski, 2019).

Over half of the studies (N = 17) compared immigrant employment outcomes to the Canadian-born population, while the other half examined employment outcomes

between groups of immigrants (N = 15). The primary outcomes of the studies included employment, wages, and earnings. Employment was measured using two approaches: (i) as an employment rate calculated by dividing the total number of immigrants in each cohort with any employment earnings by the total number of immigrants (Bevelander & Pendakur, 2014); (ii) as a category of employment status including full-time, part-time, and precarious forms of employment (temporary and contract) (Ali & Newbold, 2020; Fuller & Martin, 2012; Hira-Friesen, 2018a; Hira-Friesen, 2018b). Only one study used a binary coding of individuals as employed or not employed (Aydemir, 2011).

Earnings were defined as either average weekly or monthly earnings from a main job or as entry earnings which included an individual's average annual earnings during the first full two years after becoming a permanent resident (Akbar, 2019; Buhr, 2010; Elrick & Lightman, 2016; Sweetman & Warman, 2013). Several studies in this review used Canada's Occupational Informational Network (O*NET) to define high-skilled versus low-skilled employment (Adsera & Ferrer, 2016; Boyd & Tian, 2017; Boyd & Tian, 2018; Frank, 2013; Fuller & Martin, 2012; Lu & Hou, 2020; Warman & Worswick, 2015). O*NET is a detailed and comprehensive repository of information about hundreds of jobs categorized into occupational task units (Imai, Stacey, & Warman, 2019). The data is used to create portfolios of skills needed for each occupation. The skills can then be ranked from high-order cognitive skills to lower-level manual skills and used to compare high-skill occupations to low-skill occupations.

Narrative Synthesis Findings

The main themes that emerged from the analysis clustered around three areas: immigrant characteristics and employment outcomes; structural barriers to employment; and international comparisons.

Immigrant Characteristics and Employment Outcomes

Over half of the studies reviewed identified individual-level factors that impact immigrant employment and earnings including the immigration class, human capital characteristics, the size of the immigration cohort, place of settlement, visible minority status and gender. A key area of interest for researchers is related to the impact of Canada's points system on the labour market outcomes of new immigrants. In this review, three studies compared employment outcomes across immigrant classes. In two of the studies, the authors were interested in comparing employment rates and earnings of immigrant groups two years after arrival (Aydemir, 2011; Sweetman & Warman, 2013). Their findings demonstrate that economic immigrants had a slight employment advantage and higher earnings compared to the family class and refugee groups (Aydemir, 2011; Sweetman & Warman, 2013). However, it was noted that in some cases, Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs) did as well as the economic group in the first two years after migration (Sweetman & Warman, 2013).

A third study compared the employment and earnings outcomes of PSRs and Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs) up to 15 years after landing (Kaida et al., 2020). After controlling for differences in education, language, and other demographic characteristics, PSRs were more likely to be employed and earn more than GARs. These

differences were greater in the first two years after arrival but narrowed over time (Kaida et al., 2020).

Four studies investigated the relationship between human capital and employment outcomes of recent immigrants. Human capital focuses on achieved characteristics such as education and work experience to explain differences in employment outcomes (Frank, 2013). In general, studies indicate that immigrant entry earnings are lower when compared to the Canadian-born population (Hou & Picot, 2016). However, variables such as higher educational attainment and pre-landing Canadian work experience have a positive effect on immigrant earnings in the early years after migration (Hou & Picot, 2016).

An immigrant's ability to enter the labour market rapidly has a significant impact on their employment outcomes (Frank, 2013; Fuller & Martin, 2012). The studies reviewed indicate language proficiency is more important than any other variable in getting a job. A lack of language fluency limits employment options and hinders educational upgrading, particularly for women and highly educated men. Lower-level jobs that do not require knowledge of English or French language are more accessible to newcomers but are often less appealing to higher-skilled workers. Regardless of the type of job, individuals who can integrate into the labour market quickly have the highest earnings four years after entry (Fuller & Martin, 2012).

One strategy that recent immigrants use to improve their employment outcomes involves engaging in further education and training in Canada upon arrival. Two studies examined returns to investments in education and skills acquired in Canada compared to education and skills acquired abroad (Ci, Laing, Voia, & Worswick, 2020; Manuel &

Plesca, 2020). Immigrants educated in Canada had a higher earnings advantage and higher returns to their communication, logical and technical skills compared to those educated abroad (Ci et al., 2020; Manuel & Plesca, 2020). It was noted that despite the positive selection of highly educated immigrants, "this does not compensate for their disadvantage in transferring their skills to the Canadian labour market" (Manuel & Plesca, 2020, p. 1426).

An interesting debate among scholars is whether annual immigration levels should closely follow business cycles. Historically, immigration was increased during periods of economic expansion and decreased during periods of recession. More recently, annual targets are set by the government to counteract the effects of an aging population and skilled labour shortages (Hou & Picot, 2014). One study reviewed examined the impact of immigration level (i.e., cohort size) on entry earnings over time. The data demonstrate that an increase in the size of the cohort is associated with a decrease in wages. However, this effect diminished when macroeconomic indicators such as unemployment rates were included in the model. The authors concluded that although cohort size is important, it is just one of many factors that should be considered in immigration policymaking (Hou & Picot, 2014).

Geographic location is another area of interest to researchers in understanding the factors that affect immigrant employment outcomes (Sano, Kaida, & Swiss, 2017). Many immigrants tend to settle in one of Canada's three largest urban centres – Montreal, Vancouver, and Toronto (Statistics Canada, 2017). Yet, the studies reviewed show that those who settle outside a metropolitan centre have higher returns to foreign education and credentials and find jobs that match their skills and qualifications faster than those

living in urban centres (Frank, 2013; Sano et al., 2017). These findings suggest that regional recruitment of immigrants to meet local labour market demands may enhance the successful economic integration of new immigrants, particularly in non-traditional settings.

Research has shown that visible minorities face an additional set of challenges integrating into the Canadian labour market (Fuller & Vosko, 2008; Sethi & Williams, 2015; Stewart, Neufeld, Harrison, Spitzer et al., 2006). Four of the studies reviewed compared employment outcomes of visible and non-visible minority immigrant groups. Three of the studies focused on specific groups including Nepalese, Bangladeshi and Afghan immigrants (Akbar, 2019; O'Neill et al., 2019; Pendakur, 2020). One study examined a national sample of immigrants and compared them to the Canadian-born (Lightman & Gingrich, 2018). Across all studies, visible minorities had lower employment prospects and earnings when compared to other non-visible minority groups. There was a persistent disadvantage linked to immigrant status, race, and gender in Canada's labour market. Visible minority immigrants, recent immigrants and women faced the greatest challenges (Lightman & Gingrich, 2018).

Four of the studies reviewed focused on the employment outcomes of female immigrants (Adsera & Ferrer, 2016; Buhr, 2010; Fang & Heywood, 2010; Fitzsimmons, Baggs, & Brannen, 2020). Overall, the studies demonstrate that immigrant women participate in the labour market and experience wage gains over time. However, their rate of employment and earnings do not converge with the domestic-born population even after living in Canada for more than 10 years (Adsera & Ferrer, 2016). This was evident even among skilled workers and professional groups. In an analysis of female immigrant

nurse earnings, it was found that immigrant registered nurses suffered wage penalties compared to Canadian-born registered nurses (Buhr, 2010). Similarly, in comparing pay and attainment of a supervisory position, it was shown that immigrant women of colour suffered the largest disadvantage in both outcomes (Fitzsimmons et al., 2020).

Structural Barriers to Employment

One-third of the studies reviewed examined the causes of poor employment outcomes of immigrants to Canada. The key areas that emerged as potential explanations included a rise in precarious employment, an underutilization of immigrant skills, and a lack of access to professional networks. Three of the studies reviewed showed a notable rise in precarious employment among new immigrants to Canada (Ali & Newbold, 2020; Hira-Friesen, 2018a; Hira-Friesen, 2018b). In the most recent study, Ali and Newbold (2020) were interested in examining precarious employment among immigrants and how it varied in different regions across the country (national, provincial, census-metropolitan areas, and urban/rural areas). Results indicated that immigrants are more likely than the Canadian-born to be employed in precarious jobs across all regions. However, temporary and involuntary work among immigrants was most prevalent in Atlantic provinces compared to Western provinces and more likely in rural areas compared to urban areas (Ali & Newbold, 2020).

In a series of studies, Hira-Friesen (2018a) explored precarious employment among landed immigrants and the Canadian-born. Recent immigrants were more likely to be employed in involuntary part-time work than established immigrants and the Canadian-born. Interestingly, as immigrant education levels increased, the likelihood of being a multiple job holder also increased. In a second study, Hira-Friesen (2018b)

examined the relationship between precarious work and immigrant earnings. Again, recent immigrants experienced an earnings disadvantage that was worsened by being employed in a precarious job. The author noted that although both males and females struggle to integrate economically, the disparity in earnings was greater for women immigrants (Hira-Friesen, 2018b).

Underemployment is defined as a mismatch in skills where an employee's skills are more advanced than what is required on the job (Ng & Gagnon, 2020). Studies have consistently shown that immigrants are underemployed due to structural barriers that exist in the Canadian labour market (Banerjee & Phan, 2014; Boyd & Tian, 2017; Frank, 2013; Imai et al., 2019). These include a lack of recognition for foreign credentials, the devaluation of education and skills and an immigrant's lack of social capital in Canada.

Two of the studies reviewed focused on the employment outcomes of immigrants in professional occupations (Banerjee & Phan, 2014; Boyd & Tian, 2017). Banerjee and Phan (2014) compared the occupational status of new immigrants in regulated professions to those in non-regulated professions. A change in occupational status was derived from the difference between the status scores of the main job in Canada and that of the last job held in their home country. A high negative score reflected a greater drop in occupational status. Many immigrants in regulated professions faced a decline in occupational status when they first arrived in Canada and fewer than one-third found employment in a regulated occupation four years after arrival (Banerjee & Phan, 2014).

Another study assessed the extent to which immigrants with STEM education find employment in their area of expertise after migration (Boyd & Tian, 2017). They identified STEM occupations using the National Occupational Classification (NOC)

system and compared weekly earnings between immigrants and their domestic-born counterparts. Immigrants with a STEM education were less likely to work in a STEM occupation and had lower weekly earnings compared to STEM-educated Canadians. The earnings gap was greater for immigrants who were not working in a STEM occupation.

Three of the studies focused on labour market outcomes of highly skilled immigrants by analyzing skill requirements of different occupations (Frank, 2013; Imai et al., 2019; Warman & Worswick, 2015). It was found that immigrants were more likely to accept positions in occupations that have higher manual skills upon arrival (Imai et al., 2019). As a result, there was a significant decline in earnings related to the manual occupational task requirements of jobs held by immigrants in Canada (Imai et al., 2019; Warman & Worswick, 2015). The authors suggest both human capital and occupational task requirements as predictors of immigrant employment success.

In addition to human capital, studies have examined social capital as a contributing factor to employment. In one study, social capital theory was used as a framework to investigate the role of social networks in immigrant earnings and occupational attainment over time (Majerski, 2019). It was one of the first studies to examine networks among all immigrants in Canada and to compare across different groups of immigrants. Majerski identified that having strong social networks was negatively associated with earnings for recent immigrants to Canada. Most immigrants locate their first job through friends and close relatives who may be employed in low-skilled jobs and have a limited understanding of how the Canadian labour market operates (Majerski, 2019). Recent immigrants have not had enough time to establish ties

"in a variety of labour markets [with] access to a greater variety of jobs and more potential for occupational mobility" (Majerski, 2019, p. 332).

International Comparisons

Three studies compared employment between recent immigrants to Canada and those immigrating to other countries. Findings were mixed and varied by immigration class. For skilled immigrants, those who migrated to Canada had lower entry wages and full-time earnings compared to immigrants in the USA but were similar to those who immigrated to Australia (Bevelander & Pendakur, 2014; Bonikowska et al., 2011; Lu & Hou, 2020). For the refugee and family class groups, immigrant employment was similar between Canada and Sweden, but earnings were higher for those living in Canada (Bevelander & Pendakur, 2014).

The concept of overeducation, operationalized as the mismatch between an immigrant's education and occupation, has been used to explain the differences in employment outcomes between skilled immigrants in Canada and the USA (Lu & Hou, 2020). The researchers argue that "an oversupply of highly educated immigrants exists in Canada and that this oversupply contributes to the overeducation problem facing recent immigrants in the country" (Lu & Hou, 2020, p. 1088). They suggest that an employment-based immigration selection system like the US may be more effective at balancing immigrant supply with local labour market demand (Lu & Hou, 2020).

3.4 Discussion

This review examined existing evidence on the employment outcomes of recent immigrants to Canada. Findings were consistent across all studies reviewed. Recent immigrants, defined as those living in Canada for less than five years, face employment

challenges and are at an economic disadvantage when compared to the Canadian-born population (Kaushik & Drolet, 2018; Newman et al., 2018; Wong, 2020). The results confirm years of research that demonstrates the disconnect between selection policies that prioritize highly skilled immigrants and the reality of integrating them into commensurate employment. This article contributes new knowledge by highlighting significant factors that influence the efficient and effective integration of immigrants into employment (Baumann et al., 2011).

Studies reviewed revealed the importance of immigrants attaining employment within their first few years of settlement (Frank, 2013; Fuller & Martin, 2012). When a successful job match does not occur within this timeframe, immigrant wages and earnings remain significantly lower than the Canadian-born population (Frank, 2013; Fuller & Martin, 2012). A complex mix of individual characteristics and contextual factors were identified as significant in shaping immigrant employment outcomes. For example, immigration class was an important predictor of employment success for recent immigrants. Individuals who entered Canada under an economic stream had a higher likelihood of attaining employment in their chosen occupation compared to those who entered under the family class or refugee group (Aydemir, 2011; Manuel & Plesca, 2020; Sweetman & Warman, 2013).

Additionally, settlement location had an effect on the employment outcomes of newcomers to Canada. Immigrants who chose to settle outside of a major metropolitan area integrated into employment more rapidly than those who settled in a large urban centre (Frank, 2013). Studies suggest this is due to less competition and higher returns to foreign education for immigrants who settle in smaller centres (Ci et al., 2020; Manuel &

Plesca, 2020). When examining the data by type of employment, there were regional patterns in precarious employment of new immigrants to Canada. At a national level, higher shares of immigrants were employed in precarious work compared to Canadian-born workers (Ali & Newbold, 2020). At a provincial level, higher shares of immigrants were employed in precarious work in the Atlantic and Western regions of Canada compared to the Central regions of Canada (Ali & Newbold, 2020). Furthermore, within the Central regions of Ontario and Quebec, immigrants living in large urban centres were overrepresented in temporary and involuntary employment compared to those living in smaller centres.

Studies also suggest that structural changes in the Canadian labour market have had a significant impact on the type of employment available to newly arriving immigrants. A rise in the service sector and changes in technologies have resulted in an increasing "gig" economy characterized by precarious work (Hira-Friesen, 2018a; Lewchuk, 2017). Data demonstrate that recent immigrants are disproportionately employed in precarious jobs which many identify as "survival" work (Subedi & Rosenberg, 2017). Scholars partly attribute the high rates of precarious employment to a lack of social capital among recent immigrants (Majerski, 2019). Many locate their first job through friends and close relatives who may be employed in low-skilled jobs. Additionally, they lack ties with individuals who could assist them in attaining commensurate employment or mentor them to seek positions that match their intended occupation (Majerski, 2019).

Working in precarious employment results in economic insecurity and difficulty adapting to work (Chen et al., , 2010; Lewchuk, 2017; Premji, 2018). For skilled

immigrants, being underemployed has an even greater impact on their employment and earnings over time (Banerjee & Phan, 2014; Frank, 2013). For example, studies that focused on immigrants educated in STEM fields demonstrated that foreign-educated workers were less likely to be employed in a job requiring a university education compared to their Canadian-born counterparts (Boyd & Tian, 2017; Boyd & Tian, 2018). This was also true of immigrants in regulated professions such as nurses and engineers (Banerjee & Phan, 2014; Buhr, 2010). A lack of recognition of foreign education and credentials leads to lower wages and an earnings gap between immigrants and the Canadian-born (Aydemir & Skuterud, 2005; Banerjee, 2009).

A notable finding of this review was that highly educated, highly skilled workers that immigrate to Canada fare worse than those who immigrate to the USA (Bonikowska et al., 2011; Clarke, Ferrer, & Skuterud, 2019). Researchers argue that Canada's selection system, which is based on established targets rather than labour market demand, results in an oversupply of skilled immigrants. They recommend Canada's immigration system follow an employment-based model like the USA that includes employer input into the selection of immigrants based on local labour market demand.

Findings from this review have important implications for policymakers. First, investing in programs that enhance rapid matching with commensurate employment of recent immigrants can improve outcomes and accelerate integration into the Canadian economy. Second, creating regional policies that focus on local labour market demand can increase immigration to smaller centres and promote employment at the community level. Finally, working with businesses to increase awareness of the value of hiring

immigrants would improve employer engagement and increase uptake of recent immigrants into employment.

Although there is extensive research identifying factors associated with employment outcomes of recent immigrants to Canada, gaps remain in our understanding of how they successfully integrate into commensurate employment. In almost all the studies reviewed, the analysis was conducted at a national level with only a few studies reporting provincial or city-level data. An examination of how immigrants integrate into employment locally would enhance our understanding of the regional effects associated with immigrant economic integration. Additionally, most of the studies reviewed analyzed employment outcomes by immigration category (i.e., economic, family class, refugee). It may be more beneficial to analyze employment outcomes based on entry programs to control for any variation that may exist between groups of immigrants entering under different programs. Finally, there are limitations to using quantitative data to understand immigrant employment experiences. Qualitative research can provide further insights into the lived experiences of immigrants as they transition into employment. Although qualitative studies have begun to emerge, there is a need for further research using methods of in-depth analysis to examine immigrants' experiences throughout their employment journey.

It is important to note that many studies reviewed used Canadian census data linked to other federal databases to analyze immigrant employment outcomes. An issue with using secondary data sources is the lag time between data collection and the availability of the database for research purposes. At the time of this study, the most recent data available was from the 2016 Canadian Census. As such, the findings should be interpreted with the

understanding that the data do not include employment outcomes of the most recent immigrants to Canada.

3.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, securing stable employment for recent immigrants is a challenge and often occurs over several years. It can include moving between different types of employment and positions. This lag time in finding employment commensurate with skills and qualifications can have detrimental effects on immigrants' productivity and a negative impact on Canada's economy (Dungan et al., 2013). Findings from this review reinforce existing evidence that immigration policies shape employment outcomes with intersectional effects tied to gender, visible minority status, and class. The data suggest that a regional approach tied to local labour market demand may enhance the economic integration of new immigrants and support markets outside large urban centres across the country. With global migration on the rise and the ever-increasing need for labour, destination countries would benefit from integration policies that target the rapid uptake of immigrants into local labour markets.

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CHAPTER 4. A few "big players" – Systems approach to immigrant employment in a mid-sized city

Preface

This chapter is published in *The Canadian Geographer= Le Géographe canadien*
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methods, through consultations my supervisor, Dr. Bruce Newbold. I conducted the data
collection, analysis and summarizing of key findings. Drs. Andrea Baumann and
Margaret Walton-Roberts provided feedback on the drafts, which were incorporated into
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Original Research Paper

A few "big players" – **Systems approach to immigrant employment in a mid-sized city**

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Abstract

Canada's immigration policy is regarded globally as a best practice model for selecting highly skilled migrants. Yet upon arrival, many face challenges integrating into employment. Where immigrants settle is one factor that has been shown to impact on employment integration. In Canada, regionalization policies have resulted in more immigrants settling in small to mid-sized cities. It is important to understand how these local systems are organized to promote immigrant integration into employment. Using a systems approach, this paper presents a case study of immigrant employment in a mid-sized city in Ontario, Canada. Through a document review and stakeholder interviews, a systems map was developed, and local perspectives were analyzed. Results demonstrate that in a mid-sized city few organizations play a large role in immigrant employment. The connections between these core organizations and the local labour market are complex. Any potential challenges to the system that interfere with these connections can cause a delay for newcomers seeking employment. As cities begin to experience growth driven by immigration, there is a need to ensure local services are not only available but also working effectively within the larger employment system.

Keywords: immigrants, employment integration, systems approach, mid-sized cities

4.1 Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on international migration globally as receiving countries closed their borders to limit the spread. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), permanent migrant flows to member states decreased by more than 30% in 2020 (OECD, 2021). In Australia, Canada, and the United States, the number of new immigrants fell by more than 40% (OECD, 2021). This decline in international migration has placed immigration as a central issue for host countries worldwide. In Canada, immigrant selection is a federal responsibility while settlement is shared between federal and provincial/territorial governments (Government of Canada, 2022). The federal government funds a network of settlement service providers across the country who support immigrant integration at the local level (Shields et al., 2016; Walton-Roberts et al., 2019). As Shields et al. (2016, p. 15) note, ". . . contemporary immigration is primarily an urban affair where cities and municipalities. . . are drawn into settlement service delivery."

Canada's immigration policy is regarded globally as a best practice model for selecting highly skilled and educated immigrants, yet many face challenges finding commensurate employment. Studies demonstrate that where immigrants settle has an impact on how effectively they integrate into employment (Ali & Newbold, 2020; Frank, 2013). Regionalization policies have resulted in a redistribution of immigrant populations away from Canada's gateway cities to small and mid-sized communities across the country (Bonikowska et al., 2017; Statistics Canada, 2022a). To understand the impact of shifting settlement patterns on cities, an analysis of the local system is required. Walton-Roberts et al. (2019, p. 350) contend that "settlement happens at the local level and is

characteristic of a place-based process where success depends upon having all policy

actors operating effectively together." This paper presents the results of a systems

analysis of immigrant employment in one mid-sized city in the province of Ontario,

Canada. A map of the local system is developed, and stakeholder perspectives are

analyzed to identify challenges and opportunities for system change.

Regionalization and immigrant settlement

In Canada, regionalization emerged out of the need to "address population decline

in remote and rural areas" and as a way to boost "economic development" (Walton-

Roberts, 2007, p. 4). The goal is to encourage local governments to actively engage in

developing initiatives that will attract immigrants to small and mid-sized cities (Kaushik

& Drolet, 2018). In 2001, the federal government tabled the report, *Towards a More*

Balanced Geographic Distribution of Immigrants to document a growing interest to

evenly disperse immigrants across the country (Citizenship and Immigration Canada

[CIC], 2001). At that time, it was recognized that policy levers could be used to

encourage a shift in the distribution of the immigrant population. However, it was also

noted that in order to be successful economic growth and employment opportunities

needed to be considered (CIC, 2001). As a result, provinces were given a greater role in

selecting immigrants through various initiatives such as the Provincial Nominee Program

(PNP) and the Atlantic Immigration Pilot (AIP).

Launched in 1998, the PNP allows provinces and territories to nominate

individuals based on their economic and labour market needs (Government of Canada,

2022). Initially, the program was intended to include a modest share of the total

immigrant landings in Canada. But over time the number grew as provinces began to

show more interest in attracting immigrants (Seidle, 2013). Bonikowska, et al. (2017) examined the impact of the PNP on the geographic dispersion of immigrants during the 2000s and found significant increases in the number of immigrants settling in the smaller provinces of Manitoba, Prince Edward Island, and New Brunswick. Based on the success of the program the government created the AIP in 2017 as a way to increase skilled migration to the Atlantic provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada [IRCC], 2021). According to Statistics Canada (2022a), the share of recent immigrants settling in one of the four provinces tripled from 1.2% in 2006 to 3.5% in 2021.

The trend in shifting settlement patterns is also evident at the city level. In 2021, 90% of immigrants resided in one of Canada's 41 census metropolitan areas (CMAs), defined as urban centres with over 100,000 residents (Statistics Canada, 2022b). Although the largest share of immigrants settle in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, this trend has been decreasing over time. For example, in 1980 75% of recent immigrants settled in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver but by 2021 the proportion had decreased to 53.4% (Statistics Canada, 2022c). Table 4.1 displays the top 15 CMAs with the largest percentage change in the share of recent immigrants (i.e., those who arrived between 2016 and 2021). As noted, 14 out of the 15 CMAs were located outside the largest urban centres.

Table 4.1

Geographic distribution of recent immigrants by census metropolitan areas

(CMAs), Canada, 2016 and 2021

CMA	2016 Census		2021 Census		2016 to 2021
	number	%	number	%	percentage difference
Ottawa–Gatineau	38,015	3.1	58295	4.4	1.3
Kitchener–Cambridge–Waterloo	13,975	1.2	27785	2.1	0.9
Hamilton	17,420	1.4	26545	2	0.6
Halifax	9,510	0.8	18135	1.4	0.6
London	11,955	1	20490	1.5	0.5
Oshawa	4,550	0.4	11555	0.9	0.5
Windsor	10,800	0.9	15830	1.2	0.3
Moncton	2,840	0.2	6460	0.5	0.3
Victoria	7,690	0.6	10080	0.8	0.2
St. Catharines–Niagara	4,990	0.4	8220	0.6	0.2
Guelph	3,680	0.3	6000	0.5	0.2
Toronto	356,930	29.4	391680	29.5	0.1
Kelowna	2,995	0.2	4295	0.3	0.1
Fredericton	2,635	0.2	3730	0.3	0.1
Barrie	2,045	0.2	4155	0.3	0.1

Source: Statistics Canada, (2022c).

The implication of increasing immigration to non-traditional settings is the need

for services to assist in the settlement and integration process (Esses & Carter, 2019;

Mukhtar et al., 2016; Shields et al., 2016). Government-funded settlement services are

available in cities for areas such as language and skills development; assessments and

referrals; community connections; and employment. However, they are primarily

delivered by the non-profit sector based on contractual agreements with the government

(Flynn & Bauder, 2015; Shields et al., 2016; Thomas, 2015). Programs are funded on a competitive basis and in order to be successful require a large network of services (Drolet & Teixeira, 2022). According to Flynn and Bauder (2015), the decentralization of the settlement sector has created gaps in services and a "spatial mismatch" between the location of service providers relative to the residential location of immigrants (546). In many cases, cities outside the largest urban centres are underfunded to provide the necessary services required for increased immigration (Drolet & Teixeira, 2022; Flynn & Bauder, 2015).

Immigrant employment in small and mid-sized cities

Much of the research on immigrant employment focuses on the three largest cities of Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver (Akbar, 2019; Branker, 2017; Frenette, 2018). A few studies compare employment, wages, and earnings between immigrants residing in these metropolis areas to those residing in small and mid-sized cities (Bernard, 2008; Fong et al., 2015; Sano et al., 2017). Findings from this research suggests that immigrant employment outcomes are better in smaller urban centres (Fong et al., 2015; Frank, 2013; Haan, 2008; Sano et al., 2017). For example, Bernard (2008) revealed that immigrant incomes were highest in small and mid-sized centres and lowest in the largest urban centres. Fong et al. (2015) also found that immigrant earnings were higher in non-gateway cities compared to gateway cities. Finally, Sano et al. (2017) demonstrate that immigrant returns to post-secondary education are higher in smaller regions of Atlantic Canada compared to Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver.

Scholars argue there are many factors contributing to the regional differences in employment outcomes. Some studies suggest there is less competition for jobs and fewer

immigrants to compete with in smaller cities (Fong et al., 2015; Haan, 2008; Sano et al., 2017). Others indicate that regional recruitment of immigrants through various government initiatives has resulted in improved economic integration (Sano et al., 2017). Additionally, some researchers posit that employment barriers, such as limited language proficiency, are not significant in the employment integration of immigrants in non-traditional settings (Bernard, 2008; Sano et al., 2017). Despite the data to suggest that immigrants fare better economically in smaller urban centres, many choose to settle in one of the three largest centres based on the misconception that jobs are easier to find (Bonikowska et al., 2017). Cities outside the metropolis areas have an important role to play in creating a system that will contribute to the rapid uptake of newcomers into employment.

Employment is a complex process that includes a range of community services and engaged political and economic systems (Caidi et al., 2010). One way to examine this complexity is to analyze the local system to identify the individuals, the organizations, and how they are interconnected (Carey et al., 2015). Systems approaches have been used in public health research to address health issues by examining the system as a whole rather than its individual parts (de Savigny et al., 2009). According to Public Health England (2019, p. 89), ". . . a local whole systems approach enables stakeholders, including communities, to consider how the local system is operating and where there are the greatest opportunities for change." Carey et al. (2015) further emphasize that a systems approach shifts the focus from the individual to the structures, mechanisms, and elements of the system. This approach is needed as current policies and practices place

responsibility on the individual to integrate into employment (Anwar, 2014; Chatterjee, 2019; Thomas, 2015).

Research consistently shows that a significant barrier to employment for skilled immigrants is a lack of Canadian education and experience (Bhuyan et al., 2017; Boyd & Tian, 2017; Hira-Freisen, 2018;). In response, the government has invested heavily in retraining programs to bridge the gap between foreign credentials and the Canadian workplace (Chatterjee, 2019). The goal of these programs is to improve the individual's skills in order to solve the challenge of immigrant underemployment (Thomas, 2015). The problem with focusing on the individual is that it reinforces discriminatory practices and ignores widespread systemic issues that exclude immigrants from the workforce due to a lack of "Canadian experience" (Chatterjee, 2019, p. 4).

By taking a systems approach, the focus shifts away from the individual and toward an analysis of how local systems create a context within which immigrants can effectively integrate into employment. The purpose of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the immigrant employment integration process in one mid-sized city. The objectives were to develop systems map to identify key stakeholders and how they are interconnected and to analyze local perspectives about potential challenges and opportunities for system change.

4.2 Methodology

A case study design was used to explore the process of immigrant employment integration in the city of Guelph, Ontario, Canada. Case study is an inductive approach to research that focuses on the examination of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 2009). This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of a city's

immigrant services system and how it relates to the employment context. Following a systems approach, a map of key stakeholders and the connections between them was developed. The mapping technique was used to visually depict the services in the system and how they are interconnected (Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse [CCSA], 2014). The map was populated through a document review of grey and published literature and interviews with local stakeholders. The interviews were further analyzed to identify potential challenges and opportunities for change.

Case selection

The city of Guelph, with a population of 165, 588, is a census metropolitan area (CMA) located in southwestern Ontario (Statistics Canada, 2022d). Based on Bernard's (2008) classification of urban centres in Canada, Guelph is considered a mid-sized. The city is surrounded by other large urban centres including Toronto (95 kilometres east), Hamilton (52 kilometers south), and Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo (29 kilometres west). According to the 2021 census, Guelph was one of the fastest growing cities in Ontario with a 9% growth in population between 2016 and 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2022d). This growth is higher than the provincial (5.8%) and national levels (5.2%). Immigrants comprise 22.7% of the population, which is less than the provincial level of 30% and slightly below the national level of 23% (Statistics Canada, 2022d; 2022e). Since 2016, there has been a 17% increase in the number of immigrants residing in Guelph. This is higher than both the provincial level of 13.9% and the national level of 15.9% (Statistics Canada, 2022d; 2022e).

The composition of immigration to Guelph has changed over time (see Table 4.2). In 2021, the place of birth for the majority of immigrants in Guelph were in countries

located in Asia and Africa (Statistics Canada, 2022d). In contrast, before 1980, the

immigrant population in Guelph was primarily from European countries. Although the

immigrant population in Guelph has become more diverse over time, the visible minority

population (23.4%) remains below the provincial (34.3%) and national levels (26.5%)

(Statistics Canada, 2022d).

Table 4.2

Guelph Immigrant Population, Place of Birth, Before 1980 and 2021

2021 N=6005			Before 1980 N=8450		
Place of Birth	Number	Percent	Place of Birth	Number	Percent
India	810	22.0	United Kingdom	2685	31.7
Eritrea	460	12.5	Italy	1500	17.5
Philippines	365	9.9	Netherlands	555	6.6
Syria	190	5.2	Germany	465	5.5

Source: Statistics Canada, (2022d).

Among immigrants in Guelph, the largest percentage arrived as economic

applicants (45.7%), followed by family class (29.9%), and refugees (23.8%) (Statistics

Canada, 2022d). It is interesting to note that percentage of refugees in Guelph is higher

than both the provincial (17.6%) and national (15.2%) levels, despite not being a

designated city under the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP).

Guelph is one of the leading cities in Canada in terms of job growth and low

unemployment (Singer, 2022). In September 2022, the unemployment rate was 3.9%,

which was far below the provincial (5.8%) and national (5.2%) rates (Statistics Canada,

2022f). Additionally, the workforce participation rate was 67.9%, one of the highest in

the province (Statistics Canada, 2022f). Three key sectors dominate Guelph's economy including advanced manufacturing, agri-innovation and biotechnology (City of Guelph, 2022). These industries have been identified as having above average proportions of employment based on labour force location quotients (LQs) (City of Guelph, 2022). Combined these sectors provide opportunities for both skilled and unskilled employment.

The city is also home to the University of Guelph, a leading public research university with two world-renown colleges: Ontario Veterinary College (OVC) and Ontario Agriculture College (OAC). The university has over 30,000 students including 1,750 international students from across 30 countries (University of Guelph, 2022). It is one of the city's largest employers providing diverse opportunities to work in education, administration, or the life sciences.

Guelph was chosen as a case study because it exemplifies the key characteristics that research has shown to be attractive to immigrants. The presence of a large immigrant population, the high-performing labour market, and its location relative to other large urban centres including Toronto make it an ideal case to study the employment integration of newly arrived immigrants (Esses et al., 2010; Haan, 2008; Hyndman et al., 2006).

Data collection and analysis

Government and non-government organizational (NGOs) websites were searched for policy documents, research reports and any other relevant information that could be used in the development of the systems map. A Google search of all existing immigrant-related organizations in the city of Guelph was conducted to identify services that support employment for newcomers. The information gathered was used to develop a list of

stakeholders, construct the interview guide, and assess key policies and programs relevant to immigrant employment in the city.

A stakeholder analysis was conducted to obtain the perspectives of key actors in the employment integration of newcomers. Stakeholders are actors with a vested interest in a policy or program and include individuals or groups who influence policy or are affected by policy (Schmeer, 2000). A stakeholder identification framework was used to ensure a systematic approach that included representation of diverse perspectives (Schiller et al., 2013). Five categories with sub-groups were identified: (1) Policymakers and governments, (2) Settlement service providers, (3) Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), (4) Language services, and (5) Employers. Purposive sampling was used to recruit 14 stakeholders from across the five groups (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3

Interview Participants By Stakeholder Groups

Category	Number	Percent
1. Policymakers and government	2	14.2
2. Settlement service providers	2	14.2
3. NGOs	3	21.4
4. Language services	1	7.1
5. Employers	6	42.8
Total	14	100

Stakeholders were contacted via email and asked to participate in a virtual interview using Zoom. All participants were emailed an information letter in advance and

consent was obtained verbally before each interview. Ethics approval was received from the McMaster Research Ethics Board (MREB#: 5302).

Stakeholder interviews were conducted to obtain their perspectives of potential challenges and opportunities for system change. The interviews were held between March and August 2021. Interview guides were constructed according to stakeholder analysis guidelines (Schmeer et al., 2000). Service providers and NGOs were interviewed about their role in the employment process, their perspectives on the challenges in the system, and their ideas for system-level improvements. Employers were asked about their strategies for hiring and integrating newcomers into their workplaces.

Interviews lasted 40 to 80 minutes and were recorded and transcribed verbatim. All interview data were coded into QSR N-Vivo 12.0. Themes were abstracted using a constant comparative method of analysis (Fram, 2013). Initially, interviews were coded using line-by-line analysis in order to name categories relevant to the research question. Preliminary coding was carried out by two members of the research team who coded several texts independently. Team members then collaborated to develop a refined scheme for coding the texts. As new categories emerged from the data, relationships between salient themes were connected and integrated. Key findings were then categorized appropriately under each thematic heading. The results from the document review and stakeholder interviews were triangulated to complete the systems map. Findings were shared with service providers to validate the map and obtain feedback on its relevancy.

4.3 Results

The map is organized around three categories: governments, services, and the local labour market (see Figure 4.1). These categories are representative of interconnected systems that support immigrants through the process of settlement, pre-employment, and employment integration.

Figure 4.1

Systems Map of Immigrant Employment Integration
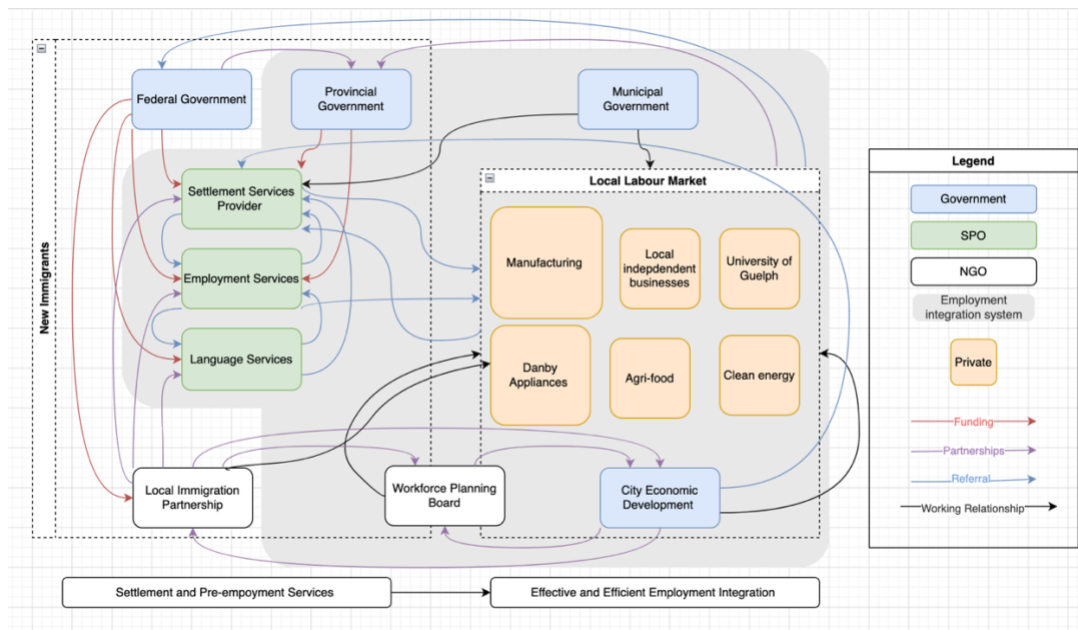
The following sections examine the key features of the map including a description of the local stakeholders, how they are connected and what they contribute to the employment integration of immigrants.

Levels of government. Federal, provincial, and municipal governments were identified as significant actors in the employment integration of newcomers in the city

(see Figure 4.1). At the federal level, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) was identified as providing core funding to immigrant settlement services, the local employment agency, and the Guelph-Wellington Local Immigration Partnership (GWLIP). At the provincial level, the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD) was reported to fund employment services and programs through settlement services and the employment agency. At the municipal level, the city's economic development department worked with settlement services and businesses to promote opportunities for economic growth, which included initiatives to integrate immigrants into the local labour market. A city interviewee described how they ". . . monitor the types of job opportunities available and the types of businesses that can ideally thrive. [They] can then identify where there might be some assistance needed and develop programs to address those areas of need." (A11)

Additionally, the city collaborates with immigrant services to provide free services directly to new immigrants. An example identified was a transportation initiative that offers a free bus pass for one year to all new refugees settling in the city. As one service provider described, ". . . we have initiated a collaboration with the city of Guelph that provides free public transportation for refugees in their first year in Canada." (A6) The program entitled "Welcome to Guelph" was designed to reduce an identified barrier to employment for new refugees in the city.

Services. In this mid-sized city, there are three main organizations providing services to assist immigrants in finding employment (see Figure 4.1). These organizations work together to help clients navigate the system beginning with language training and resume building through to attaining their first Canadian job. Service provider

interviewees described a synergistic relationship between the organizations that included assessing and referring clients to the programs that best fit their employment needs. An employment counsellor identified this as a strength of the local system: "Guelph is small, and we all know each other so we work together all the time. Frontline staff are in touch with frontline staff at least weekly and there's a lot of cross referrals happening to make sure that clients are supported." (A2)

Interviewees noted that most immigrants learn about services through word-of-mouth referrals from family and friends. Once they access services, they are referred to programs based on their unique needs. Any client who requires language services is automatically referred to the only language school available in the city, which is administered through the local public school board's continuing education. For those seeking employment, counsellors at either immigrant services or the local employment agency would provide the necessary support in the journey towards employment.

In addition to the three immigrant-serving services, two NGOs work with local stakeholders and community organizations to promote capacity-building within the region. Interviewees indicated that the primary role of these organizations is to provide research and consultation and support local initiatives aimed to improve immigrant employment integration in the city. An NGO interviewee stated, "our work is mostly with community partners that would include non-profit organizations, service providers, government whether municipal or others, school boards, and other key stakeholders locally to bring them together, and enhance the coordination and collaboration across the city." (A7)

Another NGO interviewee reported, "we often get requests for data on what industries are hiring, who they are hiring, what are the sorts of skills that are in demand so that those organizations that work directly with immigrants can start to look at what people are coming in with and where there might be matches." (A1) They also engage in initiatives that can be used by immigrants to find employment. For example, one NGO created an online local job portal called "findyourjob.ca." The site allows newcomers to search for employment based on occupation codes and regions.

Local labour market. Key stakeholders in the labour market included local employers connected to the immigrant-serving agencies (see Figure 4.1). Many of the service providers interviewed identified three companies as "big players" in immigrant employment. These companies were from the manufacturing sector and reported to hire any newcomer to the city. As the city was described as having a labour market characterized by ". . . a very low unemployment rate" and "a very high-performing workforce" (A9), employers struggled to fill vacant positions. The employers interviewed described a variety of strategies used to mitigate labour supply challenges. First, they worked closely with service providers to actively recruit immigrants. As one interviewee indicated, "if a new immigrant wants a job in the city, they could have one, even with limited English skills." (A2) Second, they supplemented language services with on-site support to ensure new immigrant employees were learning English skills required in the workplace. Third, they paired new employees with colleagues who spoke the same language as the new hires in order "to start with training." (A3)

Local system challenges. Stakeholders identified several challenges in the system that they believed had negative consequences for new immigrants seeking employment.

These included episodic and limited funding, lack of timely data, challenges in reaching all immigrants, inadequate supply of local labour, and a frayed connection to employers.

Episodic and limited funding. Interviewees reported that changes in funding over time have led to decreased services for immigrants in the city. An example of this change was a decrease in funding for language services that resulted in only one local provider. As an interviewee described, "there used to be two different language providers in the city. But because of cuts in funding now there is only one and it's more of a traditional school. They are not as nimble to pivot to the needs of individual clients because they have large class sizes. (A2)

Other challenges identified included a lack of funding for retraining programs in the city. It was reported that the only option for immigrants to upgrade their skills was through a community college in a neighbouring city. Even if courses were available online, there was often a cost associated with enrolling. Larger urban centres across the province have various funded programs in place to support upgrading for highly skilled immigrants. However, in the city of Guelph, this was identified as a significant gap in the services provided. One interviewee described how increased funding for upgrading and retraining could be a "quick fix" for some newcomers: ". . . someone might be an accountant, but they don't know quick books. Offering a free micro-course would be a quick fix for them and, as we've seen with people who take these courses on their own, their chances of employment improve greatly." (A4)

Service providers also identified gaps in funding and flexibility of programs to meet the needs of the immigrant population. Many of the programs funded through the federal and provincial governments limit services based on immigrant class. For example,

federal services are only available to permanent residents or convention refugees; whereas provincial services are available to individuals who've entered through other streams such as the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP), live-in caregiver program, or refugee claimants. Additionally, individuals who enter Canada on a work permit or student permit are not eligible for any pre-employment program. As many of the service providers indicated, these limitations posed a challenge for them in offering the best available support to match newcomer needs. This can change as governments change. One interviewee noted, ". . . for example, one government wants only internationally trained professionals, so they fund all sorts of programs for them. The next government comes in and wants all refugees and so they fund those and then you're left with these programs that don't meet the needs of the people coming in." (A2)

Lack of timely data. Another gap identified by most interviewees was the lack of timely data on new immigrants to the city. Although service providers collect data on program participants, they reported not having access to information about new immigrants choosing to settle in the city. Most interviewees reported using 2016 census data to identify the number of immigrants in the region. Although useful for general information, census data do not provide detailed information about new immigrants settling in the city or those that come to the city via secondary migration. With the limited data available, the providers must rely on new immigrants contacting them directly before they can provide services. As one interviewee reported, "the ones who reach out to [immigrant services], I think are more successful and gain a better and quicker understanding. But what percentage of immigrants go to immigration services?" (A13)

"Falling through the cracks" – Reaching all immigrants. Stakeholders identified challenges in the local system for certain groups of immigrants. One interviewee reported, "services do well for low skilled and some high skilled newcomers but not the middle group." (A4) Service providers described two distinct groups of immigrants that access their services: Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs) and economic immigrants. The two groups include individuals with a variety of skills upon arrival, and although both are successful, their path to employment is very different. For example, in the most recent wave of PSRs, many arrived from Eritrea and were identified as low-skilled and with limited education. They come to the city and are immediately hired into one of the local factories. For economic immigrants, it often takes more time to find employment and may include moving across different positions. The individuals who "fall through the cracks" are often those who enter Canada through the family class, can be highly skilled and educated but are reported to be working in manufacturing. One interviewee noted, ". . . they don't see other opportunities, because they're working 10, 12 hours and they're exhausted." (A9) Service providers believed that this group would benefit the most from immigrant services but were the most difficult to reach, so many remain underemployed.

Inadequate supply of local labour. With a consistently low unemployment rate and a high number of vacant positions, the need for local labour is not a new issue for the city. For the past several years the local economy has had significant employment growth, but the increase in population has not kept pace. As a result, many of the interviewees were concerned that the city has no formal strategy to attract immigrants. For many stakeholders, this was viewed as a lost opportunity. One NGO representative explained, "[w]ith over 400,000 immigrants entering the country annually, you need to

compete for those individuals and as a city, position yourself and market the jobs available." (A1) Employers were particularly concerned about the labour shortage in the city. As many described, they are forced to engage in creative recruitment strategies to ensure supply issues can be managed effectively. For example, one local employer in manufacturing paid monetary incentives to any employee who referred an individual to a job. It was reported that many refugees working in the factory took advantage of the incentives and often referred friends and family who were new to the city.

Frayed connection with employers. A challenge identified by employers was the lack of consistent referrals from immigrant services. An employer reported, ". . . you would think the service providers would reach out to you more often, but if you don't reach out to them, they're not necessarily calling you, which is a part of the system that should be improved." (A12) When employers did receive referrals, some reported that there was often a mismatch between the immigrant's skills and qualifications and the jobs available. As one employer commented, ". . . why send me a family law lawyer for a maintenance position? I can't help that person." (A9) Finally, employers believed there should be better communication with local businesses about newcomers arriving to the city. An employer reported, "I think the government could do a better job of communicating to employers in terms of who's out there. If they did, people would have jobs when their feet hit the ground." (A12)

Opportunities for change. Stakeholders agreed that better coordination and connectivity "between all of the moving pieces really needs to happen." (A2) As one NGO described, "there needs to be a flow of information, there needs to be a flow of expectations, and there needs to be a feedback loop." (A2) In order to improve the

system, strategies should target those areas identified as potential challenges. For example, employers noted that a lack of language services in the city could be ameliorated by offering incentives to local businesses for on-the-job language training. One employer reported, "I don't believe generally in government incentives but maybe there has to be incentives for employers to pay for either English as a Second Language (ESL) classes or the time for ESL training." (A10)

Additionally, it was reported that ". . . service providers need to go beyond counting the number of people who get a job and start looking at the quality and appropriateness of those jobs." (A7) To do this, service providers should focus on understanding the needs of the local labour market and creating stronger connections to employers outside the manufacturing sector. By improving the connectivity between pre-employment services and local employers, services can be streamlined to enhance newcomers' experiences as they transition into employment.

Finally, as many interviewees noted, the Canadian workforce is shrinking, and immigrants will be the driving force of economic growth. For employers to be competitive they must be engaged in the process to recruit and integrate immigrants efficiently and effectively. One local employer-led strategy that proved successful was the sponsoring of over 200 Syrian refugees in 2015. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a manufacturing company led the initiative and enlisted 800 community volunteers to support the refugees through the settlement and integration process. As reported by stakeholders, a key principle of the initiative was to quickly integrate refugees into employment. The belief was that the sooner they were able to gain meaningful employment, the sooner they would become self-sufficient, contributing members of

society. It was noted that the model could be replicated in other cities if "companies and cities had the passion to do it." (A10)

4.4 Discussion

This study used a systems approach to examine immigrant employment integration in the mid-sized city of Guelph Ontario, Canada. While research has addressed barriers to immigrant employment more broadly, this study provides new insights into how the local system functions to influence immigrant transition into the labour market. It is one of few studies that examine in-depth the key actors, the relationships between them and the structures formed because of those relationships. The findings move beyond identifying the main factors that affect labour market integration of newcomers in small and mid-sized cities. They provide an approach to creating change within the system that will support integration practices locally to improve immigrant transition into employment.

This study makes several distinct contributions to the literature. First, it demonstrates the use of a systems mapping technique to analyze immigrant employment integration in a mid-sized city. Mapping the system involves connecting the actors and their relationships to the larger context to examine its response to external factors (de Savigny & Adam, 2009). The system is assumed to be self-organizing, dynamic, governed by feedback, history dependent, and resistant to change (de Savigny & Adam, 2009). Focusing on the system draws attention away from reductionist problem solving to transforming systems in the service of improving immigrant employment outcomes (Kiekens et al., 2022). In the case of small and mid-sized cities, applying a systems approach would provide a comprehensive understanding of what exists and where there

may be gaps in services. The information could then be used by cities to inform policy and planning for immigration and integration of newcomers once they arrive.

Second, findings from this study build on the emerging literature about immigrant employment in small and mid-sized cities. Much of the research in this area focuses on how cities can attract and retain newcomers (Esses & Carter, 2019; Hyndman et al., 2006). This study expands our understanding of immigrant employment in smaller urban centres by revealing the important role of the local system in the integration process. It demonstrates that in a mid-sized city, relationships are primacy and community engagement is essential. Research demonstrates that cities that provide meaningful employment fare better in attracting newcomers (Esses & Carter, 2019). Findings from this study suggest that creating conditions for success requires more than job opportunities. It necessitates an interest by municipal governments, community leaders, institutions and employers to actively engage in the integration of immigrants locally.

Third, findings from this study validate existing literature that suggests small and mid-sized cities are largely underfunded to support immigrant integration. In the case of Guelph, gaps in services were related to limited resources and a lack of flexibility in funding that resulted in a more fragmented system. Research has documented that cities outside Canada's three largest urban centres lack the infrastructure and organizational capacity to provide necessary services to newcomers (Drolet & Teixeira, 2022; Flynn & Bauder, 2015). With limited access in those critical first few years after arrival immigrants will continue to struggle to find employment and may choose to migrate elsewhere.

Finally, this study provides new insights into the challenges facing service providers to integrate highly skilled immigrants into commensurate employment. Although studies suggest that immigrants fare better economically in small and mid-sized cities (Frank, 2013; Fong et al., 2015; Haan, 2008; Hall & Khan, 2008; Sano et al., 2017), findings from this study indicate that the types of jobs do not always align with the skills and qualifications of the immigrant. In the case of Guelph, low unemployment and steady job growth meant there were many employment opportunities available to immigrants. However, the types of jobs were driven by the few big players in the manufacturing sector who dominated the labour market. As a result, immigrants were often placed in low-skilled jobs where their skills and education were underutilized. The challenge facing service providers in small and mid-sized cities is to expand their network of employers to include those in high-skilled sectors. This requires targeted planning and innovative community-based strategies unique to the local context.

Results of this study have important implications for government policy. There is a need for increased funding for immigrant employment services. In a mid-sized city with few immigrant-serving organizations, any change in funding can have a substantial impact on service provision. In the case of Guelph, a decrease in funding for language services resulted in only one service provider in the city. The loss of a second language program meant that new immigrants had limited opportunities to increase their language skills for the workplace. Furthermore, there is a critical need to improve information and data sharing between governments and local service providers. Although there are several immigrant databases available to service providers, many smaller centres are not aware or do not have the capacity to access the required information. In this study, providers

reported a need for information about new immigrants settling in the city. However, many reported they lacked resources to hire staff with the technical skills in data access and analysis. A solution could be to enhance collaboration between neighbouring urban centres around data-sharing for regional planning and programming.

Finally, there is a need for municipal governments to become involved in the development of an immigration strategy that includes input from local employers. Findings from this study demonstrate that the lack of coordination between service providers, the municipal government and local businesses created a significant gap in the system and a lost opportunity for the local labour market. Formalizing a strategy to attract immigrants that includes the numerous employment opportunities available could provide a clearer pathway into employment for immigrants.

Applying a systems approach is useful for decision-makers to develop a shared understanding of the system, how it works, where gaps may exist and the various factors influencing immigrant employment integration. However, generating the map can be time-intensive, time-sensitive and difficult to develop without the aid of local stakeholders. A systems approach allows cities to tailor strategies to the local context to improve the system surrounding immigrant employment integration.

4.5 Conclusion

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the unanticipated disruption in immigrant flows has provided renewed interest in international migration globally and Canada specifically. Findings from this study suggest that creating system change that includes adapting local structures to align with the needs of the labour market would enhance the employment of recent immigrants and act as one step in improving the

integration of newcomers to mid-sized cities. As cities begin to experience growth driven by immigration, there is a need to ensure local services are available and working effectively to meet the needs of their immigrant population and to support the labour demands of the local economy.

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CHAPTER 5: National policies and local realities – Employment experiences of recent immigrants to Canada

Preface

This chapter has been submitted to the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, in January 2023. I was responsible for conceptualizing the research question and study design along with my supervisor, Dr. Bruce Newbold. I was responsible for all data collection and analysis and drafting of final manuscript. Drs. Andrea Baumann and Margaret Walton-Roberts each provided feedback on preliminary findings and drafts of this chapter, which were incorporated into the final version.

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Original Research Paper

National policies and local realities – Employment experiences of recent immigrants in a Canadian mid-sized city

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Abstract

With international migration on the rise and the critical need for labour in the global north immigration policies are increasingly focused on the economic integration of immigrants. Despite this heightened attention, national policies often lag behind the employment realities of immigrants during their first few years in the destination country. This study explored recent immigrant experiences of finding employment in a mid-sized city in Ontario, Canada. A grounded theory approach was used to conduct in-depth interviews with 20 recent immigrants. Results indicate immigrants use a variety of job-seeking strategies along the path to employment much like other new entrants to the labour market. What differs is the unique challenges they face at each stage that contribute to a delay in the process. Initially new immigrants focus on settling into their new community and beginning a job search using common tools such as employment websites. With limited success many begin testing and trying different strategies to increase their opportunities of finding employment. At this stage immigrants engage in volunteering, upgrading skills, and networking with close family and friends. Eventually many adapt their expectations and accept any form of employment in order to enter the labour market. Evidence indicates that the provision of supports at critical points along the pathway can accelerate immigrant integration into commensurate employment.

Keywords: immigration, employment, integration, mid-sized city, Canada

5.1 Introduction

With international migration on the rise and the critical need for labour in the global north countries are increasingly focused on the economic integration of immigrants. In Canada, immigration levels are currently at their highest since before the first world war (Government of Canada, 2021). In 2021, 401,000 permanent residents were accepted into the country (Government of Canada, 2021). By 2041, it is projected that more than half of the population will be first-generation immigrants or children of immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2022a). Given that Canada admits the highest number of skilled labour migrants in the the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2019) it is critical that immigration policies target the efficient and effective integration of immigrants into the labour market. Although decisions related to the number and category of immigrants are made at a national level, integration into employment occurs locally.

Studies demonstrate that where immigrants choose to settle has an impact on how effectively they integrate into employment (Ali & Newbold, 2020; Frank, 2013; Laukova et al., 2022). In Canada, regionalization policies have resulted in a geographic shift in immigrant settlement patterns away from gateway cities to small and mid-sized communities across the country (Bonikowska et al., 2017; Statistics Canada, 2022b). While populous cities such as Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal have large networks of services to support new immigrants, research has documented that smaller cities lack funding and resources to support their integration (Dauphinais et al., 2022; St-Cyr & Bouchard, 2013).

Research in Canada has documented inconsistent findings related to immigrant employment outcomes in small and mid-sized cities. Some studies suggest that immigrants living in smaller urban centres earn higher incomes and have lower unemployment rates compared to those living in larger urban centres including Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver (Fong, et al., 2015; Frank, 2013; Haan, 2008; Hall & Khan, 2008; Sano et al., 2017). Others suggest that immigrants face similar employment challenges in smaller urban centres as they do in larger centres (Guo, 2013; Lo & Teixeira, 2015; Thomas, 2021). For example, Guo (2013) found that Chinese recent immigrants in Calgary and Edmonton, Alberta, experienced de-skilling and devaluation of their education and work experience after immigrating to Canada. Additionally, Lo and Teixeira (2015) examine immigrant entrepreneurs in Kelowna, British Columbia, and found that contrary to earlier studies, immigrants in this small city did not experience better economic outcomes. Finally, Thomas (2021) interviewed immigrants in the two mid-sized cities of Edmonton, Alberta, and Winnipeg, Manitoba, and found that immigrants experience significant labour market barriers and are often underemployed in their early years after settlement.

There remains limited understanding of how the spatial context affects immigrant employment integration in small and mid-sized cities. This study explored immigrant experiences of finding employment in the mid-sized city of Guelph, Ontario, Canada. The focus is on recent immigrants, as they have been found to have the greatest labour market disadvantages (Crossman et al., 2021; Wong, 2020). Despite being highly educated, they are less likely to be employed and, when employed, are often in low-skilled, precarious types of jobs. It is well-documented that the first few years after

arrival are critical to the successful employment integration of newcomers (Crea-Arsenio et al., 2022; Frank, 2013; Fuller & Martin, 2012). If a job match does not occur within this early timeframe immigrant wages and earnings remain low over time (Frank, 2013). This work builds on an earlier study that identified how the larger system influences immigrant employment integration in a mid-sized city (Crea-Arsenio, et al., 2023). The findings demonstrate that in smaller urban centres with limited services few organizations play a large role in the immigrant employment pathway. Similarly, few industries dominate the labour market and drive employment locally. The challenge for immigrants is navigating the local system in those first few years after arrival in order to integrate into employment efficiently and effectively (Crea-Arsenio et al., 2023).

Immigrants use various strategies to enter the labour market including engaging in "gig" work, accessing social networks, and participating in ethnic economies (Lam & Triandafyllidou, 2022; Rosales, 2014; Roth et al., 2012). According to Jeon, Liu, and Ostrovsky (2019) the share of immigrants working in the gig economy is higher than the Canadian-born population. Although gig work can provide a point of entry into the labour market it has been shown to have negative effects on immigrant employment and income over time (Lamb et al., 2022). However, there are cases where immigrants who are young and highly skilled use gig work as an opportunity to improve their socio-economic situation (Lam & Triandafyllidou, 2022). As Lam and Triandafyllidou note, these migrants "are neither passive nor hopeless victims of exploitation . . . [as they seek] to use rather than be used by the [gig] economy" (Lam & Triandafyllidou, 2022, p 12).

Another strategy new immigrants use involves finding employment through social networks (Chuatico et al., 2022; Majerski, 2019). According to Majerski (2019), most

immigrants locate their first job through friends and close relatives. Although they may be successful in finding a job, it is often in a low-skilled position. Recent immigrants have not had enough time to establish ties that can lead to a variety of jobs with more occupational mobility (Majerski, 2019). A related strategy is participating in an ethnic economy which involves migrant business owners hiring immigrants of the same ethnicity (Chuatico et al., 2022; Rosales, 2014; Valenzuela-Garcia et al., 2017). Ethnic economies are more likely to form in large metropolitan areas and have been reported to be beneficial for new immigrants and refugees in the first few years after arrival. However, these are often individuals with low levels of education and language proficiency (Chuatico et al., 2022).

As the literature suggests, recent immigrants face the greatest economic disadvantages including underemployment, low earnings, and high participation in precarious employment (Hira-Friesen, 2018a; 2018b; Lewchuk et al., 2015). The trend persists despite a growing need for labour and increased government attention to the issue. National policies lag behind the local realities that migrants face in finding employment soon after arrival. Most studies that focus on immigrant employment are national in scope (Boyd & Tian, 2018; Lamb, et al., 2022; Picot et al., 2016; 2022). Studies that do include city-level data often concentrate on the three largest urban centres where most immigrants live (Akbar, 2019; Branker, 2017; Frenette, 2018; Somerville & Walsworth, 2010). Given that immigrants are increasingly settling in mid-sized cities, there is a need to examine immigrant employment experiences beyond the three largest urban centres. This study fills this gap by exploring the path to employment for recent immigrants to identify strategies and challenges they face finding commensurate

employment in their first few years after arrival. The research focused on the factors that contribute to the employment integration of recent immigrants in the mid-sized city of Guelph, Ontario. Employment integration was defined as an immigrant's ability to enter the labour market efficiently, effectively and with productive employment (Baumann et al., 2011). Examining the strategies used and the choices made by immigrants throughout the employment pathway reveals key areas where support may be required in those critical years after arrival.

5.2 Methodology

This study employed an exploratory descriptive design to examine immigrant experiences of finding employment in the mid-sized city of Guelph, Ontario, Canada. The city of Guelph has a population of 165,588 of which 22.7% are immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2022b). It is one of the fastest-growing cities in the region and a leading city in terms of job growth and low unemployment (Statistics Canada, 2022b). Although the city does not have a designated Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) for refugees, it is an active centre for privately sponsored refugees (Mann, 2016).

Grounded theory methods were used to interview immigrants and refugees who arrived in Canada within the last ten years and were either employed or seeking employment. A convenience sample of 20 immigrants were purposefully selected through immigrant-serving agencies including local immigrant services and employment agencies. Purposeful sampling allows for the identification and selection of "information-rich cases" and involves selecting individuals that are experienced with the phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2007). The inclusion criteria were individuals residing in the city of Guelph who immigrated to Canada within the last 10 years, were between 25 and 54,

spoke conversational English, and were either employed or actively seeking employment. Interviews took place between August and October 2020.

A semi-structured interview guide was developed based on key themes identified from the immigrant employment integration literature. Immigrants were asked about their experiences of finding employment upon arrival including the strategies they used and challenges they faced. For those who were employed, questions focused on the relationship between their pre-migration education and their current employment position. Interviews lasted between 40 and 60 minutes, were conducted via Zoom and were transcribed verbatim. A constant comparative method of analysis was used to compare immigrants based on gender, age, immigrant category, and employment status (employed/unemployed) (Fram, 2013). Commensurate employment was measured as a perceived job match between pre-migration occupation and post-migration employment.

Data from the initial interviews were coded using line-by-line analysis to first name categories relevant to the research question. As new categories emerged from the data, axial coding replaced open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Throughout this phase, relationships between salient categories were connected and integrated. The last phase of analysis involved selective coding and included abstraction and organization of the main categories to form a conceptual framework of immigrant perceptions of employment in Canada (Fram, 2013; Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

To assess the trustworthiness of the data, the interviewer conducted periodic checks with the participants during each interview to verify interpretations of what was being said and to ensure their meanings were not misunderstood. Additionally, peer debriefing was used to explore meanings, clarify interpretations and test working

hypotheses as they emerged (Nowell et al., 2017). Memo writing was used to track emerging themes and ideas throughout the data collection and analysis process. Immediately following each interview, ideas that arose throughout the interview process were documented in a reflexive journal to identify any personal biases and/or assumption.

5.3 Results

Table 5.1 displays the characteristics of the immigrants interviewed. A total of 20 individuals participated in the study, 10 males and 10 females. At the time of the interview, most participants were between 30 and 39 years of age and had been living in Canada for three to five years. Eleven of the 20 participants arrived in Canada as a refugee, four immigrated under the family class, three had come as international students, and two arrived as economic applicants. All except one reported post-secondary education as their highest level of education.

Table 4.4

Demographic Characteristics of Immigrant Sample

ID	Age	Sex	Duration in Canada	Country of Origin	Immigration Class	Highest Level of Education	Currently Employed	Occupation/ job	Employment Status	Perceived Job Match
1	50-59	M	5 years	Syria	Privately Sponsored Refugee	High School	Yes	Factory worker	Full-time	Yes
2	20-29	F	5 years	Syria	Privately Sponsored Refugee	College, Business Administration	Yes	HR Specialist-Talent Acquisition	Part-time	Yes
3	30-39	F	1 year	Philippines	Family class	University Bachelor	No	N/A		
4	50-59	M	5 years	Eritrea	Refugee claimant	College, Marine Engineering Diploma	Yes	Machine Operator – Manufacturing	Full-time	No
5	30-39	M	4 years	Palestine	Refugee claimant	University Bachelor	Yes	Employment counsellor	Part-Time	Yes
6	30-39	F	4 years	Palestine	Refugee claimant	University Bachelor	No	N/A		
7	20-29	M	3 years	India	Student visa	Master's Mechanical Engineering	Yes	Manufacturing Technician	Full-Time	No
8	30-39	F	2 years	Syria	Privately Sponsored Refugee	College	Yes	Restaurant worker	Part-time	No
9	40-49	M	1 year	Iran	Student visa	Doctorate Computer Science	Yes	University Researcher	Full-time	Yes
10	30-39	F	5 years	Syria	Privately Sponsored Refugee	University Bachelor's Teaching	Yes	Hairstylist	Part-time	No

11	40-49	M	3 years	Nigeria	Family class	University Bachelor's, unspecified	Yes	Operations and Administrative Support	Full-time	No
12	30-39	M	5 years	Kuwait	Privately Sponsored Refugee	University Bachelor's unspecified	Yes	Uber driver	Part-time	No
13	30-39	F	5 years	Syria	Privately Sponsored Refugee	University Bachelor's Chemistry	No	N/A		
14	40-49	F	2 years	China	Family class	Master's Law	No	N/A		
15	40-49	M	5 years	Syria	Privately Sponsored Refugee	Master's Geology	Yes	Factory worker	Full-time	No
16	30-39	F	4 years	Afghanistan	Refugee claimant	University Bachelor's Accounting	Yes	Nursing Home - Dietary Aide	Part-time	No
17	30-39	M	6 years	Eritrea	Student visa	University Bachelor's unspecified	No	N/A		
18	30-39	F	7 years	Brazil	Student visa	Master's Linguistics	Yes	Social services worker	Full-time, contract	No
19	30-39	F	6 years	India	Family class	University Bachelor's Science	Yes	Bank teller	Full-time	Yes
20	30-39	M	6 years	India	Economic applicant	University Bachelor's Computer Science	Yes	Information Technology	Full-time	Yes

At the time of the interviews, fifteen participants were employed and five were seeking employment. Of those employed, six perceived their current job as closely matched to their education and training (see Table 5.1). Findings revealed that the pathway to commensurate employment for new immigrants involved three stages: settling and searching, trying and testing, and adapting and accepting. At each stage immigrants use different strategies to find employment with varying degrees of success. The emerging model of early immigrant employment search strategies presented in Figure 5.1 was derived from the interview data with recent immigrants residing in the city of Guelph.

Figure 4.2

Model of Early Immigrant Employment Search Strategies
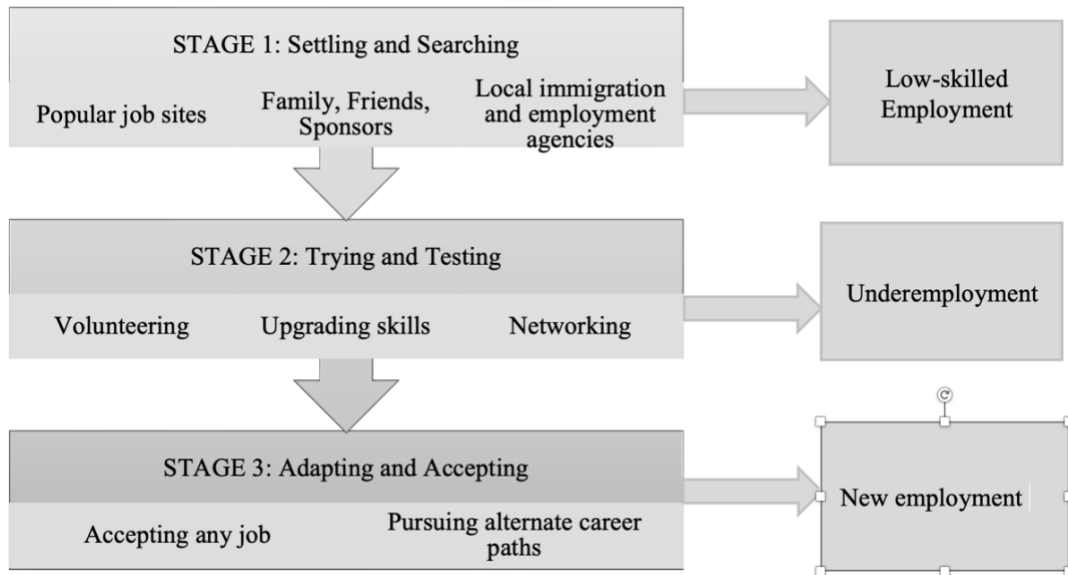
Stage 1: Settling and Searching – The importance of finding rapid employment

Stage 1 involved the immediate time after arrival where immigrants reported settling in their new community and beginning an initial job search. The urgency of finding a job was evident. Interviewees described it was important to find employment soon after arrival not only for survival but also to feel integrated into Canadian life. One refugee was asked what his immediate needs were. They stated, **"**I told you the first thing I will need is a job to start my life" (B1). Immigrants indicated that there was a sense of urgency to find employment for "financial and psychological reasons" (B11). As an immigrant from India noted, "[w]e could not survive with the money that we brought along from India to Canada. So, survival starts with money and money comes with a job. There's no other way to start" (B19). Others described the relevance of employment allowed them to feel rapidly integrated into a community. For example, one immigrant reported, ". . . immigrants want to get involved in society to feel a sense of belonging to a community. I'd wanted to get involved and find employment to gain my local experience, and to know more about the culture" (B14). Another stated, "I think employment is the only thing which makes you feel integrated into the city actually" (B20). To that end, all interviewees reported beginning their job search immediately.

The majority of immigrants engaged in common practices such as using popular job sites, asking family and friends and accessing local agencies to seek out opportunities. Although participants described applying to "hundreds of jobs" (B16) using various strategies, few had success finding employment in this initial stage. They identified challenges associated with applying for jobs online. One highly skilled immigrant reflected, "on the job websites, when they post for one job, they could get a

thousand applications. So, I think if you have a connection to that company, it could help" (B11).

Several immigrant interviewees who described using family, friends, and sponsors to connect to the local employment context. As noted by most interviewees, family and friends assisted immigrants in accessing services and knowing where to go and what to do when searching for employment. As one immigrant reported, "My brother-in-law helps me a lot to access these services. When I arrived at the airport, they gave me a box to inform me that there are services but my brother-in-law, he is the one who drove me to immigration services and told me about what I need to do" (B8). In the case of privately sponsored refugees, the sponsor was instrumental in helping find that first Canadian job. One refugee reported, "My sponsor got me connected with the CEO of a company and then I worked with this company for almost two years. It was a digital marketing company. But after the two years, the company was losing a lot of money, so they let people go and I was one of them" (B12). Although participants had been successful in attaining employment through connections made by family, friends, and sponsors, many described that the type of job was not ideal. When a petroleum engineer realized the time and money it would take to have his credentials recognized in Canada, a friend referred him to ". . .work a delivery job for Amazon."

Another strategy used by immigrants in Stage 1 was accessing local settlement and employment services to aid in their search efforts. This approach was primarily successful for lower-skilled applicants who could quickly transition into manufacturing positions. For highly skilled applicants, there were mixed results. An immigrant reported, "How I work with settlement services is when I see a job out there, I prepare my resume

and cover letter and then I send it to my employment counsellor to review. She goes through it and adds anything needed and then I apply for the job. So, they know where I applied and if they have a connection to that employer, they can follow up for me" (B17). Although some of the immigrants interviewed had success matching to employment through connections made by local settlement and employment services, others indicated that they were unsuccessful or placed in low-skilled jobs. As one immigrant described, "for the higher educated people [services] are useless because they are going to find you work in manufacturing, which is easy to find without them" (B15).

For a few immigrants, these initial strategies successfully resulted in finding a job, although most often in a low-skilled position. For others, finding a job required more effort and many engaged in trying and testing different approaches to improving their chances of finding employment.

Stage 2: Trying and Testing – Improving employability

In Stage 2, immigrant participants recognized that to be competitive in the local labour market, they needed to gain Canadian experience. Consequently, they engaged in various strategies including volunteering, upgrading skills and networking in the local community to improve their employability in the local labour market. More than half identified volunteering as a strategy to improve their prospects for employment. Volunteering served multiple purposes for immigrants. It provided an opportunity to gain exposure to Canadian workplaces. As one immigrant described, "I volunteered to be a part of a youth group that goes to local schools and talks to new immigrant students. I've worked with youths in the past, so I opted for that position" (B12). It also helped some immigrants improve their English skills. An immigrant reported, "After a couple of

months, I started going to volunteer at church sales to connect with people and make myself comfortable talking and listening to what they say, so I learn more English" (B2). Others used volunteering to build their professional networks. An immigrant described how he grew his network "by doing some volunteering in the community and through that got connected to human resources of multiple companies and many people" (B15).

Some of the immigrants interviewed described taking courses to upgrade their skills or attain certifications for different jobs. Many reported taking as many courses as they could to improve their chances of employment. As one immigrant indicated, "I did English as a Second Language [ESL] courses, I did receptionist training from Action Read, I did school bus training, I did the food handling certificate and I have the Ontario safety certificate. Right now, I am doing the office course for PowerPoint, Excel, and Word" (B16). Their employment-seeking activities should have provided them with opportunities to gain meaningful employment. However, many had limited success in finding commensurate work and resorted to trying to find any job.

A strategy used by several immigrant interviewees was to enlarge their social network in the context of employment. One immigrant reported how a casual conversation with a stranger resulted in an employment opportunity. He described, ". . . I was having a chat with someone I didn't know about career goals and job opportunities, and I told him that I noticed there was a job posted at the company where he was working. He told me to send him my resume and he would refer me. I did that and then they called me" (B17). In another instance, an immigrant described being at a social event and approaching one of the workers to ask how they found their job. He stated, "I

just asked 'how did you get this job?' So, he explained how he got the job, and I just followed the same ways and got that job too" (B19).

Stage 3: Adapting and Accepting

Stage 3 involved immigrants adapting and accepting their new employment realities. The strategies they used in this stage involved taking any job to enter the labour market and pursuing alternate career paths. Immigrants described a process of lowering their expectations of employment as a way to survive. Many talked about taking a job far below their skills and qualifications including 'gig' work such as driving an Uber to working in low-skilled jobs to make a full-time wage. As one immigrant reported, "another thing I did because I had to survive, was work as a security guard. But I had to downgrade my resume. I didn't show that I had a bachelor's in computer science with six years of experience or that I was a Team Leader with JP Morgan in India. I just showed my interest in the security job" (B19). Some immigrants used survival jobs to offset the negative effects of being unemployed. An immigrant described, "I was completely jobless, and I was restless because I was idle, so I took a job at the university. It was basically working with the hospitality team. Working in the kitchen, doing dishes, going to the wholesale to pack things. It was very unskillful, but it was just to get some job experience" (B11). Despite being educated and highly skilled, several immigrants indicated that getting any job was a strategy they used to avoid being told they lacked Canadian work experience.

Another barrier identified by interviewees was related to foreign credential recognition. Despite holding a professional degree, immigrants encountered many obstacles to having their credentials recognized in Canada. In response, many chose to

pursue alternative career paths. In some cases, this involved applying to a position within the same occupation but at a lower status. A lawyer from China described why they decided to become a paralegal instead of pursuing law, "[f]irst, it is time-consuming. Even if it goes very smoothly, it will probably take me at least two years to go through the process. And second, there is an issue of cost. Preparing for the exams and writing the exam takes money. Also, if I attend law school, would require money. And then the third issue is that I have a little daughter. So, it would be difficult for me to balance the process and taking care of my daughter" (B14).

In other cases, immigrants decided to pursue an occupation outside their profession. A teacher from Turkey described how she decided to become a hairstylist because the program was "only one year and after that, [she could] begin work right away." (B10) Several highly skilled immigrants talked about taking courses at local private colleges that promised quick entry into the labour market. However, the jobs they found were still low-paying and often in a part-time capacity. One immigrant who held a master's degree in Geology reported taking a one-year program in information technology and immediately finding a part-time, minimum wage job that he described as "not enough for somebody to provide" (B15).

Despite finding a job, immigrant interviewees reported how difficult it was for them to accept their new position in society. Almost all interviewees had established careers before immigrating to Canada and many expected that they would attain commensurate employment within their first few years after arrival. When this did not happen, they were forced to "manage their emotions" while renegotiating the meaning of employment under these new conditions. An engineer from Eritrea reported ". . .there is

no green grass over here where you can come and then get what you want, there is always a challenge everywhere you go if you are new, whether skilled or not skilled. When I was back home, I was one of the best, but now no one can give me a chance. So, you must control your emotions because there is frustration sometimes" (B17). Another highly skilled immigrant noted, "if you are telling someone who was an engineer for almost 15 years, you're going to start from scratch, you're going to lose them" (B12). As many of the participants reported, finding commensurate employment soon after arrival was imperative to their successful integration into the local community. Without the opportunity for meaningful employment, many immigrants may choose to leave the city.

Immigrant Perspectives on Commensurate Employment

The following section outlines the immigrant's perspective on how to improve employment outcomes for newcomers. There was consensus among the interviewees that Canada's current points-based system is a valid approach to immigrant selection. But several identified frustrations with the lack of follow through. One immigrant reported, "we all get screened for our application as an immigrant. If there are two of us, we both apply and I get higher points in my entry, it's meaningless when we arrive. When you come here, we're assessed the same, back to zero" (B3). Immigrants believed that the government should have a "plan" to better integrate newcomers into employment once they arrive. As one immigrant noted, this plan could involve "an immigrant service worker and government agent sitting down with new immigrants as they arrive and asking them, what is your target? What kind of work do you want? Do you want to be a welder? OK. We're going to work with that. You must improve your English to this level, so you must go to this course. We will work with you until you get the certificate and

then you can work in the career you wanted" (B15). It was evident that highly skilled immigrants were interested in a guided understanding of the employment pathway in Canada and the most efficient plan to achieve positive results.

Another area identified was the need for better evaluation and monitoring of highly skilled workers early in the process. An immigrant described, "it would be very beneficial for immigrants to have someone who evaluates them based on their experiences, rather than on documents. It's hard for anyone to get a job without having experience here. So why not make things easier for them, putting them in a place, observing them, and then giving them the feedback, whether they are suitable or not?" (B6). Another immigrant noted that the government ". . . needs a tracking system or a monitoring system, to keep monitoring people, especially the high degree people. They need to be prepared for when 90% of them do not have a job right away. Then they would need a process of how to help them if they don't have a job" (B11).

A final area identified by immigrant participants was to improve pre-arrival services to include more detailed information about different sectors of employment. Pre-arrival services are free programs for people who have been approved to immigrate to Canada (Government of Canada, 2022). They provide assessment and a personalized plan to help individuals settle once they arrive. Some services are targeted toward professions such as engineering and nursing while others are more general. One immigrant with a background in banking explained that she would have benefitted from knowing about the financial sector before she arrived in Canada. She reported, "I was working with a bank in India before I immigrated. I was not aware of how many banks there were in Canada or what the banking structure was like here. So, if they set up a few people in pre-arrival

who could train us on this and say, 'OK, you are going to Canada. Canada has these top five banks, this, this, this, this. And if you want to work there as a teller, or as a branch manager, you need to get these kinds of certifications. Of course, your experience will help you, but still, you need these certifications, like the Canadian Securities course'" (B20). As this quote demonstrates, pre-arrival services are important for skilled immigrants and an area that could be enhanced to improve immigrant knowledge about employment in Canada.

5.4 Discussion

This study explored the employment experiences of recent immigrants in the city of Guelph, Ontario. It aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of how decisions made in the first few years after arrival influenced integration into commensurate employment. Results indicate that immigrants employ diverse strategies early-on but face unique challenges that delay the process and place them at an economic disadvantage. These findings are consistent with research in larger cities that indicates recent immigrants are more likely to be underemployed and underutilized in the Canadian labour market (Boyd & Tian, 2018; Imai et al., 2019;). However, they differ from research that suggests immigrants fare better in small and mid-sized urban centres (Fong et al., 2015; Sano et al., 2017). Findings from this study reinforce the importance of the city context in understanding how immigrants find employment after arrival.

The model that emerged from the interview data present important aspects of the pathway to meaningful employment. In the early stage, immigrant participants focus on settling in their new community and beginning a job search. In a mid-sized city, there are few immigrant-serving organizations offering employment support. As noted by other

researchers, many have pre-existing relationships with local employers and place immigrants in jobs regardless of their skills and qualifications (Lumley-Sapanski, 2019; Senthanar et al., 2020). In this study, immigrants who accessed local services found themselves placed in low-skilled positions often in a factory setting where their skills were underutilized. For immigrants with low levels of education and language proficiency, these services were useful but for others they provided limited support in finding meaningful employment.

Immigrants who were unsuccessful at finding a job using those initial strategies began trying and testing different approaches to improve their chances of employment. The primary strategies used during this time involved volunteering and taking courses to upgrade their skills. These were cost-effective and required limited time commitment, which meant that immigrants could continue to search for employment while building human capital and networking in a professional context. In this stage, immigrants remained optimistic about their employment prospects and pursued opportunities as they arose. Although the strategies used resulted in some immigrants attaining employment, the types of jobs were often in a part-time or temporary capacity. In a mid-sized city, the local economy is driven by few industries that can be narrow in scope. Therefore, the types of jobs available are not always aligned with the qualifications and skills of those seeking employment. Immigrants adapted by accepting any job available to enter the labour market and by pursuing alternate career paths.

Findings from this study have several implications for policy. Although immigrants were successful in finding employment during their first few years in Canada, few reported that the job they had aligned with their pre-migration education and training.

Given that the strategies used by immigrants were not enough to facilitate successful employment integration, policies that focus on enhancing support before arrival and in the first few years after arrival are needed.

The study findings confirm the importance of investment and enhancement of pre-arrival services. This includes providing labour market details about sectors that are in-demand and the geographic regions where jobs are available. In doing so, newcomers would become more aware of opportunities that match their skills and qualifications. After arrival, participants indicated a need for job-related information to guide their employment decisions. Many newcomers are aware of how to identify job vacancies, but they lack knowledge about the local system. Studies show that many immigrants rely on family and friends to provide important information about jobs (Chuactico et al., 2022; Majerski, 2019). However, research consistently shows that this results in low-skilled position with limited opportunity for career advancement (Akkaymak, 2017). For immigrants who do access local employment services, their opportunities are often limited by their network of employers.

Limitations

While this study revealed new insights into the local employment experiences of recent immigrants to Canada, there were some notable limitations. The sample in this study was small and primarily obtained through the local immigrant services. Although there may be important differences in employment outcomes between those who access services versus those who do not, the findings do offer some beginning ideas about how to improve services to support employment pathways of recent immigrants to Canada. Future research could target a larger sample of immigrants across multiple cities to

identify challenges and opportunities to improve the employment integration process for newcomers.

5.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides further insight into the process of integration by introducing a model of immigrant strategies along the pathway to employment in a mid-sized city. It demonstrates a need for continuous monitoring of immigrant employment outcomes at a local level to assure effective integration into the labour market. The findings suggest that providing support at critical points including pre-arrival and during the initial years post-migration would accelerate the possibility of commensurate employment for new immigrants. Mid-sized cities across Canada will continue to face labour shortages that require enhanced immigration. Focusing on local initiatives to improve the efficient and effective integration of immigrants into the labour market is paramount.

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CHAPTER 6: Conclusions

This study examined the employment integration of recent immigrants in the mid-sized city of Guelph Ontario, Canada. It provides an interesting case study for immigrant employment as the city is known for its low unemployment rate and steady job growth. Within this context, immigrants should be able to effectively and efficiently integrate into employment. The three original research studies presented (Chapters 3–5) provide timely evidence about immigrant employment experiences in a local context and emphasize the important role cities play in the integration process. Chapter 3 synthesizes quantitative evidence to examine the current research on immigrant employment outcomes in Canada. By providing a national scope, the paper addresses the contradiction between selection policies that favour highly skilled applicants and the reality of immigrant employment in Canada. Chapter 4 contributes insights into the role of cities in the employment integration of recent immigrants. Using a systems perspective, the paper offers a new approach to understanding how the local context impacts immigrants' ability to find meaningful employment soon after arrival. Chapter 5 explores immigrant perspectives in their efforts to find employment commensurate with their skills and qualifications. The paper presents the strategies immigrants use in their first few years after arrival and the challenges they face along the employment pathway.

This chapter begins by summarizing the key findings of each study, followed by an examination of the contributions of this dissertation, and its implications for policy. The chapter ends a discussion about the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

6.1 Key Findings

This dissertation assumes that the barriers facing immigrants are primarily a result of systemic and structural factors rather than the characteristics of the individual. These factors are analyzed at the macro, meso, and micro levels to identify how immigrants' experience of gaining meaningful employment varies according to the barriers they encounter at each level. Chapter 3 uses a narrative review to examine existing evidence on the current state of employment of recent immigrants to Canada. The focus is national in scope and includes an analysis of the macro-level factors that have been found to be significant barriers to immigrant employment. For example, there is a clear contradiction between selection policies that reward education and professional skills and the labour market outcomes of highly skilled immigrants in Canada. When immigrants arrive, they face barriers to commensurate employment due to issues related to the recognition of their foreign credentials and a lack of Canadian experience. Findings from the review demonstrate that the exclusion of immigrants is exacerbated by structural changes in the labour market including a rise in precarious employment. Despite being highly skilled, many new immigrants are employed in jobs characterized by low wages and employment instability. Although engaging in this type of work provides a point of entry into the labour market, many become caught in what has been identified as "survival" work (Hira-Friesen, 2018; Lewchuk, 2017; Subedi & Rosenberg, 2017). Moreover, the literature shows that visible minority and female immigrants face unique challenges integrating into employment and are further excluded from the Canadian labour market (Fuller & Vosko, 2008; Sethi & Williams, 2015; Stewart et al., 2006).

Overall, findings from the narrative review highlight the evidence that macro-level policies, systemic and structural barriers in the Canadian labour market shape immigrant employment outcomes. Securing stable employment for recent immigrants often occurs over several years and can include moving between different types of employment and positions. This lag time in finding employment commensurate with skills and qualifications has detrimental effects on immigrants' productivity and a negative impact on Canada's economy. The existing evidence provides insights into the poor labour market outcomes of recent immigrants and the need to re-evaluate immigrant selection processes. However, given that employment integration occurs locally, an analysis of the local context is required.

Chapter 4 examines meso-level factors that affect immigrant employment integration in the mid-sized city of Guelph, Ontario. Using a systems approach, the study identified key stakeholders, how they were interrelated and how they functioned to integrate immigrants into employment. A systems map was developed to provide a visual snapshot of the findings. The use of a systems approach was needed to shift the focus away from the individual to the components of the system. Results of the map showed that the local system is organized around three main categories: governments, services, and the local labour market. The categories are representative of interconnected systems that support immigrants through the process of settlement, pre-employment, and employment integration. The mapping technique confirmed that in a mid-sized city, few organizations play a large role in the employment process for newcomers. Similarly, few industries dominate the labour market and drive employment locally. In Guelph, three key organizations are funded to directly serve the employment needs of new immigrants

to the city. While the city has a low unemployment rate, its industry is dominated by the manufacturing sector. This meant that newcomers were often placed in low-skilled jobs where they were underemployed, and their skills were underutilized.

Although the key components of the system were present, challenges were identified by stakeholders including operationalizing relationships between service providers and employers, the lack of a municipal immigration strategy, and limited funding for programming to support all new immigrants to the city. For example, service providers described the challenge of finding commensurate employment for skilled immigrants. Despite the availability of jobs, the type of employment was primarily low-skilled labour. For them, the challenge was engaging employers in high-skilled sectors where jobs better aligned with the skills and qualifications of their clients. At a program level, a targeted strategy to engage employers was needed to improve the match between immigrants choosing to settle the city and local employment opportunities. At a city-level, stakeholders believed that a municipal immigration strategy was needed to promote immigrant integration. Formalizing a strategy to attract immigrants with the skills to fill gaps in labour would enhance immigrant employment outcomes and provide a clearer pathway into the local labour market.

Finally, a concern voiced by all stakeholders was related to a need for increased funding to support cities to attract and retain immigrants. Findings from Chapter 4 indicate that in a mid-sized city with few immigrant-serving organizations, any change in funding can have a significant impact on service provision. With limited access to necessary services in those critical first few years after arrival, immigrants will continue to struggle to find employment and may decide to leave the city. Building on the results

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of the systems map, Chapter 5 further examined recent immigrants' early experiences on the pathway to employment.

Chapter 5 includes an analysis of micro-level factors that influence the integration of newcomers into the local labour market. Through semi-structured interviews with 20 immigrants, the study identified the strategies used and decisions made to find commensurate employment. Results demonstrate that although immigrants were active participants in the pathway to employment, they were met with unique challenges in the city that delayed the process. In the initial years after arrival, immigrants followed a sequence of strategies including settling and searching for jobs, testing and trying different activities, and adapting and accepting any employment to enter the labour market. Although they actively made decisions throughout the process, they were limited by the local employment context. As identified in Chapter 4, the economy in a mid-sized city is driven by few industries that can be narrow in scope. Therefore, the types of jobs available are not always aligned with the qualifications and skills of those seeking employment. In this study, some immigrants were successful in finding employment during their first few years in Canada, but few reported that their job matched their pre-migration education and training. Despite the challenges they faced, immigrants chose to remain in the city.

Given that the strategies used by immigrants were not enough to facilitate successful employment integration, study participants believed that enhancing support before arrival and in the first few years after arrival was required. For example, pre-arrival services should be expanded to include labour market details about sectors that are in-demand and the geographic regions where jobs are available. Having information

about specific industries and where they are located would help to inform skilled immigrants looking to transfer their skills. Newcomers are aware of how to identify job vacancies, but they lack knowledge about the local system. Studies show that many immigrants rely on family and friends to provide important information about jobs (Majerski, 2019; Wilson-Forsberg, 2015). However, this often results in low-skilled positions with limited opportunity for career advancement (Akkaymak, 2017; Chuatico, et al., 2022). For immigrants who access local employment services, their opportunities are often limited by the network of employers connected to the agencies. In these cases, immigrants are offered low-skilled jobs and told it is a beginning pathway into the Canadian labour market.

6.2 Contributions

Collectively the original research studies presented in Chapters 3–5 of this dissertation strengthen the evidence about barriers immigrants face as they enter the Canadian labour market and expand the existing literature on the role of cities in the employment integration of newcomers. Together the findings from this dissertation make substantive and methodological contributions to the literature.

Substantive

The research in this dissertation is timely given that the federal government has increased immigration targets to unprecedented levels. Between 2023 and 2025, the government intends to admit a total of 1.45 million new immigrants: 465,000 in 2023, 485,000 in 2024, and 500,000 in 2025 (IRCC, 2022). Under this plan, close to 60% of immigrants will be admitted under the economic class. With the increase in immigration, the role of cities in the employment integration process is ever more important.

Findings from Chapter 3 contribute to the existing literature that indicates recent immigrants face significant barriers in the Canadian labour market. It expands the literature by revealing that immigrant employment outcomes are shaped by a complex mix of factors that intersect to produce varying degrees of labour market success. Economic conditions, settlement patterns, immigrant characteristics, and systemic and structural barriers in the Canadian labour market all contribute to the economic disadvantage facing immigrants to Canada (Adsera & Ferrer 2016; Ali & Newbold, 2020; Fitzsimmons et al., 2020; Hira-Friesen, 2018; Imai et al., 2019; Lamb et al., 2022; Lightman & Gingrich, 2018; Warman & Worswick, 2015). Yet, as Chatterjee (2019) notes, government policies have focused on only one area to correct the challenges facing immigrants – creating programs for "remedial training" to improve immigrant skills. By targeting immigrant skills as the primary issue, the government has created a context where immigrants are viewed as deficient against a Canadian standard. This places the onus on the individual to correct their shortcomings to integrate into employment efficiently and effectively. As the analysis of existing evidence demonstrates, a focus on training initiatives as the solution to poor labour market outcomes ignores the complexity of the issue and offers a simple solution to a multifaceted problem.

Chapters 4 and 5 shift the focus from the national-level to the local context by examining how immigrants integrate into employment in the mid-sized city of Guelph, Ontario. The city of Guelph is an ideal case to study employment as it has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country and is recognized as a top city for job growth (Kavcic, 2022; Singer, 2022). Findings from Chapter 4 contribute to the existing literature on immigrant employment in small and mid-sized cities by offering new

insights into how the interrelated components of the local system function to influence immigrant employment. Although studies show that there are more opportunities for jobs in smaller cities, the types of jobs available may not be suited to all immigrants (Bernard, 2008; Fong et al., 2015). As the findings from Chapter 5 revealed, immigrants in mid-sized cities do struggle to find commensurate employment. It is evident that the realities facing immigrants are both structural and local.

Most research on small and mid-sized cities focus on how cities can attract and retain newcomers (see Esses & Carter, 2019). Chapter 4 expands our understanding of the important role of cities in the employment integration of immigrants. Namely, it identifies that in a mid-sized city, relationships are primacy and community engagement that includes all stakeholders is essential to ensure successful integration of immigrants into the local economy. Additionally, creating a municipal immigration strategy is a necessary first step for small and mid-sized cities (Esses et al., 2010). Studies show that cities that take advantage of government initiatives, such as the welcoming initiative and services offered through local immigration partnerships, can improve their ability to attract immigrants and create an environment that would support immigrant settlement and integration into the community (George et al., 2017; Walton-Roberts, 2011). Communities that provide meaningful employment that match immigrants' skills fare better in attracting newcomers than communities with fewer suitable employment opportunities (Esses & Carter, 2019).

Chapter 5 contributes to the existing literature about immigrant employment experiences in mid-sized cities across Canada. Studies suggest that employment opportunities are better for immigrants in smaller and mid-sized cities, as there is less

competition for jobs and fewer immigrants to compete against (Fong et al., 2015; Frank, 2013; Haan, 2008; Sano et al., 2017). This study showed that although there may be more opportunities for employment in small and mid-sized cities, the type of jobs available are not suitable for all immigrants. Highly skilled immigrants do not fare as well in cities where industry is dominated by the trades, services, or manufacturing sectors.

Additionally, although immigrants in mid-sized cities actively engage in the pathway to employment, they face challenges related to the local context. For example, studies show that strong social ties can provide immigrants with a sense of belonging in a community but can also present challenges to employment integration for newly arriving immigrants (Majerski, 2019; Walton-Roberts, 2005). Immigrant networks limit immigrants' ability to acquire official language skills, find employment commensurate with skills and qualifications and hinder occupational mobility. Findings from Chapter 5 confirm that immigrants rely on friends and family as an initial step in navigating the labour market and builds on the literature to suggest that immigrants engage in various other strategies as they endeavour to find employment. In a mid-sized city, developing social capital is challenged by a lack of familiarity with the local system. Creating programs that provide an opportunity for immigrants to interact with community members outside of their social group would allow immigrants to gain social capital and develop ties in the Canadian labour market.

Methodological

This dissertation contributes new methodological approaches by applying a systems approach to understanding immigrant employment (Chapter 4) and by using

qualitative methods to examine early immigrant employment experiences in a mid-sized city (Chapter 5).

The study presented in Chapter 4 is the first to use a systems approach and systems mapping technique (as far as the author is aware) to examine immigrant employment integration in a mid-sized city. System approaches involve identifying key actors, how they are interrelated, and the context within which they function. Although prevalent in public health research (see de Savigny et al., 2009), this approach has not been used in immigration literature. It is a useful approach as it allows for a view of what exists and where there may be challenges and opportunities to improve the system. Additionally, it shifts the focus from "reductionist problem solving" to transforming systems to improve the employment outcomes of newcomers (Kiekens et al., 2022). Systems thinking adds to existing theories and methods in understanding immigrant employment and provides new opportunities to continuously test and revise policies and programs to improve immigrant outcomes (Kiekens et al., 2022).

The technique used in Chapter 4 includes the development of a systems map. System mapping identifies and presents a system by connecting the actors and their relationships to the larger context to examine how it responds to external factors (de Savigny & Adam, 2009). The system is assumed to be self-organizing, dynamic, non-linear, governed by feedback, history dependent, counter-intuitive, and resistant to change (de Savigny & Adam, 2009). The benefit of using a systems map is that it shifts the focus away from an immigrant deficit approach to policymaking and toward an emphasis on system-level improvements. The technique can be used as a tool to engage

small and mid-sized cities in planning for immigration and critically assessing how to better integrate immigrants once they arrive.

This dissertation further contributes methodologically by using qualitative methods (Chapters 4 and 5) and a grounded theory approach (Chapter 5) to examine immigrant employment in a mid-sized city. Although there is extensive research on the employment outcomes and economic integration of immigrants to Canada, most studies are quantitative and national in scope (Boyd & Tian, 2018; Frank, 2013; Lamb et al., 2022; Picot et al., 2016; 2022; Sweetman & Warman, 2013). Of the studies that do include city-level data, they often concentrate on the three largest urban centres (Akbar, 2019; Branker, 2017; Frenette, 2018; Somerville & Walsworth, 2010). Chapters 4 and 5 use qualitative methods to examine how immigrants integrate into employment at a city-level. Chapter 4 is one of the few studies that address the local system as a driver of employment integration. The approach included the use of key stakeholders from the local community to co-design the systems map and validate findings against their perspectives. In Chapter 5, grounded theory methods were used to interview newcomers to the city to explore their lived experiences integrating into the local system. Again, this study is one of few that employ grounded theory methods within an urban context (see Lam & Triandafyllidou, 2022). Grounded theory seeks to identify issues of importance to participants and examine their experiences using qualitative interviews. It's unique approach to data includes collecting and analyzing simultaneously through a process of constant comparison (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). By using grounded theory methods to interview immigrants in one mid-sized city, the study provides a different perspective of how immigrants actively engage in the pathway to employment. Rather than counts and

percentages, it uncovers strategies and stories about immigrants' efforts to find

meaningful employment in their initial years in Canada.

6.3 Implications

This research has timely implications to guide changes in policies at the national,

provincial, and municipal level. Nationally, it is important to continue to track immigrant

employment outcomes in Canada. The evidence can be used to guide program planning

and improve local services available to immigrants upon arrival. However, the data

accessibility and information-sharing need improvement. Federally, there are many data

sources available that include variables about immigration and employment. The

challenge identified by stakeholders (Chapter 4) is the lag in information available to

local service providers, non-governmental organizations, and employers. In smaller and

mid-sized cities there are limited resources available for immigrant services and they

often do not include data collection and management. In response, the government

created Local Immigration Partnerships (LIP) to build local capacity and provide cities

with additional resources to include evidence in their planning efforts. It is important to

continue investment into the LIP infrastructure and increase collaboration between larger

and smaller centres. As identified in this dissertation, larger centres can offer support to

smaller cities that includes access to timely data, information sharing, and collective

thinking on how to improve immigrant employment outcomes regionally.

Additionally, as identified in Chapter 5, there is a need to improve the labour

market information available to immigrants prior to arrival in Canada. Data obtained

from immigrant interviews indicated that newcomers are not well-informed about

employment opportunities based on sector and geography. With a continued interest in

regionalization and the persistent labour shortages across Canada, it is critical that more detailed information is shared with potential immigrants in all immigration classes. The current selection system awards points based on occupations but does not provide detailed information about job vacancies, where they are located, how industries are organized, and what training and skills are required to work in those industries in Canada. Studies have shown that immigrants are unaware of the potential barriers they will face in the Canadian labour market (Akkaymak, 2017; Tastsoglou & Miedema, 2005). By enhancing the information provided to immigrants, they may be better prepared to access employment upon arrival. Currently, the federal government funds pre-arrival organizations across the country to assess immigrant needs and provide a personalized plan that includes information about housing, employment, and life in Canada (Government of Canada, 2022). Expanding these services to include labour market information specific to sectors of employment that are in-demand would provide newly arriving immigrants with the necessary knowledge to improve access to and integration into the labour market.

Furthermore, a more strategic and skills-based approach is needed to better integrate newcomers into the Canadian job market. First, there is a need to re-evaluate the allocation of immigrant selection to the Provincial Nominee Programs (PNPs). Provincial governments have unique labour market challenges based on dominant regional industries that require targeted skills and occupations. Providing provincial governments with a greater share of immigrant selection will not only improve the regional dispersion of newcomers, but also help to relieve labour shortages across the country. Provinces also have an important role to play to ensure cities and employers are involved in setting

criteria for selection. To benefit newly arriving, highly skilled immigrants, any points allocated to in-demand occupations should be aligned with existing employment opportunities. This would require governments to work more closely with employers at a local level to identify open positions that could be shared with immigrants who score high on relevant occupations.

Second, strengthening university and employer capacity to select future immigrants via international students, temporary foreign workers, and skills-based recruiting could enhance short-term employment outcomes of newcomers to Canada. As Walton-Roberts (2011) notes, the universities and colleges act as a "locus of change" by creating greater diversity in communities and as "important attractors of talent" by the connections they develop in the local labour market. For mid-sized cities, higher education plays a significant role in international migration, settlement, and integration. This requires collaboration between local stakeholders, including settlement service providers, municipalities, and employers.

Municipally, there is a need for immigration strategies that include local employers to attract immigrants into available employment opportunities. As discussed in Chapter 4, stakeholders believed this was a significant gap and a lost opportunity for the local labour market. Creating a strategy to attract immigrants that includes the numerous employment opportunities available could provide a clearer path into the local labour market. Initiatives that promote collective thinking and a shared vision of immigration can result in targeted planning.

6.4 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

While the findings of this dissertation have expanded our understanding of how recent immigrants integrate into employment and the role of cities in the employment process, there are some notable limitations. The narrative review (Chapter 3) was based on studies that were national in scope, with few reporting on provincial or city-level data. Although the evidence reviewed provided a snapshot of immigrant employment outcomes in Canada, it did not offer any insights into the lived experiences of immigrants integrating into local labour markets. The extensive literature focused on immigrant employment is largely quantitative and used to inform policy related to immigration and the Canadian economy (Adsera & Ferrer, 2016; Boyd & Tian, 2018; Frank, 2013; Fuller & Martin, 2012; Lu & Hou, 2020; Sweetman & Warman, 2013; Warman & Worswick, 2015). The only published review of the literature was conducted over a decade ago (see Reitz, 2007a; 2007b). An updated review of the research was needed to assess emerging trends and to identify significant factors associated with immigrant employment outcomes. Qualitative studies were excluded because they do not focus on outcome measures of employment.

Future research should include a systematic review of the emerging qualitative research on immigrant employment (Akkyamak, 2017; Thomas, 2020; Wilson-Forsberg, 2015). The review would provide important insights into what is known about how immigrants integrate into employment in various contexts across Canada. Qualitative research provides an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of immigrants as they transition into employment. It is important to synthesize the existing evidence to

integrate knowledge, enable more robust conclusions about immigrant employment, and provide evidence to inform policy changes that better align with lived experiences.

The case study and systems map (Chapters 4 and 5) was based on one mid-sized city in the province of Ontario. There may be challenges with transferability to other cities and in other provinces. For this study, transferability was achieved through a detailed description of the city including data about how it compares to other mid-sized cities on indicators such as population size, proportion of the immigrant population, unemployment and employment rates. Additionally, details about the available settlement and employment services were described and related to the local labour market. The findings from Chapter 4 identify system-level characteristics that can enhance and inhibit immigrant employment integration. Other cities can learn what works and where there may be gaps that need to be addressed in their own local community.

Future research should examine key features of mid-sized cities that would enhance the rapid uptake of immigrants into commensurate employment. Studies have provided some data on immigrant settlement in small and mid-sized cities (see Drolet & Teixeira, 2020; Esses & Carter, 2019; Walton-Roberts, 2011), but few explore employment in depth and the role cities play in the integration of immigrants into the labour market. Future studies should interview employers located in selected small and mid-sized cities to identify the characteristics of the employment context that could enhance the successful integration of newcomers.

The systems map (Chapter 4) is limited by the time and place the data were captured and may not be a complete depiction of the system. Systems mapping is a tool used to abstract information about how a system is organized and functions. However, it

is important not to confuse the map with the system it depicts. Systems are dynamic and vary across space and time. An inventory of existing services is also time sensitive and becomes out of date quickly. The systems map of Guelph was developed during the COVID-19 pandemic when the local services were functioning remotely and offering limited services to their clients. There may be important differences in how the system functions under typical conditions. Although the interviews with stakeholders did include questions regarding how the system worked pre-pandemic, recency bias may have been an issue. To assess credibility, periodic checks with the participants during each interview were used to verify interpretations of what was being said and to ensure their meanings are not misunderstood. Member checking was used also used to assess the credibility of the map once it was developed.

Future research should revisit the map in Guelph with key stakeholders to identify any changes post-pandemic. Additionally, the systems map tool should be used in other mid-sized cities across Canada, particularly those that are experiencing growth in immigration. For example, the mid-sized city of Windsor has an immigrant population of 23%, which is above the national average (Statistics Canada, 2022a); however, their unemployment rate is almost double the national rate (8.3% and 4.5% respectively) (Statistics Canada, 2022b). It would be interesting to develop a systems map of immigrant employment in Windsor to identify how the local context and the services available to the immigrant population influence their integration into the labour market. Furthermore, the systems map tool could be used to compare cities that are similar demographically, geographically, and economically. A comparative study could identify

some notable similarities and unique differences that could guide policy and planning around immigrant employment services at a local level.

Finally, the immigrant sample in Chapter 5 was small (N=20) and primarily obtained through the local immigrant settlement services. Therefore, there may be issues with the transferability of the data to immigrants who do not access services to find employment. Studies show that social networks are used by immigrants to find employment in their first few years after arrival (Chuatico et al., 2022; Majerski, 2019; Nakhaie & Kazemipur, 2013; Xue, 2008). In a mid-sized city, the use of social networks to find employment is more common, especially among low-skilled workers with limited language proficiency (Bernard, 2008; Sano et al., 2017). Although there may be important differences in employment outcomes between those who access services versus those that do not, the findings do offer some beginning ideas about how to improve services to support employment pathways of recent immigrants to Canada. Future research should include a larger sample of immigrants and ensure adequate representation of immigrants who do not access services to find employment.

6.5 Concluding Remarks

International migration is on the rise and populations are on the move. At the same time, countries around the globe are facing rapid change politically, socially, and economically. The global COVID-19 pandemic depleted many countries of resources and created significant labour shortages. Canada's response has been to significantly increase immigration levels as a strategy for post-pandemic economic recovery. In order to be effective there is a need for integration policies to support the increase in the number of skilled newcomers to Canada over the next several years. Cities will face the greatest

pressure to facilitate the effective and efficient integration of immigrants into employment. The pandemic has provided an opportunity to shift attention away from an immigrant deficit approach to policymaking and toward an emphasis on system-level improvements. Findings from this dissertation provide evidence of how cities can create an environment where immigrants can transition into employment commensurate with their skills and qualifications. With a better alignment between policy and reality, immigrant employment outcomes and experiences will improve over time.

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Appendix A. Statistics Canada Census Definitions

Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) or Census Agglomeration (CA): "is formed by one or more adjacent municipalities centred on a population centre (known as the core). A CMA must have a total population of at least 100,000 of which 50,000 or more live in the core. A CA must have a core population of at least 10,000."

Source: Statistics Canada. (2018). *CMA and CA: Detailed definition*.

https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/92-195-x/2011001/geo/cma-rmr/def-eng.htm

Census Division (CD): "Group of neighbouring municipalities joined together for the purposes of regional planning and managing common services (such as police or ambulance services)."

Source: Statistics Canada (2015). *Census division.*

https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/ref/dict/geo008-eng.cfm

Census Subdivision (CSD): "Area that is a municipality or an area that is deemed to be equivalent to a municipality for statistical reporting purposes (e.g., as an Indian reserve or an unorganized territory). Municipal status is defined by laws in effect in each province and territory in Canada."

Source: Statistics Canada (2015). *Census subdivision.*

https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/ref/dict/geo012-eng.cfm

Appendix B. Stakeholder Semi-Structured Interview Guide

1. Can you tell me about the services provided by organization?

2. What is your role in immigration/immigrant services?

   Probes: How long have you worked with immigrants? Are you involved in decision-making about services for immigrants? Can you describe the services you provide to immigrants?

3. What is your perspective of the existing services and supports available to immigrants in the city of Guelph?

   Probes: Do you think immigrants avail themselves of these services? Why or why not? Are there gaps in services? If so, what additional services are needed?

4. What is your perspective of the facilitators that help immigrants in finding employment?

   Probes: How does your organization support immigrant employment?

5. What is your perspective of the challenges immigrant face when trying to find employment?

   Probes: Are there enough services/supports in place?

6. How has COVID-19 affected immigrant employment in the city?

7. From your perspective, what are the responsibilities of key stakeholders in the employment integration of recent immigrants to Canada?

   a. *Government*
   b. *Service providers*
   c. *Communities*
   d. *Employers*
   e. *Immigrants*

8. What conditions or supports do you think are necessary to improve employment outcomes for immigrants?

9. Do you have any additional comments you would like to add?

Appendix C. Immigrant Recruitment Poster

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR
RESEARCH IN IMMIGRANT EMPLOYMENT

We are looking for volunteers to take part in a study about how immigrants find work that matches their education and skills in the city of Guelph.

If you are someone who has immigrated to Canada in the last 5 years, are between the ages of 25 and 54 years, speak conversational English, and are either employed or looking for work, we are interested in hearing about your experiences.

You will be asked to participate in a phone or Zoom interview that will last 30-45 minutes. You will be asked questions about your perspectives and experiences in finding a job as a new immigrant to the city.

In appreciation for your time, you will receive a $20 money transfer.

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study, please contact:
Mary Arsenio
School of Earth, Environment and Society
McMaster University
519-362-7182
Email: mcrea@mcmaster.ca

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance by the McMaster Research Ethics Board.

Appendix D. Immigrant Semi-Structured Interview Guide

General questions:

1. How long have you resided in Canada? In the City of Guelph?

    Probes: When did you arrive? Did immigrate with family? Why did you choose Guelph?

2. Can you tell me about the services you've accessed since arriving to Guelph?

    Probes: Why did you access these services? Were they helpful? Was there any other information that you needed and could not find or access?

3. Tell me about your educational/work experience prior to immigrating to Canada.

    Probes: What is your educational background? What jobs have you held previously? What was your intended occupation in Canada?

4. Can you tell me about your experiences trying to find a job in the City of Guelph?

    Probes: Did you use any services? How did you begin your search? What industries were you interested in working? What informal supports (if any) did you use?

5. What are some challenges/barriers you faced in trying to find a job in Guelph?

    Probes: Are there many job opportunities?

6. What has helped you in your job search?

    Probes: Individuals? Organizations? Formal or informal supports?

Employment questions:

For those employed

7. Can you tell me about your current employment?

    Probes: Where do you work? How did you get this job? How long have you been employed in your current position? Are you employed in a permanent position?

8. Do you believe that this job matches your educational qualifications and work experience? Why or why not?

For those seeking employment

9. How long have you been seeking employment?

    Probes: How many jobs have you applied to? Have you received any calls/interviews?

10. What type of employment are you seeking?

Probes: what are your preferences for work status (full-time, part-time), location?

COVID-19 and its Impacts:

11. Employment.
    a. What is your trade/occupation you currently practice in Canada or are intending to practice?
    b. Has COVID-19 impacted your ability to work? Have you lost your job or reduced hours at all?

12. Financial situation.
    a. Has COVID-19 impacted your financial situation? How would you describe your financial situation? Would you say you have enough money to meet your basic needs, that you have just enough, or not enough?

Final Comments:

13. Do you have any suggestions on how to improve the employment integration process for newly arriving immigrants?

14. What employment advice would you give to a new immigrant to Canada?

Probes: Would you refer them to any specific agencies?

15. Do you have any additional comments you would like to add?

Appendix E. Demographic Data Collection Form

IMMIGRANT PARTICIPANTS

1. What is your age?
   - [ ]20-29 years
   - [ ]30-39
   - [ ]40-49
   - [ ]50-59
   - [ ]60-69
   - [ ]<70

2. What gender do you identify as?
   Do you identify as (check all that apply):
   - [ ] Female/Woman
   - [ ] Male/Man
   - [ ] Trans Woman
   - [ ] Trans Man
   - [ ] Two-Spirit
   - [ ] Non-binary
   - [ ] Prefer to self-identify: _____
   - [ ] Prefer not to answer

3. What year did you immigrate to Canada? _____

4. From which country did you immigrate?_____

5. What is your country of origin? _____

6. Immigration admission category
   - [   ] Economic immigrant
   - [   ] Family reunion class
   - [   ] Refugee
   - [   ] Other_____

7. Languages spoken: _____

8. What is the highest level of education?
   - [   ] Specialized non-academic training (e.g., mentorship, self-study)
   - [   ] Secondary (high) school diploma or equivalency certificate
   - [   ] Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma
   - [   ] College, CEGEP, or other non-university certificate or diploma
   - [   ] University certificate or diploma below bachelor level
   - [   ] Bachelor's degree
   - [   ] University certificate or diploma above bachelor level
   - [   ] Master's degree
   - [   ] Doctoral or professional degree

9. What is your Canadian citizenship or immigration status?
    [   ] Canadian Citizen
    [   ] Permanent Resident
    [   ] Landed Immigrant
    [   ] Refugee
    [   ] On a work visa/permit

10. Are you currently employed?
    [   ] Yes (go to question 13)
    [   ] No (go to question 11)

11. Are you seeking employment?
    [   ] Yes
    [   ] No

12. For how long have you been seeking employment? _____

13. In which industry are you employed?
    [   ] Accommodation and food services
    [   ] Administration, Business Support, & Waste Management Services
    [   ] Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting
    [   ] Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation
    [   ] Construction
    [   ] Educational Services
    [   ] Finance and Insurance
    [   ] Healthcare and Social Assistance
    [   ] Information
    [   ] Manufacturing
    [   ] Mining
    [   ] Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
    [   ] Real Estate and Rental, and Leasing
    [   ] Retail Trade
    [   ] Transportation and Warehousing
    [   ] Utilities
    [   ] Wholesale Trade
    [   ] Not applicable

14. Employment status?
    [   ] Full-time (permanent/temporary)
    [   ] Part-time (permanent/temporary)
    [   ] Casual
    [   ] Other_____
    [   ] Not applicable

15. How long have you been employed at your current place of employment?
    Months _____
    Years _____

    [   ] Not applicable

16. If you are comfortable sharing, what is your current income level?
    [   ] under $20,000 per year
    [   ] between $20,000 and $30,000
    [   ] between $30,000 and $40,000
    [   ] between $40,000 and $50,000
    [   ] between $50,000 and $60,000
    [   ] between $60,000 and $70,000
    [   ] between $70,000 and $80,000
    [   ] between $80,000 and $90,000
    [   ] between $90,000 and $100,000
    [   ] over $100,000

Appendix F. Participant Information and Consent Forms

Stakeholder Participants

A study of the employment integration of new immigrants to a mid-sized city.

Principal Investigator:
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Purpose of the Study: You are invited to take part in this study on the employment integration of recent immigrants to the city of Guelph, Ontario. This study is part of my PhD dissertation in Human Geography under the supervision of Dr. Bruce Newbold. We want to learn about how newly arriving immigrants find employment that matches their skills and qualifications including any challenges they may face when finding employment in a mid-sized city. We also hope to find out what services and supports are in place to help new immigrants in finding work once they arrive to the city. This research is being completed as part of a doctoral dissertation.

Procedures Involved in the Research: You will be asked to participate in a phone or Zoom interview that will last between 30 and 45 minutes. We will audio-record the interview using either a personal recording device or audio recording for zoom and take notes with your permission. Recordings will be deleted immediately after they are transcribed, up to 6 months after the interview. You will be asked questions about your perceptions of immigrant services and employment supports available to recent immigrants in the city of Guelph. I will ask you for some demographic/background information like your age and education. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer during the interview. The full list of questions we will ask is attached to this form.

Potential Harms, Risks or Discomforts:
This study will use the Zoom platform to collect data, which is an externally hosted cloud-based service. Please note that while this service is approved for collecting data in this study by the McMaster Research Ethics Board, there is a small risk with any platform such as this of data that is collected on external servers falling outside the control of the research team. If you are concerned about this, we would be happy to make alternative arrangements for you to participate, perhaps via telephone. Please talk to the researcher if you have any concerns.
There is also a slight risk of identification based on quotes used in the final reporting of study results. The confidentiality of participants will be protected by removing any identifiers in the selected quotations however, there may still be the possibility of identifying you or your position. To minimize this risk, you do not need to answer questions that you do not want to answer or that make you feel uncomfortable. You will also be reminded not to share stories that could identify you or your position.

Potential Benefits*:*
We hope to learn more about how immigrants can be supported in finding meaningful employment quickly when immigrating to a mid-sized city. We hope that what is learned as a result of this study will help inform policy and programming to improve the employment outcomes of recent immigrants.

Confidentiality:
You are participating in this study confidentially. I will not use your name or any information that would allow you to be identified. No one but me will know whether you were in the study unless you choose to tell them. The information/data you provide will be kept in a password protected and encrypted computer folder that only I will have access to. Once the study has been completed, the data will be destroyed after 3 years.

Participation and Withdrawal: Your participation in this study is voluntary and it is your choice to be part of the study or not. If you decide to be part of the study, you can withdraw from the interview for whatever reason, even after consenting or part-way through the study or up until ***January 30, 2022***, when I expect to be submitting my dissertation for review.
If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. In cases of withdrawal, any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. If you do not want to answer some of the questions you do not have to, but you can still be in the study.

Information About the Study Results:
I expect to have this study completed by approximately *January 30, 2022.* If you would like a brief summary of the results, please let me know how you would like it sent to you.

Questions About the Study: If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact me at:

> *Mary Arsenio*
> *Email: mcrrea@mcmaster.ca*
> Phone: 519-362-7182

This study has been reviewed by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

> McMaster Research Ethics Secretariat
> Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142
> C/o Research Office for Administrative Development and Support
> E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

CONSENT
- I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Mary Arsenio of McMaster University.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested.
- I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time or up until ***January 30, 2022.***
- I have been given a copy of this form.
- I agree to participate in the study.

You will be asked the following questions at the time of the interview:

1. I agree that the interview can be audio recorded.
[ ] Yes
[ ] No

Immigrant Participants

A study of the employment integration of new immigrants to a mid-sized city.

Principal Investigator:
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Student Investigator:
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Email: mcrea@mcmaster.ca

Purpose of the Study: You are invited to take part in this study on the employment integration of recent immigrants to the city of Guelph, Ontario. This study is part of my PhD dissertation in Human Geography under the supervision of Dr. Bruce Newbold. We want to learn about how newly arriving immigrants find employment that matches their skills and qualifications including any challenges they may face when finding employment in a mid-sized city. We also hope to find out what services and supports are in place to help new immigrants in finding work once they arrive to the city. This research is being completed as part of a doctoral dissertation.

Procedures involved in the Research: You will be asked to participate in a phone or Zoom interview that will last up to 45 minutes. We will audio-record the interview using either a personal recording device or audio recording for zoom and take notes with your permission. Recordings will be deleted immediately after they are transcribed, up to 6 months after the interview. You will be asked questions about your experiences and perceptions of immigrant services and employment supports as a recent immigrant to the city of Guelph and about your previous and current employment. I will ask you for some demographic/background information like your age and education. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer during the interview. The full list of questions we will ask is attached to this form. In return for your participation, you will receive a $20 money transfer.

Potential Harms, Risks, or Discomforts:
This study will use the Zoom platform to collect data, which is an externally hosted cloud-based service. Please note that while this service is approved for collecting data in this study by the McMaster Research Ethics Board, there is a small risk with any platform such as this of data that is collected on external servers falling outside the control of the research team. If you are concerned about this, we would be happy to make alternative arrangements for you to participate, perhaps via telephone. Please talk to the researcher if you have any concerns.
As part of the interview, you will be asked about your experiences in finding employment. This could cause you to worry about your employment situation. To minimize this risk, an employment supports/counselling document will be provided to you that includes resources for counselling services. Also, you do not need to answer questions that you do not want to answer or that make you feel uncomfortable.

Potential Benefits*:*
We hope to learn more about how immigrants can be supported in finding meaningful employment quickly when immigrating to a mid-sized city. We hope that what is learned as a result of this study will help inform policy and programming to improve the employment outcomes of recent immigrants.

Confidentiality:
You are participating in this study confidentially. I will not use your name or any information that would allow you to be identified. No one but me will know whether you were in the study unless you choose to

tell them. The information/data you provide will be kept in a password protected and encrypted computer folder that only I will have access to. Once the study has been completed, the data will be destroyed after 3 years.

Participation and Withdrawal: Your participation in this study is voluntary and it is your choice to be part of the study or not. If you decide to be part of the study, you can withdraw from the interview for whatever reason, even after consenting or part-way through the study or up until *January 30, 2022*, when I expect to be submitting my dissertation for review.
If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you, and you will still receive the $20 money transfer. In cases of withdrawal, any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. If you do not want to answer some of the questions you do not have to, but you can still be in the study.

Information about the Study Results:
I expect to have this study completed by approximately *January 30, 2022.* If you would like a brief summary of the results, please let me know how you would like it sent to you.

Questions about the Study: If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact me at:

> *Mary Arsenio*
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CONSENT
- I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Mary Arsenio of McMaster University.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested.
- I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time or up until *January 30, 2022.*
- I have been given a copy of this form.
- I agree to participate in the study.

You will be asked the following questions at the time of the interview:

1. I agree that the interview can be audio recorded.
[ ] Yes
[ ] No

2. [ ] Yes, I would like to receive a summary of the study's results.

Please send them to me at this email address _____

[ ] No, I do not want to receive a summary of the study's results.

Appendix E. List of Employment and Counselling Services Information Sheet

Below is a list of services of counselling and employment services in the city of Guelph:

<u>**Counselling Supports**</u>

<u>Family Counselling and Support Services Guelph-Wellington</u>
519-824-2431
Offers individual and family counselling services, no appointment needed.
https://familyserviceguelph.on.ca

<u>Canadian Mental Health Association Waterloo Wellington Dufferin</u>
1-844-264-2993
Crisis line/immediate assistance/to access services.

<u>**Employment Services**</u>

<u>Lutherwood Employment Services</u>
519-822-4141
Offers employment counseling and job searching support.
https://www.lutherwood.ca/employment

<u>Second Chance Employment Counselling</u>
519-823-2440
Offers employment counselling and access to jobs.
https://2ndchance.ca/about-us/

<u>Municipal Internship for Immigrants at Guelph</u>
519-822-4141
Offers internship positions for new immigrants.
https://guelph.ca/employment-careers/careers-jobs/are-you-an-internationally-trained-person/

<u>Immigrant Services of Guelph Wellington</u>
519-836-2222
Offers settlement and employment services in Guelph.
https://www.is-gw.ca

<u>Guelph-Wellington Local Immigration Partnership</u>
519-822-1260 ext. 2625
Offers resources to local employment services.
https://www.guelphwellingtonlip.ca

<u>For more information about COVID-19</u>
Public Health Canada
https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html.