HELP NOT WANTED:
(UN)EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES OF VISIBLE MINORITY MIGRANTS IN THE CITY OF OTTAWA, CANADA

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To my dad late Paul Madut Kon
and
mom Rose Adut Badh

Help Not Wanted:

(Un)Employment Experiences of Visible Minority Migrants in the City of Ottawa, Canada

Dissertation submitted to Tilburg University

to meet partial requirements for

Ph.D. in Social Science

About the Cover

The cover design is meant to be both attractive and symbolic. I chose a Canadian icon, the maple leaf, to exemplify the beauty and bounty that is Canada. Four foregrounded maple leaves represent the social construction of four distinctive communities within Canadian society. The two larger red leaves signify the Anglophone and Francophone communities, the two dominant groups constituting mainstream Canada. Two divergent maple leaves represent the "other" Canada. The brown-yellow one symbolizes the older First Nations, while the bright green leaf signifies the newer, more visible minority community.

The back cover, an illustration of labor force activities, is an image meant to reflect the major themes of this dissertation and the stories of those who participated in my research.

The creative graphics concept was made possible through the technical support of my amazing and multitalented friend, Dr. Rodney Merrill. We hope that it will arouse both sense and sensibility.

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the experiences of visible minority migrants as they attempt to integrate into the local work force in Ottawa, Canada. Prior research on this targeted group's access to economic opportunities and success in the local workforce has been largely quantitative, focusing primarily on percentages of unemployed and underemployed. Research has paid little attention to the social, economic, and cultural experiences of the visible minority migrants who are looking for work, and even less attention to their accounts of these experiences. In this qualitative grounded theory research, migrants consistently tell stories of long-term struggles to find and keep a job—of sensing that they are unwanted. This work interpreted participants' perceptions, utilizing many of the words of the migrants themselves. Their words were gathered through intensive interviews of between one and two hours with 6 visible minority migrants and one focus group interview with 4 visible minority migrants, for a total of 10 participants. The intensive one-on-one interviews were followed by a group interview with four other participants for about 3.5 hours, in which the same questions used in the intensive interviews were asked. The actual interviews started in the middle of March 2010 and continued through June 2010. Using the grounded theory method, interviews were transcribed, coded, and categorized. Analysis included a partial Situational Analysis Matrix, triangulations, constant comparisons, interrelation of concepts, categories and memos which led to seven key themes. The outcome revealed perceptions of the migrant job seekers on multifaceted employment barriers as causes of unemployment and underemployment in Ottawa.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all professional migrants forced to leave countries-of-origin or those who willingly migrated to Canada for better, safer, and more prosperous lives, as well as to the host country (Canada) and in particular, the cities that opened their doors to receive a diverse workforce and oppressed persons from around the globe. I think that with carefully designed and executed plans, policies, and programs, these skilled migrants will be able to contribute effectively and abundantly to the socio-economic development of Canada.

Chapter 1

Context and Background

The complexity of the visible minority migrants' experiences of finding and keeping jobs in Ottawa's local labor market has been one of the challenges facing policymakers and employment professionals who provide employment assistance to help unemployed individuals gain sustainable jobs in their professions. Employment programs, funders in government, employment professionals, regulatory bodies, and employers have continued to attribute the high unemployment rate and difficulties of securing jobs for visible minority migrants to their lack of knowledge and limited understanding of the local labor market's requirements (Jedwab, 2006).

For decades, these interpretations of visible minority migrants' experiences with unemployment and difficulties in finding employment have been less than helpful in the process of integrating these migrants into the local work force. However, all levels of governments (municipal, provincial, and federal) continue to set up multi-million dollar employment programs based upon these perceptions. The participating job seekers interviewed in this dissertation believed that employers have control over the hiring requirements for jobs they advertise and that the screening of prospective employees is not limited to skills, qualifications, and abilities, but extended to the candidate's knowledge of prevailing social norms and workplace culture (Rodriguez, 1997). The unstated requirements of cultural awareness and what is known as "becoming more Canadian," such as speaking English without an accent, obtaining a Canadian education, understanding Canadian social norms and having a form of work experience in Canada, prevent these job seekers from obtaining jobs and hinder their ability to hold jobs or advance in their careers. Baklid (2004) states:

> One of the main barriers involves an applicant's "fit" with a position or an organization. Research has shown that personality and person-organization fit are powerful predictors of job performance. However, many visible minorities believe this is an area where systemic discrimination hides. Indeed, the criterion of "personal suitability," which can exist for positions at all levels of an organization, appears to be a determining factor for management roles. For example, executive search firms looking to staff a senior position focus on whether a candidate's personality meshes with the overall organizational culture. The issue, from the point of view of several visible minorities...is that fit or suitability often comes down to chemistry between the hiring manager and the candidate. Visible minority candidates who had been unable to create a rapport with hiring managers due to different backgrounds and ethnicity left the interviews feeling that prejudice may have been to blame. (p. 3)

Satzewich (1998) suggests that racism and racial bias, among other factors, have been of concern to many migrants in Canada. According to Reitz and Banerjee (2006), most Canadians do not believe they practice racism, but they have limited interaction with members of various other ethnic groups in neighborhoods and workplaces. Within minority groups, the perceptions of the existence of racial discrimination in employment are relatively extensive. The Minority Survey conducted in 1992 in the City of Toronto indicated that 78% among Blacks believed their group was the target of employment discrimination (Dion & Kawakami, 1996). In a related survey, 37% among the Chinese in Toronto considered employment discrimination a very serious barrier to employment.

Employment professionals in Ottawa are tasked with assisting migrants in meeting the requirements of employers through government and community programs. They seem, however, to have little understanding of the unspoken "otherness" factors hindering the visible migrants' ability to obtain jobs (e.g., ability to exhibit Canadian social norms, workplace culture factors, discrimination and employer biases in the evaluation of credentials, and disqualification of degrees and skills obtained outside Canada). The government policies and resources provided to support employment programs in the community have not helped visible minority migrants in their efforts to find and keep jobs. These employment policies were too generic in nature and not intended to address the major employment barriers that migrants experienced and discussed as the root causes of their unemployment and underemployment. They had limited coordination with regulatory bodies that control the types of qualifications required to hold jobs in regulated professions. In addition, they did not address the employers' desire to work with employees they think would "fit" socially and culturally in their companies and teams. Hence, the perception among visible minority migrants is that employers eliminate them simply because of their differing ethnic affiliations, cultures, or religious beliefs (Baklid, 2004).

Given this, there is a fundamental mismatch between the perceptions of job seekers and those supplying jobs. As mentioned above, government funders, employment professionals, and employers believe unemployment and underemployment of the visible minority group are due to personal, cultural, and skill deficits. Therefore, they continue to believe that employment programs and services should aim at changing the visible minority job applicants in these areas. Furthermore, the eligibility for participation in some of these employment programs and services is limited to

individuals with previous records of employment in Canada, such as laid-off individuals or those let go because of shortages in work or end of contracts. Eligibility also requires that job seekers obtain employment insurance to participate (Employment Ontario, 2011). This eliminates the majority of members of the group discussed here, as many of them have only been able to gain part time, casual manual jobs.

These employment programs and services do not focus on all the employers' expectations, the requirements of regulatory bodies for licensing and credentialing, or structures around union affiliations (Goldberg, 2000). For example, the programs and services provided helped participants gain knowledge and tools regarding how to look for jobs, but it was the individual job seeker's responsibility to deal with regulatory bodies, workplace cultures, and union affiliation requirements. These numerous requirements appear complicated and difficult to manage for the visible minority migrant. In addition to being unfamiliar with the workplace culture and Canadian social norms, many migrant job seekers had never worked in a unionized environment, nor were they expecting to be eliminated from professional jobs due to the routine undervaluing and discrediting of the credentials they had achieved in their home countries. These factors combine to make it more difficult for these migrants to understand the employment system and successfully navigate through the processes necessary to obtain and keep jobs.

In this context, participants thought that these difficulties in gaining employment indicated a need for more customized and relevant employment programs to help them effectively integrate into the local labor force and provision of resources to assist them overcome the unusual employment barriers they face. The Canadian immigration policies and employment programs developed to support the integration of visible

minority migrants into the local workforce have not effectively addressed these barriers and issues of accessibility to gaining sustainable employment (Jedwab, 2006).

The percentage of unemployed and underemployed visible minority migrants remains high in Canada. According to the 2006 Census, the unemployment rate among visible minority migrants stands at 18% among recent immigrants aged 15 to 24, and 13% among recent migrants aged 25 and up (Statistics Canada, 2006). These migrants believe that the huge disparity is because they are seen as "other" in the hiring process. This maze of barriers has led visible minority migrants in the city of Ottawa to question the interest, sincerity, and commitment of the government in integrating them into the local workforce. The voices of the participants in this dissertation add useful perspectives to the current debate regarding causes of, and remedies for, disproportionately high unemployment and underemployment among visible minority migrants living in Ottawa.

This state of affairs has stirred voices advocating for fundamental change in race relations, hiring policies, and workplace interaction to look into the legal implications of these practices through Employment Equity, Affirmative Action, and other human rights acts intended to guarantee fair access to employment for all Canadians, including visible minority migrants. These voices include social activists within the visible minority group and mainstream policymakers and scholars concerned with the future role of immigration in Canada's socio-economic development. There has been some progress in establishing social and political rights meant to minimize the impact of discrimination and the socio-economic exclusion of visible minority migrants in Canada. These rights are protected by the Canadian Constitution and various enabling laws that promote equality and justice among Canadian citizens. The only issue that remains unaddressed,

according to visible minority migrants, is their access to employment, which would enable their full contribution to local economic development (Jedwab, 2006).

Wallace (1973) is among the researchers who contributed to this ongoing dialogue about unemployment and underemployment of the visible minority migrants in Canadian society. Wallace has attributed these challenges to what he called a *reactionary society*--a society that practices protectionism in all social, political and economic spheres to preserve the values of the mainstream segment of society from those considered outsiders. Cornwall (2004) considered the elimination of foreign-trained doctors from practicing medicine in Canada (due to a devaluing of their foreign-attained credentials) as shutting out doctors, especially in a country where these skills were highly in demand. Friesen (2011) reported a decline in earnings of the highly-educated migrants from 1980 to 2005 when compared to Canadian-born university graduates. According to this study, new Canadian male immigrants with university degrees earn about 50% less than their Canadian-born counterparts, compared to the 30% less earned by male new immigrants in the U.S. This creates what Gunderson and Riddle (1993) defined as a discouraged work force among the job seekers. These are people who drop out of the labor force during a period of high unemployment to engage in household activities or return to school. To further illustrate the current changes in the demographic profile of visible minority migrants in Canada, Reitz (2001) cited the 1996 census, which indicated that most recent immigrants of employable ages possessed more than a high school education, nearly a third had college degrees. Even so, these qualifications and years of experience did nothing to improve the economic conditions of these highly skilled visible minority migrants. The 1991 census indicated that for some visible minority groups, the poverty rate remained high (Kazemipur & Halli, 2000).

The purpose of this dissertation, therefore, is to add to the dialogue of visible minority unemployment and underemployment by directly including the participants' perspectives through their own stories of the process of finding and keeping meaningful jobs from the moment they arrived in Ottawa, Canada. These stories came from people who were successful in finding employment in Canada, as well as from those who had lived in the city of Ottawa for over 30 years and had not managed to obtain meaningful employment.

In this context, it is worth mentioning that systemic elimination of certain segments of society from obtaining jobs because of ethnic variations, sex, or age has not been limited to Canada or a particular disenfranchised cultural group; rather, this is a ubiquitous phenomenon that has been experienced by social groups whenever segments of a group in society are identified to be treated differently by any dominant cultural, political, or social group. These limiting policies of classification and categorization of individuals in terms of hiring practices in Ottawa have, according to participants in my study, led to socio-cultural and economic gaps between themselves and the dominant groups around them.

Leo Cohen (1975) has argued that the status of minority groups in the United States will lead to economic discrepancies and social injustices if the wide differences between races are not narrowed. He stated that, "[...] if the vast differences between the two races are not reduced, the emphasis will be upon economic disparities rather than civil rights or educational opportunity*"* (p. 108). These differences, as discussed above, were understood by the visible minority migrants as having a role in shaping their perceptions concerning lack of participation and accommodation in the local workforce. Members of the visible minority migrants believe that the construction of their identity

based on race, region, or religion has continued to widen the socio-economic gap between them and their mainstream Canadian counterparts, who are considered the founders and shapers of the social, economic and political structure of Canadian society.

Before embarking on a further discussion of this topic, I feel that it is important for me to acknowledge that in writing this dissertation, I am not only claiming an academic background in the social sciences, but I have worked in the field of employment for 10 years at the municipal level in Ottawa and implemented several provincial employment services and programs, as well as social services programs. I also self-identify as a newcomer and categorically as a member of a visible minority group defined by the policies of the Employment Equity Act of Canada. Thus, my own stories and my experiences with employment and skills development in Canada are not substantively different from those of the participants in my research project. At the development stage of this research, I found it difficult to determine a methodology that would allow me to conduct this dissertation project as a member of the same constructed community (visible minority population) in Ottawa. I reviewed three research methodologies—ethnography, narrative inquiry, and grounded theory—to determine which of them would best help me address my research questions. I selected grounded theory as a workable system I could use in this study because of the constructionist philosophy of Charmaz (2006) and her understanding of the researcher as a participant—a contributor, not an objective observer. Her approach to grounded theory presented a relevant and involved position for me in pursuing this research work as partially derivative of my own experience, and my status in Canada allied me with my participants even though I managed to secure employment 6 years after my arrival to Canada.

Grounded theory is a discourse that looks at the emergence of a theory through a constant comparison of the data in developing increasingly inclusive codes and categories. In this research, these codes and categories were developed directly from migrants' stories of employment opportunities and difficulties.

My focus in this dissertation was on what people perceived as reality and discussed through their own stories. I looked closely at what people described as similar experiences in the same or different situations. In this context, the development of employment programs without an understanding of job seekers' perspectives of their experiences would be a serious handicap in the development of functional programs to help individuals or groups successfully reintegrate into the local job market. The construction of a group identity with reference to ethnicity, culture, and race has not supported these groups' efforts to effectively integrate socially and economically. Before outlining the process and outcomes of this dissertation project, I would like to provide an overview of the social constructionist concepts that have been relevant in designing, conducting, and understanding the results of this study.

Social Construction of Race and Identity

Let me begin with the social constructionist assumption that looks at race as a social construct dependent on mutual agreement and consent, mostly by the prevailing groups in society. This collective agreement is eventually accepted as a social norm to create a stratification of persons that subsequently determines limitations to power, such as economic or political power. Berg (1989) argued that "what people do, how they act and structure their daily lives, and even how people are influenced by certain ideological stances can all be observed in traces people either purposely or unintentionally leave behind" (p. 85). Similarly, Berger and Luckmann (1966) suggested that "the sociology

of knowledge" created by people's day-to-day constructions of reality gives shape to the fabric of society. Further, Thomas and Thomas (1928) stated that if people accept a given situation as real, it becomes real for them.

As for the concept of race and how it relates to social interaction, Roy (2001) argues that the concept of "...race was created mainly by Anglo-European, especially English societies in the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries" (p. 81), and continues as a useful means of defining human communities based on socio-cultural, ethnic, region or religious background. Within this debate of race and racial classification, Durkheim (1938) viewed the concept of race as a "social fact" (p. 13) that human societies need to understand and deal with accordingly, while Weber (1978) argued that race is only the adoption of the social practice of marrying members of the same clan, people, or other kinship group (endogamy). Thus, Bash (1979) suggests that "the sociologist might regard racial distinction as a special case of an awkward status differentiation" (p. 197). Cultural anthropologist Lusca (2008), stated that human societies are often socially constructed as groups, defined by either race or color of skin, in which people become known as White, Asian, Mexican, Arab, Black, minority, etc. Such social constructions impact the ways a group is seen by others and thereby affect individuals' lives and their social, political and economic interaction with others. Lusca also posits that these groupings affect the types of jobs individuals can access, the amount of wealth they acquire, the friendships they develop, the neighborhoods they live in, and so on.

According to Gergen (2011, December) in his article "Why I am Not a Social Constructionist," there are two important questions to be asked when discussing these categorizations: How does a given set of ideas contribute to human well-being? Who do they advantage and disadvantage? In the same vein, Foucault (1991) added that

"…potential harm in racial-ethnic categorization outweighs any potential for remedy" (p. 215). Gracia (2005) argues that "grouping persons by race, ethnicity, or nationality" is always inappropriate and usually motivated by "social conflict and abuses" (p. 1).

In Canada, all people not defined as Caucasian are constructed as visible minority groups with emphasis on race and color of skin, regardless of regions or countries-of-origin. Most of the prior research that discussed socio-economic issues among these groups, as I have mentioned earlier, reported significant social issues such as difficulties in integrating into the mainstream communities socially, politically and economically. These issues include equity in education, training, credentials recognition, access to employment and social acceptance, which are perceived by migrants as affected by race and color of skin.

The use of race as a factor in shaping social policy and equitable contribution remains a common practice throughout society, even though social constructionists remind us that race does not exist in the world in any real, scientifically-grounded sense. As discussed by Lusca (2008),

> Race, although it does not exist in the world in any ontological objective way, it still is real in society (as opposed to nature). Race is a social construction that has real consequences and effects. These effects, consequences and the notion that race is ontologically subjective is epistemologically objective. We know that race is something that is real in society, and that it shapes the way we see ourselves and others. Many rightly claim that race is conceptually unstable. However, this should not lead us to skepticism about race, i.e., that we cannot have any objective knowledge about race. We *can* know what race is and how it

> works, regardless of the various shifts in meaning that have occurred through history and occur geographically. (para. 4)

It is therefore fair to say that race has little to do with skin color; rather, it is constructed around social stratification and power. In this sense, race is used relentlessly as a means of controlling power and status due to fear of losing it to others. For Gergen (2000),

> it grows increasingly difficult to be certain of who or what one is, social life proceeds. And in one's interactions one continues to identify oneself as this or that sort of person. One may identify oneself as American in one situation, Irish in another, and mixture of nationalities in still others. One may be feminine for certain friends, masculine for others, and androgynous for still others. As these public characterizations of self are found effective in meeting the challenges of a complex social world, a new consciousness begins to develop... For what is true of a culture's history and of the national reality is no less true of persons. That is attempts to define or describe oneself inevitably proceed from a person perspective, and different perspectives have different implications for how a person is treated. (pp. 145-146)

This discourse of ethnic categorization, found in the classification of visible minority migrants in Canada, prompted a review of historical categorizations of this group in Canadian society and what has been done to achieve what Gergen (2009) defined as "second order morality...a condition in which we restore possibilities of collaboration and the genesis of the good" (p. 370). Gergen states,

> in many respects I feel that we are only crossing the threshold of possibility because humankind has barely become conscious of the relational basis of its

> reality and values. History supplies us with numerous means of declaring and defending what is the case. Languages of science, faith, personal experience, divine illumination, reason and so on, all function to protect, sustain, and expand particular traditions. Discourse of "is true," "is real," "is moral," and like all have the capacity to drive wedges between people. (p. 370)

Social constructionists' views on the construction of race and ethnicity and my personal background have been useful in conceptualizing and designing this study. My background as the author of this research project is accurately reflected in the preceding discussion. According to Harre and Slocum (2009), "we enter into relationships carrying with us a history of relationships. It is this history that furnishes us with the resources for relating in the present moment. In fact, the self is born within relationships and life pursuits are carried out within relationships" (p. 67). Hence, it seems fair to share the history of such relations for a better understanding of my role in this research work, my perspective in understanding certain relationships I have encountered in the process of migration to Canada, and my experience with unemployment and underemployment.

Gergen (1994) has indicated that "the art of life copies have become the vehicle through which the reality of life is made manifest…we live by stories--both in the telling and the realizing of the self" (p. 186). Therefore, in opening Chapter 2 I will share my story of being a visible minority migrant in order to be transparent to the reader about my biases and predispositions, and also to add my voice to those of the participants who willingly shared their stories that have become part of their identities and their current realities.

Chapter 3will provide a scholarly review of the literature regarding the issues surrounding employment among these groups, particularly in Ottawa, and how barriers

to employment contributed to the development of the perceptions of members of this visible minority group. The construction of the social structure of ethnic communities in Canadian society is also discussed in the context of ethnic divides along four communities: Anglophones, Francophones, the First Nations of Canada, and what is currently known as the visible minority community in Canada. In contemporary literature, Rosenau (2003) discussed other forces that support the overall flow of migrants, in terms of the information society, modern transportation, and global economics. These factors also have facilitated the movement of these migrants to present-day Canada, as well as encouraged secondary migration within Canada and other industrial nations.

Chapter 4 deals with methodology and how I wanted to shift the focus from "employers" and "professional" perspectives to job seekers' own experiences and perceptions. The discussion of methodology includes research purpose and questions and how this research work was developed. In writing this dissertation, I have used grounded theory from data collection to the development of themes.

Chapter 5 explores the findings and Chapter 6 presents discussion, limitations and the unexpected events I encountered in the process of conducting this study. Chapter 7 provides insights toward improved policies and recommendation for future research**.**

Chapter 2

An Autobiographical Introduction

This section unites my story as a migrant with the experiences of participants in this study. These experiences were based on their own stories with unemployment and underemployment from the time they arrived in Canada as people who were construed socially and culturally as different under the term "visible minority migrants." Therefore, as a migrant myself, my personal account will include my migration journey from Africa (South Sudan) to Canada, the reasons I came to Canada, how I gained Canadian experience for my path of career development, my perceptions about Ottawa's workplace, and my involvement with the Taos Institute and Tilburg University in the Netherlands.

The complications of the migration process can start at the early stages with identity, such as name and date of birth. Many migrants have a birth-date of January 1. The birth-dates in most cases were based on medical assessments, not the actual birth-dates of the individual migrants. The same applies to names, which immigration required to be in the Western format of first and last name. In the Southern Sudan where I come from, for example, there is no emphasis on first and last name, as there is in Western societies. Individuals are known by both first name and father's name, followed by the clan or tribe to whom an individual belongs.

I grew up in the city of Wau in Southern Sudan, a city of 136,932 people, where I acquired most of my earliest social skills and developed a common sense of belonging and love for human beings. Social skills acquired through my earliest socialization in Wau have helped me later in life as an adult to relate to and accommodate the different world cultures, from the societies in the Middle East to Western society, with no

feelings of alienation or inconvenience. In the culture in which I grew up in, we were taught as young people that all of the elders in the town, regardless of their tribes, regions, or clans, were our uncles, grandmothers, fathers, or aunties--not "strangers." There was no such a thing as a stranger in the town, as all were accommodated and accepted. This was how social relations and social interaction were constructed locally in Wau.I left Wau, Sudan, in 1987, after I passed my secondary school diploma, as it was not possible to pursue post-secondary study from Wau at that time because of the civil war that broke out between the Christian South and the Northern Muslim Government in Khartoum. According to the policies of the central government in Khartoum, Southern Sudanese students were allowed to travel to the capital, Khartoum, and apply to universities within Arab countries.

Student and Displaced Person in Egypt

I left Sudan for Egypt in 1989, where I had my earliest experience with people who were culturally and ethnically different from me, helping me to have a sense of being in another country for the first time. I was accepted into to the Faculty of Arts, Department of Sociology at Alexandria University in 1990. I completed my degree in May 1994, and I remained in Egypt with many other displaced refugees from my home region in Southern Sudan because of the ongoing civil war. My parents had advised me not to come back to Sudan, as they believed that the Islamic government in north Sudan was targeting young, educated Christians from South Sudan and the rest of the country to join the military or was accusing them of mutiny and killing them if they refused to work for the government. As a result, I decided to stay in Egypt until the political instability in Sudan settled down. My decision to stay in Egypt then changed my identity from a Sudanese citizen studying in Egypt to a "displaced person."

The Egyptian government treated Sudanese migrants as displaced people, as the government policy towards the Sudanese was that both Egypt and Sudan are Arabic countries; therefore, it is home for citizens of the two countries. However, all of the Sudanese in Egypt were required by the government to have a work permit (just as any of the refugees who claim refugee status in Western countries) in order to be employed in Egypt, and were not given Egyptian citizenship, regardless of how long they lived in Egypt. Most of the displaced people worked in the service sectors, in jobs that Egyptian citizens normally would not take. The same phenomenon is found among the visible minority migrants in Canada, even though in the case of Canada these migrants can become Canadian citizens, with the same rights and responsibilities as all Canadians. As the situation with the war grew worse in Sudan, the number of migrants continued to increase, and their situation in Egypt began to deteriorate due to the lack of services and resettlement programs. As a result, most of the Western countries, including Canada, opened their doors to accept Southern Sudanese as immigrants in their countries.

Migration to Canada

Egypt, as discussed above, was known to Southern Sudanese as a country to which they could come to study or for short-term training and then return home to continue in their practices or look for better jobs. Hence, most of the Southern Sudanese found in Egypt during the period of 1973 to 1990 were university and college students. However, things dramatically changed beginning in the early nineties, as a wave of war-affected displaced Southern Sudanese migrated to Egypt to escape the atrocities of the civil war between the North and South Sudan.

As far as my migration to Canada was concerned, it is worth noting that the African indigenous Southern Christians have been at civil war with Northern Arab

Muslims since the independence of Sudan in 1956. It is a conflict attributed to socio-cultural, economic, and political representations and claims of national identity in Sudan. In short, about 35% of the Northern Arab Sudanese were installed by English and Egyptian colonial rule from 1899 to 1956 as a new national government in Sudan after its independence in 1956.

This was the reason many southern Sudanese left their homeland to seek refuge in neighboring countries when the civil war between the South and North intensified in the 1990s. At that time, I was in my second year as a university student in Alexandria, Egypt. Southern Sudanese students in Egypt became important contacts and resources for many of the newly-displaced persons who came to Egypt in their early stages of resettlement, because most of them didn't know where to stay, where to go, or how to connect to social services. Churches in Egypt were the first to help as the number of people continued to increase and their situations began to deteriorate. Subsequently, international organizations, such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in collaboration with the United Nations, intervened by accepting displaced persons from the South and North alike as internal displaced Southern Sudanese in Egypt, and referred them to countries that were willing to accept them as refugees. In this process, many Sudanese, in particular South Sudanese were admitted to countries such as Australia, the United States of America, most of the European Union, and Canada as conventional refugees.

Southern Sudanese university students who were on scholarship in Egypt, including myself, were uncertain as to what would happen after graduation, as it was not possible to go back to Sudan, and we saw all our countrymen and women leaving Sudan in huge numbers to live permanently in Egypt and other neighboring countries. After my

graduation in 1994, I found myself a displaced person, as people who just arrived from Sudan lost all entitlement to both Egyptian and Sudanese scholarships. Thus, I completed an application to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to seek refuge in Egypt; however, the UNHCR rejected my application because the reasons that brought me to Egypt were those of a student, regardless of the war in my homeland.

Hence, I applied to the Canadian Embassy, which was accepting immigrants from Sudan to come to Canada as conventional refugees due to the ongoing civil war that displaced millions of Sudanese civilians to neighboring countries and abroad. My writings on social justice in a daily newspaper in Egypt, specifically about what had been happening in Sudan, my educational background, and my knowledge of English facilitated the acceptance of my effort to come to Canada as a Landed Immigrant in 1996, a category of permanent residency for people who have been granted official refugee status in Canada, classified as a "New Worker"--migrants who meet skill shortages and the requirement of being able to migrate and work in Canada. Landed Immigrant was my new identity, which I had for five years before becoming a Naturalized Canadian Citizen in 2001.

Limitation of Credentials Assessment

I arrived in Ottawa, Canada, with a B.A. in sociology. I asked what I needed to do in order to get a job in my field. The common response from practitioners in my field of profession (sociology) was that I needed a foreign credential assessment of my foreign degrees before applying for jobs in Canada. I completed my assessment through the University of Toronto Comparative Education Services. In this process,

whether the degree is deemed to be equivalent to that of Canadian universities or not, the evaluating body has no mechanism in place for assessing the types of courses or number of credits a foreign-trained migrant should take to bring his/her level of educational attainment to the level of a degree earned from a Canadian institution. The wording of the document shows its limitations -- employers can set up their own classification on whether or not employers should accept or even trust this assessment.

Even though I was very happy to receive my evaluation of credential assessment, which was determined to be equal to a degree from a reputable Canadian university, five years of applying for jobs consistently revealed that my degree was not treated as the same as one obtained from a Canadian institution. Employers preferred degrees obtained from Canada, and most importantly, those held by Canadian-born candidates. This limitation is obvious from the statement on the assessment that "this letter does not commit any professional organization to accept our assessment in lieu of its own established classification requirements." Such a disclaimer limits open competition in the Canadian job market between foreign-educated immigrants and those who have completed the same degrees in Canadian institutions. If I had known that beforehand, I would have started changing my career focus or training shortly after my arrival in Canada, or at least upgraded my degree. From 1996 to 2012, no benefits have materialized from what this document (credential assessment) has offered me in terms of training or employment. Further, as an employment specialist by profession in Ottawa, I am still puzzled as to why Foreign Trained Professionals participants are still being encouraged to complete this credential assessment, given the time, emotion, and costs involved in obtaining it, and its subsequent uselessness in landing a job.

In the year 2000, after four years of manual labor jobs, I came to the conclusion that the current process in place to move Foreign Trained Professionals to integrate into the job market would not support my efforts in finding appropriate jobs in Ottawa, Canada. Hence, I tried to search for training options in areas with the potential for sustainable employment by talking to academic advisors at colleges and universities. I thought of pursuing graduate studies in sociology or starting a separate line of professional training at a community college level to obtain a Canadian education. As a result, I completed my application to study in the Social Services Worker program at the Algonquin College in the city of Ottawa in August 2001. The program was a one-year intensive social services program, and upon completion, there was a four-month work placement with the City of Ottawa municipal government. In 2002, I was awarded a three-month contract as a Case Coordinator with the City of Ottawa in the Employment and Financial Assistance Branch. The City of Ottawa as an organization was understaffed at that time and lacked representation of ethnic minorities within its ranks. The department also had job vacancies to recruit new staff to work as caseworkers, referred to as Case Coordinators. As a result, all Social Services Worker Students in internships with the City of Ottawa in the Department of Employment and Financial Assistance were hired.

In 2004, I decided to pursue graduate studies to further improve my chances for employment opportunities, as I was not sure how long the City of Ottawa would continue to retain my job with the department. In doing so, I was looking for universities that would allow me to keep working and study on a part-time basis or through distance education, because of my full-time work commitments and family responsibilities. Having worked with the City of Ottawa, Employment and Financial Assistance

Department, for a few years, I did not consider studying or training in Canada as important as I initially had. Rather, my perception was now that the barriers to the job market in Ottawa seemed more cultural and socially constructed by the gatekeepers (employers, unions, and government officials), and had less to do with where the degree was obtained. To date, unless jobs are posted externally, most of the public sector employers reserve jobs for their own Union members and those recommended to them by other managers. In this case, visible minority migrants are more disadvantaged due to a lack of networking.

Most of the visible minority job seekers I met in Ottawa received their advanced degrees from Canada; however, it made no difference in their advancement within the organization, as employers didn't look at them as favorably as Canadian-born Caucasian candidates. Bearing that in mind, my decision to apply for graduate studies and search for graduate schools that met my professional aspirations was not limited to Canadian institutions and perceptions. Accordingly, I completed applications for admission to local universities in Canada and the United States of America. I received an offer of admission from universities in both countries, but I chose to study at Fort Hays State University in the United States. In May 2007, I graduated with a Master's of Liberal Studies, specializing in social science, with a concentration in sociology.

In Canada, I was again requested to provide a Canadian credential assessment for my American degree to be able to compete for career advancement. I did not understand the rationale behind this request, as I thought that, unlike overseas universities, Fort Hays State University was accessible by phone, mail, or e-mail from all of the Canadian institutions should they need more information about equivalency or authentication. In addition, the degree was funded through the Ontario Student Assistance Program

(OSAP). I then paid about $125 to get my credentials evaluated through World Education Services. Master's Degree Credential Assessment document issued was more about wording of verification and authenticity of the degree attainment, not a comparison of courses and equivalency of hours, GPA and quality of subject matter. This makes job seekers wonder what kind of credential equivalencies this document provides. I think it would be more realistic if Canadian institutions created some system of assessments and analysis in which the foreign degrees are replaced by degrees issued from Canadian institutions to at least eliminate hiring preferences based on where degrees were obtained (i.e., Canadian institution vs. foreign institution).

My story of securing employment in Canada highlights the issues of migration and employment and job retention difficulties in Ottawa, even if employed. As discussed, the process of foreign credential assessment could constitute barriers, not only to obtaining jobs in Canada, but also in eliminating chances of advancements and promotions for those who are already employed. According to participants in this study, visible minorities holding local Canadian degrees are sometimes treated as if they held a foreign degree. The question to be asked, then, is: Are the degrees, or the holders of the degrees, the problem in gaining employment?

My perception was that academic degrees completed, regardless of the country where they were attained, could be relatively universal and useful, not only in finding jobs, but in pursuing further studies in the same or different field. For example, my undergraduate degree obtained in Egypt did not obstruct my ability to pursue a post-secondary diploma in Canada, nor did it hinder my ability to pursue a Master's degree in the United States. In the Canadian competence evaluations, however, it does matter where the degree was obtained and who holds it.

As a classified visible minority professional myself, I had the privilege of securing full-time employment with the City of Ottawa, as noted above, six years after my arrival in Canada and continuing to the present day. Hence, I have shared my own experiences, which readers may need to know to further help in understanding what I brought into this study as a field researcher and a composer of this collection of stories.

During my period of studies at Algonquin College as mentioned earlier, I met six other ethnic minority individuals. Four of the students held Master's degrees from institutions in Canada, Egypt, the United States, and Great Britain, and two of us held Bachelor's degrees. A common story among us was that we could not find employment in our area of specialization with foreign degrees. All the visible minority candidates in my class were interested in advocacy and social justice, a philosophy adopted and practiced within the Department of Community and Health Services at Algonquin College at the time. The philosophy of this department created a safe environment in which visible minority migrants could learn and achieve their goals. As mentioned earlier, Algonquin College facilitated my hiring by the City of Ottawa, Employment and Financial Assistance Department.

The first barrier I encountered while working in the Department of Employment and Financial Assistance was the influence of Union policies and its application in public institutions. It eliminated the social sciences approach in human services practice--in particular, social work practices—because the emphasis was on business practice models in which humans are considered customers, numbers, or consumers of services. I thought that my social services skills would be utilized and applied, however, I found that the traditions in my department, including the services delivery models and trainings provided to employees, were all based on key business practice models,

primarily to meet requirements of funding criteria. Training provided was typically around the use of technology, implementation of policies, and bringing directed interviews to determine eligibility of people in need of employment and financial assistance, regardless of social or economic barriers. Most of the vacant positions in the department were posted for internal Union-affiliated members only. These positions in most cases were already filled through what is known as *tapping*--internal temporary vacancy assignments utilized by managers to bring in people they trust to work with them in the programs they managed. The success of visible minority job retention in the Department of Employment and Financial Assistance is typically a constant struggle that is determined by the desires of managers, the Union, and the willingness of co-workers, who may or may not embrace diversity in the workplace. The senior staff in the department could use their corporate seniority (number of years in service) not only in career advancement, but also to be seated in a cubicle of their choice and leave work one hour earlier in summer than the others with less seniority. This seniority gives the employee the right to defend their job in case of layoff, or to be considered for hire should a new position of interest become available.

Accordingly, my early years of employment with the City of Ottawa involved fear of losing employment at any time and how to deal with all these unwritten and written rules of the workplace culture in Canada. My second concern was the stories of visible minority employees who were working years before I was hired with the department. I heard stories of job retention difficulties, biases in hiring, discrimination and preferences for mainstream Canadians concerning visible minorities' promotions and career development. There were also perceptions about unfair treatment, reservations, and hesitations to meet or freely resolve issues of concern.

I heard stories of how some ethnic minority staff had left the department or were dismissed in other departments. Indeed, I noticed some posters used for anti-racism and human rights education within the department still hung on the walls as a result of the last complaint from a staff member who felt she was unfairly treated by her peers and the management. During my tenure in the department, I have received the strongest imaginable support (within the boundaries of what the organization deemed acceptable) but I also sensed strong negative biases from my managers and team members. I also felt that visible minority employees were only placed within frontline ranks where they were expected to serve their "own people" in crisis or be visible for political representation and customer services purposes. There were no members of visible minorities within the managerial ranks within the Department of Employment and Financial Assistance, not because they were not qualified, but because they were simply deemed not to connect socially and culturally. It became customary to find myself the only visible minority on my team and committees and expected to excel or I would be deemed slow and clumsy.

All of the categorized visible minority staff I met told me countless stories of experiences they had encountered in struggles to get and keep jobs in Ottawa and in Canada. Many of these stories were not shared or discussed with colleagues or managers. The perception was that they might be labeled and subsequently marginalized if their stories were considered not "politically correct." Some already believed that they were being labelled because of their openness. The stories I heard from ethnic colleagues, clients, and friends have motivated me to embark on a journey to discover more about the experiences of visible minorities that they often did not discuss. These colleagues discussed how these stories of systemic discrimination affected them and how they

coped with them at an individual or community group level.

My role as researcher, however, was to acknowledge my biases as a self-constructed member of a visible minority group, share my experiences, and analyze data relevant to my experience and that of my participants. The visible ethnic minorities, as socially constructed in Canada, are not in fact a homogenous group, as they come from different regions, cultures, faiths and ethnic backgrounds. The factors that brought all visible ethnic minority groups together are the common identification as a visible minority and the unique treatments attached to this identification; this does not mean that all have the same culture, practice the same religion or come from the same ethnic background. I have listened to communities of shared experiences and incorporated the experiences of the participants and their perceptions of their world in their own words. There are several documented research projects in Canada on unemployment and underemployment of the visible minority migrants in Canada that described how many end up working in manual labor jobs unrelated to their profession or field of study in order to survive. Many researchers have cited medical doctors and engineers working as taxi drivers or persons with Ph.D.s working as security guards or delivering mail. Visible ethnic minority unemployment and underemployment have been the primary focus of many social activists, scholars, and policymakers in Canada. Statistics Canada, the Social Planning Council of Ottawa, and the Canadian Federation of Municipalities have done extensive work on visible minority skills development, immigration policies, language barriers and employers' expectations for decades. In the following section, I will narrate my reasoning in investigating these issues of migrant unemployment and underemployment.

Entry into Doctoral Studies

After completion of my Master's degree in 2007, I started to reflect on the lives of visible minority individuals that I came into contact with as a Case Coordinator and in my capacity as an Employment Specialist during my work with the City of Ottawa. Their stories and experiences in their new society, their quest for employment, and their dealings with employers suggested that the current process of integration and resettlement of visible minorities in Canada's labor market required further understanding of migrants' sides of the story for a better understanding of barriers facing them in gaining meaningful jobs. I noticed that all of the programs designed to address the issues of these migrants' unemployment in Ottawa were mainly to prepare individuals to meet the needs of employers' requirements per Canadian social norms and workplace culture. There was no room for people who were considered culturally different to access jobs or be considered for employment advancements. The experiences as revealed by the stories I heard among the visible minority individuals were similar in content across their communities in Ottawa. Statistics Canada Census, the Social Planning Council of Ottawa, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Association, and other scholars have been reporting annually on the status of visible minorities in the Canadian labor market in terms of the high unemployment rate, discrimination, difficulties in finding and keeping jobs, lack of customized programs, and secondary migration within Canada, as well as returning back home. Accordingly, it occurred to me that all of these difficulties must have stories attached to them. As a member of the same classified group in Ottawa, Canada, I had my own stories and experiences, as I have already outlined.

My role as a researcher was to collectively share the experiences that people have noted about the process of integration into the new homeland workforce through a collaborative crafting of others' stories. In my quest to complete a Ph.D., I came across the Taos-Tilburg Ph.D. program with requirements and academic supports that suited my needs and expectations, particularly the centrality of social constructionism.

As a researcher, I hope to provide mainstream employment professionals with information needed in the analysis of visible minority participants' motivations, interests, and the impact of life events (and crises) on an individual's employment goals. This includes their shared perceptions of the causes of unemployment situations in Canada, shared perceptions by visible minority migrants that they are treated differently, which eventually leads to mistrust, frustration, and isolation, as discussed later in this research project.

In the next chapter I will provide a literature review of the complication of migration issues and visible minority employment status in Ottawa's labor force. This review will consider the work of earlier scholars on the topic of migration, as well as social policymakers' reports pertaining to the contribution of these migrants in the City of Ottawa and in Canada more generally. I also have looked at the government of Canada's statistical reports from annual reports published by Statistics Canada on the activities of the visible minority migrants and their contribution to local economic development.

Chapter 3

Ethnicity and Canadian Immigration Policy

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the theoretical and policy background of ethnicity and immigration in contemporary academic literatures. The literature review searches for the historical patterns of immigration policies in Canada that determined who should and should not be admitted to Canada as preferred immigrants from the era of racial classification and categorization to the era of multiculturalism, employment equity, and affirmative action acts in 1986.

Canada has long been called a country of immigrants, and that image continues to the present. The contributions of immigrants in Canada socially, culturally, economically and politically have been acknowledged by many researchers. However, an 84-participant focus group study done by Kunz, Milan and Schetagne (2000) concluded that visible minority migrants continue to face "difficulties with the demand for Canadian experience, evaluation of foreign credentials, and not being considered for promotion if employed" (p. 40). Another study on socioeconomic integration of visible minorities, conducted by George and Doyle (2010), indicated that "visible minorities, like Aboriginal peoples, are seriously disadvantaged in Canada's labor market; with large gaps between labor market prospects for visible minority and non-visible minority populations" (para. 9).

The policies that have shaped the fabric of the current Canadian society and its future prospects have led scholars, including Knowles (2007), to ask what Canada will look like decades or a century from now if changes are not introduced to strengthen the current immigration policies. This question should also examine the future prospects of the visible minority migrants themselves if they continue to be marginalized socially,

politically, and economically. I would like to state that this research project is not about confirming or debating the existence of discrimination, racism, or exclusions of visible minorities from participating in the Canadian labor market, in particular the Ottawa workforce. My research was rather on the narrated experiences of visible minority migrants that led to their perceptions about the causes of unemployment, the impact on their well-being, and their responses to these situations.

For purposes of this study, I want to discuss certain historical constructions of visible minorities in Ottawa and in Canada more generally that underpin their current socioeconomic status and continue to hinder their successful integration as effective contributors in Canadian socio-cultural and economic development. According to Taylor (2008), the disproportionate success of majority groups on one hand, and the disproportionate failures of visible minorities on the other hand, can be traced to inequalities, injustices and social crises founded in deep-rooted socio-political and cultural nationalism constructed by Canada's "founding fathers," who demanded that any ethnic groups coming to Canada should fit socially and culturally into one of the two majority groups (French and English) to better integrate, or assimilate, into a *Canadian* society. With that rationale, the First Nations communities have remained isolated, as they have neither adapted nor assimilated into the Canadian mainstream.

The social, economic, and political disparity of Canadian society along ethnic lines has a long history and can be better understood within the historical perspectives of socio-political and cultural interaction between communities within the larger Canadian society. Key among these are immigration policies stretching from the colonial period to the foundation of the Confederation union, and into contemporary Canada.

In this context, Charon (1983) noted that the fabric of Canadian society has been

often cited as a union of the descendants of earlier French and English settlers/immigrants, the First Nations, who are the natives of the land, and the ethnic communities that were brought in by both the English and French to work and subsequently adapt to, or integrate into, the Canadian society. Saint and Reid (1979) have added a new debate on population and migration in Canada, as they believe that there are still unresolved arguments which suggest that the native or the First Nations of Canada themselves migrated to Canada from Siberia during the Ice Age, when Siberia and Alaska were linked by land.

This interesting hypothesis adds yet another dimension to the debates regarding the history of social structure of migrant communities in Canada. This interesting concept, if explored, may limit the discourse of migration to socio-economic stratification and an ethnic variation that may have included First Nations people as one of the earliest groups to migrate to what is now known as Canada. Therefore, treatment of migrants based on who came first, their color, their ethnic group, or their religion, and whether they are "real" Canadian or not, would continue to foster policies of exclusions in the Canadian society. According to Watson (1979), the European explorers who first came into contact with the First Nations people in Canada thought that their faith was being tested, as they never envisioned the existence of human beings in this part of the world.

Other scholars believe that Canada's earliest inhabitants, the indigenous people of Canada known as Indians, combining Métis and Inuit, migrated from Asia. The first European visitors were probably the Vikings, who arrived at Newfoundland in 1497. According to John Cabot's recorded history, the Vikings claimed Newfoundland for the British and eventually remained on the coast of Atlantic Canada. In 1534 Jacques

Cartier, a French explorer, arrived and claimed the Gaspe Peninsula, Quebec, for the French and developed their community, called New France (Government of Canada, 2012). This historical contribution subsequently gives more social political and economic rights to French and English in Canada.

In 1759 the British pushed into New France and defeated the French. However, French people in the New France were permitted to conduct their legal system, use their own language, practice their religion and eventually become Canada's tenth province, which is currently known as Quebec. In that era, Canada was divided into Lower Canada (French), and Upper Canada (English). Later, in 1867, Canada was formed as a country to include four provinces of Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Subsequently, six more provinces joined, including Newfoundland in 1949, with the last territory being Nunavut in 1997. Canada has three territories, Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, which cover nearly a quarter of Canada's land area (Government of Canada, 2012).

These facts are difficult to ignore when examining the social, political and economic construction of Canadian society. Further, they must be understood by migrants who are trying to integrate into Canadian society and contribute to its economic development, as they provide insights on social cultural norms and how communities' and ethnic groups' identities are constructed within the larger Canadian society. Much progress has been made in terms of communities' improved receptiveness to a multicultural society, along wide the establishment of laws that protect the basic human rights of ethnic minorities in Canadian society. These laws reinforce respecting human rights, even though not fully implemented in the case of visible minority

migrants, and have improved Canada's profile as a welcoming place for talented and highly educated immigrants worldwide.

Individuals' rights have been considered an important value in Canadian society and are well-protected under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Immigration Canada, 2009). These ideals and principles are enshrined within the Canadian constitution and lifted up as exemplary values of the society. These values have facilitated the progress of the invisible minorities in mainstream Canada: women, gays and lesbians. However, they have done little to address the social injustices facing the visible ethnic minorities and the First Nations peoples in Canada due to continued marginalization, under-representation and lack of coherent policies to assist these groups socially, politically and economically into mainstream Canadian society. Accordingly, it is reasonable to assume that the historical interpretation of ethnic groups under the cluster of the visible minority has continued to widen the socio-cultural and economic gaps between the visible minority groups and the mainstream Canadian communities within contemporary Canada.

The Construction of Ethnic Minority Identity

The terms *immigrant* and *migrant* were later constructed with certain disdainful social and political tones to refer to ethnic visible minority immigrant communities within the Canadian society. Likewise with the concept of ethnicity, which was apparently adopted to describe non-Caucasians, regardless of the actual meaning of ethnicity. This new construction and interpretation of the Canadian definition of immigrants was attributed by DeVoretz, Pivnenko and Beiser (2004) to the qualifying forces that favored injustices, poverty and social exclusion of the group from accessing economic powers. The conservative elements within the host countries consider the

social or economic integration of migrants a threat to national heritage and culture, as well as competition for the members of the mainstream communities for economic opportunities.

Burnet and Palmer (1988) have acknowledged that "ethnic diversity" has been ignored in social policy and as a topic for further research in Canada until recent years and has not been treated as an issue of vital importance in Canadian society. The issues of French and English Canadians have been the main topics of discourse in social science research. The authors note that even though neither the French nor the British are ethnically homogeneous, they expect migrants who come to Canada to assimilate into one of their dominant ethnic groups.

In this context, the reference to ethnic groups in Canada applies to neither French nor British, regardless of the broader definition of ethnicity. According to Schermerhorn (1970), ethnicity is:

> a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood... Nonetheless, necessary accompaniment is some consciousness of kind among members of the group. (p. 12)

Under Schermerhorn's definition, Francophone and Anglophone are also ethnic groups, the same as other Canadian ethnic groups (visible minority and First Nations). According to Avery (1995), the concepts of identification and categorization of people according to their ethnic affiliation in Canada have been in place for years. The focus of the practice was on the origin of people and their ethnic affiliation. In the years 1967 and 1971, and through the year 1981, information about ethnic affiliations was recorded

through the census; also, the official record of immigration contained information about ethnic origins. This practice then shifted to gathering information on country-of-origin for the purpose of clustering and the systematic classification of what is known now as visible minority migrants.

According to Belanger (2006), the establishment of distinct ethnicity-centered communities within Canada was under the continuous scrutiny of the government and became a concern of the top political leadership in Canada because of difficulties with social integration, political participation, and inter-race relations (diversity). Belanger (2006) noted that most of the leadership opinions on *racialized* migrants in 1945 did not support inter-race relations and interaction between different races. Belanger supports his assertion with the speeches of former Prime Ministers of Canada and political leaders who expressed their opinions on immigrants in the pre-1945 run against inter-cultural and ethnic integration between Caucasian and non-Caucasian migrants.

For both practical and political purposes, immigrants entering Canada were classified into one of three groups: (1) the preferred category, which included British on the top of the list, followed by Americans and Western Europeans; (2) an acceptable but not preferred category, which included East Europeans from Russia, Ukraine, and Poland, and southern Europeans from Italy, Greece and Spain; and (3) the non-preferred and not acceptable category, which included members of any group that would now be classified as a visible minority group. Each of these groups, according to Belanger (2006), experienced discrimination in Canadian society, ranging from standard interpersonal relations to dealings with government officials. The practice of clustering and categorizing people that divided the country along four distinct ethnic communities became engrained in Canadian immigration policies and is still in existence today.

According to Kelly and Trebilcock (1998), Canadian immigration policies were always set to reflect public concerns about who is allowed to come to Canada, concerns based on the historic presumption of social, political and cultural assimilation of immigrants into the larger (French and English) society. In this context, Kelly and Trebilcock (1998) note that:

> ...the immigration act and regulations provided the government with enough flexibility to prevent access to prohibit naturalization, and to effect the removal of those who were perceived as lowering the standard of acceptable citizenry, by their nationality, race, or political opinions. Thus, nationals of countries with which Canada was at war ('enemy aliens') were interned and refused entry; African and Asian immigrants were almost entirely prohibited...Unfortunately, the view of Canadian society and perceptions as stated have continued to reflect on their social interaction with people they considered not a perfect fit socially, cultural and racially to what their society perceived as ideal Canadian society. (p. 166)

Accordingly, it is important in exploring issues of migrants' unemployment and underemployment in Canada not to overlook past historical practices pertaining to social exclusion of ethnic groups, and discriminatory policies that have affected the progress of ethnic minority immigrants socially and economically to the present time. Of course, it is equally important to evaluate what has changed in these immigration policies throughout the history of resettlement and integration of migrants in Canada.

The focus of this historical review and its significance was therefore placed on those migrant groups that were affected by exclusionary immigration policies, especially those groups that were admitted but not considered acceptable migrants into Canada.

Even though this dissertation will not further explore the status of the native or First Nations in Canada, the outcome of research on the experience of this visible minority in Ottawa's labor market suggests limited progress made in terms of social acceptance and inclusion of this group within Canadian society.

Social Structure of Canadian Communities

In Canada, the concept of ethnicity in social and economic interaction was not only linked to access to jobs; it has been a way of life even among the first founders of Canada, as social interaction between different races was not embraced till recent years. Thus, Canadian society still cleaves along four distinct ethnic groups: (1) Anglophone, (2) Francophone, (3) First Nations, and (4) Visible Minority Communities.

Ironically, perhaps, this social structure is upheld by misinterpretation in policies of the Multiculturalism Act of 1986, which encourages communities to remain socially, culturally and ethnically distinct. In this scheme, English and French were named as official languages of Canada, but the existence of official languages does not prevent communities or groups from reading and writing or speaking their own mother tongues, which are neither English nor French. This situation has further widened the social interaction gap between visible minority and mainstream communities in Ottawa and Canada because the dominant languages in the labor market are English and French.

The extreme form of these interactions is the relationship between the Anglophones and the Francophones, in which both stress socially and politically the preservation of their heritage, language, and race as a distinct nation within Canada whilst expecting the visible minority migrants to integrate into undefined, mutually agreed-upon characteristics of Canadian culture. The First Nations believe that in this construction their heritage and culture are being threatened by English and French

cultures, as well as the influence of modernization, which renders them isolated and disadvantaged because the latest technology and its intellectual content is quite alien to their cultural heritage and therefore not well integrated.

In this context, the ethnic minority communities were adopted into the Canadian society by virtue of their rights and responsibilities pertaining to their status in Canada under the Canadian Constitution. Accordingly, the influence of culture and ethnicity as an indicator of identity has remained the major factor for ethnic minority communities, rather than Canadian nationality and citizenship. The common belief in Canadian society is that there is one Canada, one vast and homogenous society into which the ethnic minority communities in Ottawa (or Canada at large) are to converge, blend, and assimilate to become *real* Canadians. When new Canadian migrants come to Canada, they are expected to embrace and conform to the Canadian culture, yet what immigrants find when they get here is a country divided along four major lines.

Thus, the concept of Canadianism should not constitute a major barrier to employment, as it was based on values of the rule of law rather than considerations of culture or ethnicity that employers imposed on minorities to access jobs. However, within this segregation and isolation of communities along an ethnic divide, economic opportunities and support services were concentrated within the Anglophone and Francophone communities by virtue of the political influence acquired over centuries of rule, going back as far as the founding of Canada. Thus, integration into the mainstream communities of the larger Canadian society provides better access to socio-cultural and economic resources than isolation, as discussed by Max Weber in the concept of *life-chances*. Life-chances is a sociological term used in Max Weber's analysis of class and status. According to (Encyclopedia.com, 2011) this concept,

> The ownership of property and the disposal over goods and services in the marketplace, which are outcomes of the distribution of power in society, determine the 'chances' of an individual or group to realize any goals in social action. The marketplaces, which are outcomes of the distribution of power in society, determine the 'chances' of an individual or group to realize a goal in social action. (para. 1)

Visible minority migrants in Ottawa argue that the chances in Max Weber's analogy cannot be accessed in their local labor markets, which fluctuate based on the Canadian migration scale, policies, and migrant integration.

Canadian Migration Scale

The scale of Canadian migration was for centuries dictated by the need to bring in new workers to fill the shortage of skilled workers within the Canadian labor market. The process was later constructed by the policymakers to align with the ideological and socio-cultural inspiration of Canadian mainstream society and its vision of the future of migrants in Canada. As a result, migrants were classified into preferred nations, who were considered acceptable people to be admitted to Canada, and not preferred, who might not assimilate culturally, socially and politically into the Canadian society.

The following migration statistical scale and the number of the migrants as reported by countries-of-origin will provide more information on Canadian immigration policy, and how it evolved over the time. Moreover, the census statistics from the nineteenth century to the present reveal the direction of the migration policy in terms of who was admitted to Canada as a skilled or resettlement worker. These statistical reports not only reflected the variation in ethnic makeup in the immigration process, as many scholars have discussed, but they attest to the contribution and commitment of

minorities in Canada's social and economic development. Differences have been noted between migrants of that era and those of today in terms of new migrants bringing to Canada skills, interests, work experience, and qualifications that are totally mismatched with the types of jobs available to them.

The priority of admission for migrants in general from 1900 to1920 was not placed on visible minorities because they were not considered acceptable migrants to integrate, work and live in Canada. Europe and the United States provided the majority of the migrant population, as the government considered them the most desirable and acceptable migrant workers (Anderson, 1981). The process changed, however, in the 1960s due to changes that were introduced in immigration laws and policies, such as the introduction of the immigration Point System in 1967, which depended on knowledge of English and French, age of migrant (i.e., not too old or too young), arranged employment in Canada, having a relative or family member already in Canada, educated and having intention of migrating to regions with high employment prospects. These factors were also influenced by international policies and acts that helped in addressing issues of social justice and discrimination worldwide, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. I will further discuss these factors in the next section. In this context, the record of migration from 1921 to 1945 continued to reflect the ethnic variation in admission of the preferred and acceptable nations who were allowed to come to Canada. This historical review was incorporated to further provide some historical perspective and outline factors that made the ethnic minority community one of the most vulnerable communities within Canadian society (Anderson, 1981).

The Era of Acceptance

There were many social, economic, and political factors that led to changes in Canadian immigration policies from 1980 to the 1990s and to the present, factors that changed the dynamics of the immigration selection criteria of people who should be admitted to Canada and provided visible minorities with more opportunities to come to Canada. For example, the number of people migrating from the most desirable countries, such as the United States and the Great Britain, dramatically declined due to improvements in the economic situations in those countries, and as such, there was a considerable rise in number of people admitted from countries that were considered less desirable, or not accepted (Anderson, 1981).

In addition, the family class system of sponsorship that came with the Immigration Act of 1976 opened doors to migrants who would not normally pass the *point system* set by the immigration authority on who should be admitted to Canada as a migrant or a skilled worker. Another factor that helped in the admissions of more visible minority migrants to Ottawa, or Canada for that matter, was the introduction of family class sponsorship, which helped these migrants who had become *Naturalized Citizens*, or who had *landed* migrant (Permanent Resident) rights to sponsor their relatives overseas to join them in Canada. The priority under this Act was to allow spouses and dependent(s) of migrants with legal status in Canada to be sponsored and admitted to Canada. In this regard, being a spouse or dependent was the approved criteria, regardless of the applicant's ethnic or cultural background. The sponsoring individual, however, had to be working full-time and have the financial means to support the sponsored spouse and/or dependents for at least ten years after they arrived in Canada. Most importantly, the sponsoring spouse could not be unemployed or receiving any

public financial assistance (Immigration Canada, 2009).

Other factors that supported the waves of ethnic minorities who migrated to Canada included admission to Canada as conventional Refugees, which according to Immigration Canada (2010a),

> Are persons who fled their homeland due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. These people were unable or unwilling to return to their countries of birth or habitual residence. Conventional Refugees also included the asylum seekers, categorized as *Protected Persons (IMM5520),* and those from countries experiencing ongoing civil wars and armed conflicts, who had documented records of experiencing human rights abuse. With proper documentation of such abuse, the applicant is accepted to live in Canada under either the Conventional Refugee Act or the Humanitarian Designated Class Act introduced by the federal government in 1997. Immigration Canada defines protected persons as those who are determined by the Immigration Refugee Board to be in need of protection. (para.7)

The refugees are required by immigration authorities to apply for refugee status, preferably outside, but sometimes refugees apply inside Canada. However, it is worth noting that the increase in the number of people who claim their refugee status inside Canada was also facilitated by the improvement in transportation, the affordability of traveling around the world, and new global economic and information revolutions. New factors resulting from globalization have made the world nearer the Global Village envisioned by McLuhan (McLuhan & Powers, 1992) in the 1960s and 1970s: a little

village that is accessible to all nations worldwide. It has also widened the choices of preferred destinations to migrants for reasons of employment, or simply to seek a better life within industrial nations. These prospective migrants come to Canada with skills, knowledge, and education that they believe will give them better opportunities.

The period between 1999 and 2001indicates a great shift in the admission of migrants from the most preferred sources of migrants from the United States and UK, including Western Europe, to China, India and Pakistan. The United States and UK continue to contribute most preferred migrants to Canada, even though the shift clearly indicated that migrants from the least preferred countries were accepted in greater numbers than in the years from 1921 to 1945 (Statistics Canada, 2006).

China continued to lead the list of countries that contributed the most migrants in the year 2000, followed by India. The years 2000 and 2001 also witnessed a huge decrease in the number of migrants coming to Canada from the United States and United Kingdom, as well as an increase in the number of groups identified as visible minority migrants admitted to Canada.

The last era, 1999-2001, has witnessed the highest immigration of visible minorities to Canada from underdeveloped countries. Still, the quest for equality and fair access to economic opportunities for members of this group continues to constitute a major challenge for policymakers and employment professionals. According to Winnemore and Biles (2006), the most effective initiatives to address social injustices in Canada were the Employment Equity Acts of 1985 and 1995, the Multiculturalism Act of 1988 and the Charter of Human Rights and Freedom in 1982, all of which unsuccessfully attempted to alleviate the social, economic and political exclusion and inequality experienced by members of visible minority groups.

Visible minority migrants do not think that the new immigration policies of inclusion and increases in their admission quota have perceptibly improved their integration into the local labor force nor reduced protectionism and exclusion from fair access to economic opportunities all over Canada. Even though only 14% of Canadians have experienced discrimination because of their ethno-racial origin, the Ethnic Diversity Survey of 2004 indicated that "about 36% of visible minorities have been subjected to discrimination because of their ethnicity, race, language or religion. Of these, 56% faced discrimination in the work place" (HRSDC, A6).

As discussed, the discourse of immigration centered on integration, assimilation and adaptation of the migrant within host countries, which has also become a concern of many scholars studying difficulties in migrants' socio-economic integration in host countries. Several scholarly articles have been written on immigration-related issues, with emphasis on migrant socio-economic, cultural and economic adjustments in Canada, and none of these researchers have predicted any better future policy changes in employment of visible minority migrants in Canada.

At the international level, there are annual interdisciplinary conferences that focus on issues of migrants' unemployment worldwide, with concentration on its impact on migrants' children, families, and as on them as individuals. Among these are the "Working Group on Global Childhood Migration", held at Drexel University in the United States; the "International Organization for Migration" (I.O.M.), which tracks the movement of people from country to country; and the "United Nations High Commission for Refugees", which has been providing protection for millions of refugees globally. In Canada, the Department of Social Work at the University of Manitoba hosts an annual conference titled "Strangers in New Homelands" in which

scholars and politicians discuss socio-cultural and economic integration and concerns of migrants in Canada annually. The outcomes of the papers and workshops presented in these conferences has suggested that effective integration of visible minority migrants into the Canadian labor market has not yet materialized due to socio-cultural and bureaucratic barriers.

The nature and magnitude of immigration and migrant-related issues varies from one host country to another and mostly depends on the policies established by the host country, social/political accommodation, and acceptance of the migrant in his/her new society. Furthermore, successful integration and adaptation of migrants depends on their ethnic, cultural and religious influence as perceived by the host country of resettlement, as well as the willingness of employers to accommodate individuals' differences.

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in the United States and the rise of global extremism have further complicated the visible minorities' rights of movement and access to economic opportunities in North America. The ethnic profiling and new scrutiny measures have facilitated creations of highly invasive new policies detrimental to individual freedoms, and encourage, almost justify, discriminatory behavior in all aspects of socio-political and cultural interaction, nationally and internationally (Isani, 2011).

Nonetheless, the lack of institutionalized programs to facilitate assimilation and denounce socio-economic marginalization, and the social isolation of ethnic minorities in many of the host countries have been cited as factors that encouraged the development of sub-culturally distinct community organizations, with distinct cultures and ways of life attached to culture in their countries-of-origin more than their new host, Canada. These new ways of life were considered alien by mainstream communities in

Canada, and were therefore sometimes linked to the causes of cultural and religious intolerance (Jedwab, 2006).

These new perceptions entailed adaptation of new security measures in Canada that led to difficulties in entering local labor markets and constructed a stigmatized identity for all visible minority migrants because of the new security concerns, which include constant profiling and scrutiny. According to survey conducted by the Department of Justice in Canada (2010),

> the majority (73%) of respondents indicated that they were not personally affected by any of the post-9/11 security measures; however, more visible minority participants felt that they were affected when compared to the responses of non-minority respondents (31% vs. 25%). The most common ways the participants were affected was by increased security at airports/delays in air travel (54%) and increased checks at customs/delays crossing borders (44%). Larger proportions of non-minority respondents reported experiencing increased security/delays in air travel when compared to minority respondents (57% vs. 44%). (5.4 Impact, para. 2)

Even though most ethnic minority migrants become citizens in their host countries, citizenship does not improve the lives of visible minority migrants or facilitate access to social or economic opportunities (Winnemore & Biles, 2006). Furthermore, ethnic minorities as discussed within the global context have remained a distinct community culturally, socially and economically, with no prospect of change unless current practices of social economic marginalization and isolation within host countries, including Canada, are changed. These would entail creation of customized programs and policies that facilitate their integration socially and economically.

In this context, Rifkin (2000) has cited *The Consumer Impacts of Expanding Credit Card Debt*, the work of Brobeck (1997), in which Brobeck has attributed the forces that shape policies restricting access to economic opportunity in local labor markets to gatekeepers and systemic discriminations. Rifkin believes that nothing changes unless these forces change. In this context, he stated:

> Discrimination against the minorities will not change as long as forces that determined the decisions of the gatekeepers are not changed. Their decisions depend partly on their ideology—that is, their system of values and beliefs which determine what they consider to be "bad" or "good". Thus if we think of trying to reduce discrimination within a factory, a school system, or any organized institution, we…see that there are executives on boards who decide who is taken into the organization or who is kept out of it, who is promoted, and so on. The techniques of discrimination in organizations are closely linked with those mechanisms, which make the life of the members of an organization flow in definite channels. Thus, discrimination has a link to management, and the action of gatekeepers that determine what is done, and what is not done. (p. 180)

The difficulty of migrants' integration into the host country's labor market and issues of unemployment are worldwide concerns. Even though views of politicians in Canada continue to run contrary to the reality of visible minority migrants in terms of access to employment and fair treatment, it is apparent that Canadian politicians continue to advocate for ongoing admission of migrants to Canada to fill skill shortages in Canada.

Paul Martin, former Liberal Canadian Prime Minster (December 12, 2003 – February 6, 2006), stated that "Canada needs immigrants… and we need them to succeed, plain and

simple" (CTV Report, 2006). What constitutes success, however, and accommodation of foreign skilled workers into the Canadian labor market, has yet to be defined in terms understood by employers, employment professionals, and the visible minority migrant job seekers.

Ethnic Minorities in Ottawa's Workforce

This section focuses on the visible minority migrants' contributions and experiences as cited by researchers in the City of Ottawa. These statistical figures provide an illustration of their participation in the City of Ottawa labor market through a study conducted by the Social Planning Council of Ottawa, a nonprofit community organization, and Statistics Canada reports. This statistical analysis was conducted between the years 2001 and 2006 to evaluate the success of economic integration of the visible minority immigrants in local labor market. The study indicated that the visible minority population in Ottawa had experienced 22.3% growth, and immigrant contribution in the local labor market was about 79%. The report also indicated that 75.1% of recent immigrants are visible minorities and that 38.8% of the visible minority population in Ottawa are not immigrants. Further, 63.2% of visible minorities are youth 15-24 years old. Refugees comprised 17.9% of residents. According to the report, the labor force participation rate among the visible minority migrants is 67.6%, with an employment rate of 60.3% and an unemployment rate of 10.8%. Some 1,650 recent immigrants left Ottawa for another destination in the years 2001 to 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2006).

According to the Social Planning Council of Ottawa study cited above, the City of Ottawa was the recipient of the most highly educated migrants admitted to Canada in 2006. About 52% of its population aged 25 to 64 had university degrees. The study also

revealed that about 66.4% of newly arrived migrants (2001 to 2006) to the City of Ottawa were holders of post-secondary graduate level education (Social Planning Council of Ottawa, 2009).

The mismatch of skills and qualifications and the high rate of unemployment and underemployment among visible minority immigrants were discussed in a research study written by Steward (2010). The author posited five major themes that revealed "New Canadian" frustration with the labor market, anxiety about deep-rooted inequality, rejection, crushing personal and household debt, and the importance of government intervention. Even though this study was not conducted in the City of Ottawa, the conclusions are not far from the perceptions of the visible minority groups in the City of Ottawa on the local labor market, which will be discussed further in Chapter 6 of this dissertation.

Statistics Canada also indicated among the 84% of the general population who have a post-secondary education in Ottawa, 53.8% were immigrants. Further, in the year 2006, about 46% of the total number of migrants received their education inside Canada, and 84.4% of recent immigrants took their post-secondary qualification outside Canada, a group known as foreign trained professionals (Statistics Canada, 2006).

The Social Planning Council of Ottawa has also cited that the highest percentages of the recent visible minority migrants coming to Ottawa had post-secondary qualifications. Yet these high credentials are not reflected in the types of jobs applicants were able to obtain, despite their over-representation in local labor force. As such, their group's unemployment rate remained high at 18%, especially among recent immigrants aged 15-24, and 13% among recent migrants aged 25-plus. This percentage

is comparable to a typical unemployment rate during the 1933 collapse into the Great Depression (Statistics Canada, 2006).

Policymakers have tried to understand, discuss, and meet the challenges of unemployment among visible minority migrants in Canada by using statistical analysis and by presenting quantitative data on skills, levels of participation and contributions made by these migrants in local labor markets, regardless of the high educational qualifications they possessed, but these have not addressed the concern of the majority of their members who strive for jobs that meet their needs and career aspirations. These reports, produced annually, tend to state the obvious in terms of participation, qualification, and types of jobs visible minority migrants were able to obtain within the Canadian labor market in general and the local labor market in Ottawa.

Among all of the major cities in Canada, Ottawa remained a first choice home for the highly skilled and educated visible minority migrants due to the concentration of governments and diplomatic missions in this city. Ottawa is home to three levels of municipal, provincial and federal governments, which are considered major local employers. As noted above, through the Statistics Canada report, the demographics of the migrants have changed with the new point system, which gives more points to the highly educated migrants than to vocationally trained ones like nurses, truck drivers, plumbers and the like. Since the increased number of highly educated visible minority immigrant workers was not properly utilized (as mentioned earlier), the practice was perceived by these migrants as an indication of systematic discrimination with a serious negative impact on the potential for socio-economic development in Canada given that major human resource capabilities were not being used for the benefit of the country.

Accordingly, the group has found its case to be unique and not well understood by policymakers or employment professionals. Thus, there is a need to address the issues of unemployment among these groups in Ottawa within an historical context and from socio-political and economic perspectives. That way, what is being said can stand alongside what is not being said and help in understanding the basis of perceptions of the job seekers and the factors that aided in the development of such perceptions among them about their perspectives on lack of effective contribution in the local labor market. In an interview in the *Globe and Mail* (July 26, 2010), Conservative Senator Donald Oliver stated:

> …progress has been made, but there's still a long way to go, particularly for visible minorities. Among the four groups targeted by employment-equity legislation, visible minorities are the only group whose representation in the federal public service falls below its level of availability in the work force […] There's an awful lot more to be done for all four targeted groups, particularly visible minorities. Of the four groups, visible minorities are at the bottom of the employment heap. In this same interview, Senator Oliver attributed visible minority unemployment rates to racism, discrimination or what he politely called barriers that are ethnic-based. (Friesen, 2010)

Visible Minority and Discourse of Employment

I have just discussed statistical reports, scholarly work and policymakers' opinions on issues of unemployment and underemployment of the visible minority migrants in national and local media. This discussion primarily treated visible minority employment in Ottawa and Canada as a whole from an outside, bureaucratic, majority perspective. In contrast, the intention of the research for this dissertation is to move from the periphery to the center, from a position of object to a position of subject—to

look at these issues from the perspective of visible minority migrants themselves on how they are coping, adjusting and integrating into new labor markets socially, culturally and economically.

This discourse has also looked at the construction of visible minority identity in Canada and its definition, discussed in context of the structure of Canadian society, which remains divided along four distinct communities to date. This dissertation treated Canada as a country built upon migration, in which people have come from all over the world to find a peaceful life, or better their opportunities to work and prosper; however, the experiences of the migrants vary widely between communities in terms of their socio-cultural and economic integration. In this context, Black migrants tend to be the most disadvantaged. Statistics Canada has predicted an additional seven to nine million people will be added to the migrant population by 2017. Immigration Canada has been admitting immigrants in different groups and categories, such as Conventional Refugees, refugee claimants, and skilled workers who were accepted to meet the needs of Canadian workforce shortages in specific professional areas. People have been coming to Canada from different countries, cultures and ethnic backgrounds for different reasons for centuries (Immigration Canada, 2012).

Researchers have cited the main reasons that forced people to leave their homeland as human rights abuse, political prosecutions, civil wars, or social cultural and religious persecutions. Other people were admitted to come and work to fill the skills shortages in the Canadian workforce as skilled workers, also referred to as New Workers. The concept of the New Worker or the Skilled Worker has been the core value and strategy of the Canadian immigration policy and vision for reshaping Canada's social cultural, political, and economic development. Accordingly, people who come to

Canada, regardless of their ethnic background, are expected to succeed and be effective contributors in Canada's socio-economic and political development.

According to Neice (1978), the debates from the 1800s to the 1960s have centered on the makeup and criteria of the New Workers and the prospect of integration, or assimilation, into Canadian society when they settled as new citizens. At the present time, however, the arguments have shifted from who should come to Canada as an immigrant to who should be employed, and what the requirement of obtaining Canadian jobs would be if coming from outside Canada. In both cases, the visible ethnic minorities appear to be the most disadvantaged socially, politically and economically. Despite the reasons and motives that bring people to Canada, as I have already explained, all migrants who landed legally or met the requirements of immigration have an opportunity to become Naturalized Canadian Citizens, which gives them more constitutional rights and responsibilities. In many instances, however, the rights of the visible minority migrants are not fully served, despite the Citizenship Act of 1977 which guaranteed equal membership in the country's citizenship and rights of participation in the democratic process to become an effective contributor socially, politically and economically (Winnemore & Biles, 2006). It would seem that an effective integration by, and participation of, different ethno-cultural individuals in Canada would require a greater understanding of socio-cultural interaction, as well as fair access to economic opportunity. The immigration policies in Canada have historically centered on socio-cultural integration and the possibility of integration into Canadian society as criteria for immigrants who are allowed into Canada, with a limitation on percentages of immigrants that were categorized as accepted, or preferred workers who were likely to socially, culturally and politically adjust, assimilate, or integrate into Canadian society

(Kelley & Trebilcock, 1998).

Visible Minority in Canada

In addition to Francophones and Anglophones in Canada, there are two communities that are officially treated as distinct communities culturally, racially, ethnically, politically and economically. These two communities are the Aboriginal community and the ethnic visible minority community. According to the Government of Canada (Public Services Commission, 2009)

> an Aboriginal person is a North American Indian or a member of a First Nation, Métis or Inuit, North American Indians, or members of a First Nation including treaty, status, or registered Indians, as well as non-status and non-registered Indians. (Para, 1)

In this context, the visible minority is defined in the *Employment Equity Act* of 1986, adopted by the Public Services Commission of Canada to refer to the people who fall within the following criteria:

> [S]omeone (other than an Aboriginal person as defined above) who is non-white in color/race, regardless of birthplace. The visible minority group includes: Black, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, South Asian-East Indian (including Indian from India, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, East Indian from Guyana, Trinidad, East Africa, etc.), Southeast Asian (including Burmese, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai, Vietnamese, etc.), non-white West Asian, North African or Arab (including Egyptian, Libyan, Lebanese, etc.), non-white Latin American (including indigenous persons from Central and South America, etc.), persons of mixed origin (with one parent in one of the visible minority groups listed above), other visible minority groups. (para.3)

Apparently, many researchers have emphasized that the above-mentioned communities in Canada are not well represented in all aspects of social and political institutions, nor granted fair access to economic opportunities and participation in the Canadian labor market (Social Planning Council of Ottawa, 2009). The quest for equal opportunities and representation continues to be one of the major setbacks for the progress of ethnic minority communities in Canada at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels. This discussion subsequently led to the question of whether or not the government in Canada and its institutions, as per past immigration policies and their applications historically, have invested in development of policies and programs that would foster social, cultural and economic opportunities for ethnic minorities in Canada. One is left to wonder if the process of effective integration of visible ethnic minorities into the Canadian society and its workforce has been taken into serious consideration as a viable means for socioeconomic development.

These historical service gaps in immigration and integration policies could be also understood as contributing factors in the development of participants' perceptions concerning social exclusion, categorization and social injustices, as well as their thoughts relating to their social, cultural, political and economic marginalization within Canadian society. These given discourses on immigration policies and the integration of the clustered migrants have presented challenges in socio-cultural and economic integration for visible ethnic immigrants in Canada to successfully participate as effective members within their chosen new society. However, these discourses do not prove that all visible ethnic minority migrants in Canada do not do well, nor do they dispute that socio-cultural and political factors determine the success of visible minority

immigrants' integration and assimilation in Canadian societies. Rather, the problem remains that the process of social and economic integration in Canada is stalled.

The demographic representation of the targeted population in this study was the visible ethnic minorities in Ottawa, Canada, with the underlying assumption that socio-cultural norms and community structures of the mainstream culture in Canada constitute cultural barriers for visible ethnic minority immigrants to successfully transition into the Canadian workplace. These barriers were discussed by migrants, along with their perceptions of social inclusion, Canadian social norms and employers' biases, as they attempted to integrate into Canadian society. The adoption of the social structural foundation of the Canadian society by migrants was also viewed as a determining factor for successful transition to accessible economic opportunities for an ethnic minority individual, or it could lead to total isolation and marginalization. Societies are "divided" generally into two components--social structure and social institution--that interpenetrate each other, i.e., are dialectically interrelated. The key to understanding social structure in a society is to understand its social institutions and their intertwining combinations in dealing with social issues (DeVoretz et al., 2004).

The analogy of four distinct socio-cultural and economic communities of Anglophone, Francophone, First Nations and Visible Minority emphasizes the level of visible minority migrants' integration, interaction, social relations and accommodation within the mainstream communities (Charon, 1983). For example, did these interactions support a sense of belonging that facilitated degree of access and success in workplaces, or did a failure to integrate and assimilate lead to marginalization and social exclusions?

The proposal of the four communities analogy is to discuss their invisible contributions as conceptual models and to outline socio-economic powers concentrated

within the mainstream communities by virtue of socio-cultural and historical linkages to the ancestral founding fathers of the state in Canada (English and French). In this regard, the other two communities (First Nations and ethnic communities) are viewed socially, politically, and economically as dependent communities that should, through naturalization and immigration, meet the requirements of citizenship to contribute to Canadian societal economic affairs. These complexities of social structure and wealth distributions in Canadian societies have been viewed by the disadvantaged communities, in particular the ethnic minority communities, as causes of socio-cultural injustices, marginalization, and exclusions.

Therefore, I think that these perceptions of social exclusion explored by the previous research discussed above will be best explained through the experiences and stories of the visible minority individuals themselves. In adopting this approach, I have found the grounded theory methodology particularly useful in explaining the experiences of ethnic minority immigrants with access to employment opportunities in their local labor market.

The discourse of these migrants' experiences requires an historical review in context of how immigration policies in the past decades were not in favor of envisioning intercultural relations and the creation of ethnic communities in Canada. This discourse will also outline changes in these policies and factors that facilitated the change through the decline of migration from the two major acceptable sources of migrants to Canada (Great Britain and the United States). These views were discussed through visions and policies of categorization of immigrants in the 1940s. During this time, migrants coming to Canada were categorized as Acceptable, Preferred and Not Acceptable. The purpose

of this historical discourse was to clarify the construction of the concepts and use of the term Ethnic Minority in Canadian society.

This constructed identity (visible minority) was later legitimized in immigration policies and served as the basis of socio-political identity in all forms of interaction, socially, politically and economically, in their host city. Statistical data was incorporated into this process to reflect immigration policies on ethnic representation in admission of migrants from their countries of origin. In addition, these statistical data have clarified the changing trends after the decline in immigrants from Great Britain and the United States of America. The changing trends and decline in the number of migrants from Great Britain and the United States, as discussed, was one of the factors that led to consideration of visible ethnic minorities as an alternative source of immigrant skilled workers.

The purpose of the statistical data was to reflect contributions of visible minorities in the labor market through their level of participation, educational background, and income variations. This contribution was measured by numbers of the unemployed and underemployed as a projection only, but was not used as part of research findings. This dialogue has included the role of globalization, technological advancements, improvements in transportation, and new humanitarian policies under the *United Nations Human Rights Protection Act December 8, 1948* that have facilitated continuous arrival of more visible ethnic minorities groups to Canada. I think the immigration policies remained unclear in terms of programs, plans, and strategies that support visible ethnic minorities' migrant participation and facilitation of meaningful transition into Canadian human resource pool. As Knowles (2007) has stated, people

who are coming to Canada, and the policies that the government has in place, will determine what the country (Canada) looks like 100 years from now.

The concept of labor force integration, socio-political accommodation, social acceptance and access to economic opportunities (labor market in particular) was analyzed in the context of determinant variables that supported the process of integration and development of a sense of belonging to the larger Canadian society. The literature on this discourse was achieved through the available contemporary scholarly work in the field of immigration, and ethnic minorities' immigrant research studies. The above-noted discourse has led to more deliberation on sociological and social construction perspectives on ethnicity and economic opportunities in Ottawa/Canada. These theories and their philosophical background were incorporated with the grounded theory data analysis process to discuss and analyze experiences of visible ethnic minorities with unemployment and underemployment in Canada.

Accordingly, the experience of the visible minorities in this context was the central discourse of this dissertation to develop new understandings in the dialogue of visible minority migrants' unemployment and under-employment in Canada. That was because the ethnic migrants' perceptions about the local job search and their experience were never considered, or incorporated as a body of knowledge, in the discourse of why they are unemployed and underemployed in Ottawa or other municipalities.

Why is This Work Important?

The quest for employment and the process of integration into the Canadian labor force has been one of the challenging transitions shared by the majority of visible minority immigrant communities in Ottawa. I had an opportunity as a member of this group myself, and as an employment counselor for years, to listen to the stories of those

who were experiencing the effects of unemployment and underemployment. The stories of these migrants could add new insights into the field of employment development and immigration-related policies that will support and facilitate the progress of ethnic minority immigrants in Canadian society. My underlying assumption was that these stories and their emotional enormity were deep-rooted in their experiences. Many researchers do not normally discuss experiences of visible minority job seekers from their own perspective, as their emphasis is mainly placed on a quantitative approach to understanding the barriers to employment. Minimum attention is placed on how these ethnic minorities feel about what is going on in their own lives, through their own experiences (i.e., lack of access to economic opportunities, and how this lack of access, or feelings of social exclusion, has affected them socially and economically).

Social exclusion is defined as

> the process whereby certain groups are pushed to the margins of society and prevented from participating fully by virtue of their poverty, low education or inadequate life skills. This has distanced them from job, income and education opportunities, as well as social and community networks. (Combat Poverty Agency, 2010)

According to the 2006 census, visible ethnic minorities represent about 20% of residents in the city of Ottawa, of which about 30% are Canadian-born. About 4.9% are Black, 3.8% Chinese, 3.3% South Asian, 3.0% Arab, and other, 5.2%. In total there are about 156 ethnic groups in Ottawa, with more than 70 languages, making Ottawa the second city in Ontario that accommodates a majority of ethnic minorities, after Toronto (Mixed Blessings, 2008).

The flow of immigrants to the city of Ottawa has continued to increase rapidly in the last decades. According to Social Planning Council of Ottawa, the immigrant population has increased by about 22.2% from the normal baseline growth of 12.6% within the years 1996 to 2006. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that about 79% of the population growth in Ottawa from 2001 to 2006 has been cited as the outcome of the new immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2006).

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (2009) has cited that immigrants are returning to their countries-of-origin, including those who possess skills required by the employers within larger Canadian cities. According to the above assertion, Ottawa is not the only Canadian municipality that is not paying attention to the retention of its new immigrants; rather, it is becoming a general phenomenon among all Canadian municipalities.

Nonetheless, I think that better understanding of immigrant integration and access to economic opportunity may be achieved from the immigrants' perspectives on what they perceive to be a social, cultural, and economic problem. In the next chapter, I will discuss theoretical perspectives and methods used to make this research possible. Specifically I will define the research question, the purpose of the inquiry, the importance and social relevance of this research, and my role as researcher and what I bring to the inquiry as far as experience and background is concerned.

Chapter 4

Method of Inquiry

The experiences of visible ethnic minorities in this dissertation were gained through interviews and dialogues with immigrants who have self-identified themselves as members of visible minorities per the Canadian Government Classification according to the Employment Equity Act of 1986. The participants discussed their experiences with employment and unemployment in the Canadian labor markets. The focus of this study is the experiences of these skilled migrants, their perception of what is happening, and how they resolve what they have perceived as a problem, or regarded as an opportunity. This study will assist in producing a reflective discourse on contemporary issues in the integration of migrants into the Canadian labor force based on personal accounts from the migrants themselves. Nonetheless, the outcome may create new understandings of collective socio-cultural and technocratic barriers to employment of visible ethnic minority immigrants in the Canadian labor market. My hope, then, is to:

- Explore visible minority migrant insights on access to meaningful employment and successful integration into the Canadian labor force,
- Evaluate the impact of unemployment and underemployment on the socio-economic welfare of this group.
- Examine the current employment requirements, immigration policies, and regulatory assessments that may offer understandings that could change the current policy directions, and create alternative policies to promote integration and inclusion of visible ethnic minority skilled immigrants into the Canadian workforce and society.

Research Sample

The core analysis of this piece depended on open-ended questions through focus groups and one-on-one interviews with the participants. All participants were identified as visible minorities using the definition of the Employment Equity Act of 1986. In this process, ten visible minority professionals/migrants were interviewed. These participants have lived in Ottawa between three and thirty years. Participants have met the following screening criteria to participate in the study: (1) self-identified as a member of the groups targeted by the Employment Equity Act under the cluster of visible minority migrant, (2) unemployed or underemployed, and (3) has been living in Ottawa for the last three years. The screening was done through a personal information questionnaire that included name, date of birth, age group, profession, employment status, country-of-origin, number of years in Ottawa and first city of residency in Canada. An ideal candidate, then, was a person who met the following criteria:

- Have lived in Canada for more than three years
- Self-identify themselves as a visible ethnic minority migrant or refugee
- Has Canadian Permanent Residency status
- Self-identify as unemployed or underemployed

Table 1 in the following page provides a brief synopsis of the background of participants in this study and also provides insights into their stories as pertaining to their experiences since arriving in Ottawa, Canada.

Table 1. Participants' Background Information

Pseudonym	Background Information
Angela	Angela was trained as a psychologist in Peru. She earned a Master's degree in psychology from Concordia University, Montreal, Canada. Angela could not work in her field for the first 10 years in Ottawa. She was later hired as a social worker because the employer was looking for a professional with her language and ethnic affiliation (Spanish), which was required to support targeted clients from her ethnic community who arrived in large numbers as new migrants to Ottawa in the early 1990s. The assumption was that the mainstream staff were not able to effectively serve these new Spanish Canadians due to cultural and language barriers.
Anne	Anne was a trained medical doctor who completed her medical school in her country-of-origin (Mexico). Anne came to Ottawa to find a job as a medical doctor, a profession that was in high demand in Ontario. However, she couldn't manage to work in her field as a medical doctor. Anne decided on a career change and went back to Graduate School to complete her Master of Social Work (MSW) in Ottawa. Accordingly, she became a social worker instead of a medical doctor, the field in which she invested most of her time and resources.
Emelda	Emelda was a trained psychologist from El Salvador. She completed her Master's degree in Social Work at Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada and worked as a social worker for more than 20 years. Emelda currently runs a Multicultural Counseling Center in Ottawa to support migrant professional women to deal with issues of employment, family separation and parenting.
Robert	Robert was an economist from Sudan, Africa; has about 18 years of work experience with international organizations (United Nations and Middle East Council of Churches) throughout Africa and the Middle East. He earned a Master's degree from American University in Cairo, Egypt. Robert worked in Canada as a resettlement officer with a non-for-profit community organization. Even though he thinks that his current job is not directly in his chosen field, he feels that his transferrable skills and experience working with people through grassroots community organizations has helped him adjust and adapt to his roles in his new profession in Canada.
Surgie	Surgie earned his undergraduate degree in sociology from a school in Ethiopia. During my interview with Surgie, he was doing a qualifying year in a University pre-requisite program to pursue his Master's degree at Carleton University in Ottawa. He tried to work in interim jobs but could not manage to adapt because of cultural variations in the workplace. He was not informed that migrants holding a high level of education, such as a B.A. or a Master's degree, have worked in survival jobs such as cleaning, construction, security, etc. He quit working in a McDonald's

	restaurant to return to complete his graduate studies after he read and found out more about the reality of visible minority migrants pursing gainful employment. He will return home if he does not secure a job in Ottawa after completion of his program.
Abdul	Abdul has an undergraduate degree in Engineering and a Diploma in Social Services Work from Ottawa, Canada. He could not find a job as an engineer; as a result, he considered a career change through social work training.
Richard	Richard came to Canada to study Hospitality at Concordia University in Quebec. He later went back home to work as a University Instructor. Richard returned to Canada to pursue a Master's degree in Hospitality. However, after he completed his Master's degree, he decided to work and settle in Canada. Richard has been living in Canada for the past 30 years. Richard stated that he is still looking for a "good job" but feels that in his line of work (hospitality), discrimination would prevent him from securing a job in his field. Richard is currently working with politicians advocating on behalf of Latino Canadians who are affected by unemployment, resettlement discrimination and lack of participation in Canadian politics. Richard further stated that Latino migrants in Ottawa have started to move back home because of difficulties they are facing in Canada.
Doris	Doris is a professional teacher from Africa with a Master's in Education. Doris was first employed as an electronics assembler in Ottawa, Canada. Reflecting on her past jobs before migrating to Canada, Doris used to cry at her work for reasons that her immediate supervisor could not understand. Doris later quit her job and stayed unemployed till she found a contract job with a Community Resources Centre, where her abilities, skills and qualifications were discovered. With no education in Canada or Canadian work experience, she has managed to secure employment with municipal and provincial governments.
Pan	Pan was a computer technician in Cambodia and obtained a Diploma in Computer Science in Ottawa, Canada. He has lived in Ottawa for about eight years. During my interview with Pan he told me that he has about three more months to move back to Thailand to help Cambodian refugees currently living there. Pan has many Cambodian Canadian friends who left Canada to find jobs in Thailand.
Xu	Xu obtained a Master's degree in Project Management from the University of Quebec. He arrived in Canada with a B.A. in Business Administration, and is currently thinking of taking a certificate in professional accounting from Algonquin College in Ottawa, Canada. He thinks that this certificate will maximize his chances of getting a job as an accountant. Xu has been applying for jobs in his country-of-origin (China), as he thinks there are a lot of opportunities in China for him--more than in Ottawa.

Participants in this project were four females and six males, with an age range of 30 to 55 years of age. About 60% of the group spoke and wrote both Canadian official languages of French and English. As far as countries-of-origin were concerned, they represented Mexico, Peru, Somalia, Sudan, China, Burma, Egypt, and Ethiopia. I recruited my participants through a letter of invitation, which I posted on a grassroots community organization discussion list and also distributed in public town hall meetings. I met Surgie, for example, in a Social Planning Council town hall meeting in which he attended a presentation about the outcome of research on economic experiences of visible minorities living in Ottawa. I explained my research project and my intention of recruiting people into my project. Surgie agreed to participate and also asked for a few copies of the letter of invitation to distribute to people in his community. Angela was referred to me by my co-worker, who knew about my research. Angela later referred two more participants from her community. One participant (Robert) responded to an invitation I had posted on the Sudanese Community Discussion Forum and agreed to participate in the study. Abdul, Doris, Xu, Pan and several others were referred by other participants. Contact e-mails and phone numbers of the participants were kept for follow-up, especially during the transcription of the data and throughout the process of data analysis.

I received several phone calls of inquiry about my reason for doing this study at this time, as well as those who expressed their interest in participating in this study. There was some resistance from one of the prominent organizations that dealt with Foreign Trained Professional Migrants in Ottawa to accept my invitation to talk to their participants. My organization also dealt with both professional migrants, job seekers, and those in need of financial assistance. I did not use my organization nor ask them to interview participants because participants might not feel safe discussing their personal experience as they depend

upon their income from this organization. Thus, I preferred to meet participants in their own environments and discuss mutual times that suited their schedule. The protocol of the interview and its purpose was carefully explained to the participants before embarking in discussion with them. In this regard, it is worth mentioning here that the names used to identify in this dissertation are not the actual names of the participants. Having noted that, many of these participants were willing to use their real names along with their statements.

Data Collection

The research participants were interviewed to discuss their experiences with job-hunting in Ottawa. The interviews explored viewpoints of the participating migrants on how they have perceived access to jobs in Ottawa and how they resolved these feelings and experiences. This process facilitated an open conversation. The techniques used in data collection incorporated open-ended interviews and focus groups. Interviews included written field notes, observations and one-on-one conversations with the participants. This process also included sound-recording tapes and field notes, as discussed by Ellen (1984). The information collected was written up afterward, classified, coded, and interpreted in conjunction with grounded theory.

The steps and process of research methodology are derived from Creswell (2003) and Charmaz (2006) as well as Dobbert's (1982) work on critical ethnographic research methods. This work is premised on the role of researcher discussed by Charmaz (2006) as the "key instrument as they collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behaviors, or interviewing participants" (p. 175).This study uses the qualitative design of a grounded theory, which was historically developed and successfully used in sociology by Glaser and Strauss. Their first work, leading to the development of this method, was their research on dying hospital patients—research that used the constant comparative method,

which became a key element in what has become known as grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Glaser, 1998). Grounded theory is defined as an inductive reasoning process emanating from a corpus of information that facilitates development of theory (Charmaz, 2005; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

In this context, Charmaz (2006) thinks that "constructivism assumes the relativism of social realities, recognizes the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed, and aims toward interpretive understanding of subjects' meanings" (p. 130). The meaning here includes, but is not limited to, respondents' and researchers' meanings, as the researcher is part of the process. According to Charmaz (2006), the researcher composes the story; it does not simply unfold before the eyes of an objective viewer. The story reflects the viewer as well as the viewed, and data "are narrative constructions of experience; they are not the original experience by itself but interpretation of these experiences" (p. 130).

I have chosen the constructionist approach, as according to Charmaz (2006), the "constructivist grounded theory fosters the development of qualitative traditions through study of experience from the standpoint of those who live it as of how and sometimes why participants construct meanings and actions in specific situations" (p. 130). This would not exclude the co-researcher from being part of, or participating in, developing a final body of knowledge and report findings. As such, Charmaz (2009) notes that in grounded theory

> Knowledge rests on social constructions. We construct research process and products, but these constructions occur under preexisting structural conditions, arise in emergent situations, and are influenced by the researcher's perspectives, privileges, positions, and geographical location. All these conditions inhere in

> the research situation but in most studies remain unmentioned or are completely ignored…Constructivists realize that conducting and writing research are not neutral acts. (p. 130)

My role, therefore, was to facilitate the conversation and record the experiences that represented the voices of the participants from their stories. The challenges were how to carefully access others' perceptions, observe their actions and place meaning to their language in terms of cultural affiliation. As Grills (1998) discussed, social objects, such as ideas, language, actions, symbols, physical objects and identities, do not provide intrinsic meaning. As such, researchers need to understand people's perceptions of their own world. This idea was further supported by Denzin (2007) in his discussion of grounded theory and the politics of interpretation, which gives researchers wide latitude in utilizing grounded theory as a research method.

Data Analysis

In this approach, the focus of researchers should be on "the kind of analysis that enables us to understand what is taking place from multiple standpoints, that will help us to engage in dialogue with others from varied walks of life, and that will sensitize us to a range of possible futures" (Gergen, 1999, p. 195). As Charmaz (2005) discussed, the process of inquiry in this context supports ideas which involve

> exploring tensions between complicity and consciousness, choice and constraint, indifference and compassion, inclusion and exclusion, poverty and privilege, and barriers and opportunities. It also means taking a critical stance toward actions, organizations and social institutions… social justice researchers openly bring their shoulds and oughts into the discourse of inquiry. (p. 510)

Using this method, the interview materials were labelled, and categories begin to emerge and develop, along with their properties and dimensions. The second phase was the axial coding, in which connections are made between categories to identify conditions that led to the development of these categories and in which circumstances they appear. The third phase of the analysis involved selective coding, in which the main category to be used was identified. The process of identifying this main category involved development of the theory through an analytical description of the potential main category. The main category is then compared and related to the other categories and validates the story line against the data. A series of memos then form the story line. Any gap in the story will be rewritten by returning to the participants for additional information.

I have used MS Word 2007 to code key words in participants' transcribed interviews and subsequently color-coded the initial codes in clients' stories and distributed words along developed concepts of what they stand for as categories. Triangulations, constant comparisons, interrelation of concepts, categories and memos have led in the case of this study to seven key themes—This process has helped in providing a sequence of steps of data analysis throughout the research analysis and in keeping the information flow and line of thoughts focused, as it was a considerable undertaking framing the entire process from initial coding to the development of the storyline.

The Coding Process

Data were gathered through intensive interviews of between one and two hours with 6 visible minority migrants and one focus group interview with 4 visible minority migrants, for a total of 10 participants. The intensive one-on-one interview was followed

by a group interview with four other participants for about 3.5 hours, in which the same questions used in the intensive interviews were asked. The purpose of the group interview was to give participants the opportunity to cross-reference their stories and to provide additional information if other participants felt they could add more data on a given situation or had a different experience with the same incident.

The interview was conducted and protocols discussed with participants, who were given more information about the project as outlined in the letter of invitation in Appendix A, including choice of withdrawal if a participant felt uncomfortable with the interview process at any point. The protocol noted the code of conduct, participant rights, confidentiality, research benefits to the participant, and limitations for the use of participant information. In most instances, the complete session was taped and transcribed as is, as I did not correct grammar or language construction; rather, I focused on participant concerns and what was actually being said, and in what context. Some of the interviews were written up without taping, as I felt that the recorder was interrupting my focus, as well as the interviewee's line of thought when they discussed their stories.

Before embarking on intensive interviews in fieldwork as discussed below, I devoted about two months to conducting pilot interview projects, practicing coding, sorting, memo writing, application of constant comparison and theoretical sampling. In March 2010, letters of invitation and contact with members in the community were made through the Social Community Network, e-mail and word-of-mouth. The actual interviews started in the middle of March 2010 and continued through June 2010. I then worked through the months of June and August in discussions with my participants to clarify statements that I did not understand during the transcription of their recorded stories.

The first intensive interview was completed with Anne for about an hour and a half, in which data was consecutively transcribed, coded and sorted for a preliminary analysis of the categories. One of the advantages of the grounded theory methodology is the ability to start analysis as data is collected. Major concepts, categories and themes started to surface by interview number 6, whereby stories of experiences become repetitive, with no new codes emerging for further analysis and categorization. This is a stage which Stern (2007) described as reaching the point of *saturation*, in which learners hear nothing new. At that stage, the group interview was considered to obtain new information from different settings, whereby all were listening to each other's stories and had an opportunity to discuss, comment and provide feedback on common experiences in similar situations, or different experiences in similar situations, or different situations. Theoretical saturation in grounded theory is the stage where there is no emergence of new themes from the data being analyzed (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

All categories and concepts under the themes were discussed and explored for further understandings of an experience, or the conditions under which they emerged. The narrative was supported by participants' statements from data collected to eliminate forced data analysis process and bring analysis closer to the participants' stories. I have revisited field notes and called up research participants to provide additional information to complete the missing gaps in their stories. This also included regular feedback with participants on the progress of coding, analysis and writing of the storyline. Buckley (1967) noted that "the feedback has to be done so that discrepancy between desired and the actual direction leads to correction of actions or to change of planning" (p. 173).

The research participants had the opportunity to review transcriptions of their stories and provide clarifications, more information and feedback for validation and for

discussion and analysis. The initial coding of the data resulted in about 83 line-by-line codes. The 83 codes were then color coded, sorted by what had been said and categorized accordingly using Microsoft Word tables (see Appendix C). The categorizations of these codes after sorting, has resulted in the development of six key themes discussed throughout this dissertation project. These codes and categories emerged from the stories of participants, which were subsequently analyzed per their properties to write the storyline that described their experiences in seeking employment.

The initial codes in this research project were based on line-by-line coding, per grounded theory coding techniques. According to Charmaz (2006), grounded theory is a process of naming each line of written data. With that coding process, I have also acknowledged Charmaz's statement that coding every line may seem like an arbitrary exercise because not every line contains a complete sentence and not every sentence may appear to be important. The initial codes have been grouped into six categories, analyzed and compared to the original data and incorporated with participants' statements throughout the analysis.

The analyses of these six categories have led to emergent of six themes through constant comparison and theoretical sampling supported with participants' statements. The Situational Analysis Matrix was thereafter used in the form of Mind Map and Smart diagrams found in Chapter 6, which further facilitated analysis of the six main themes of this dissertation, as reflected in Table 2 below, and the Situational Analysis Matrices in Figures 2-7 in Chapter 6. The situational analysis as a method was not used as a complete process of data analysis. Clarke and Friese (2007) noted that,

> …you may want to produce simplified situational maps to include only those elements you intend to address in the final products of the research.

> These often become project maps: maps that display various aspects of your particular project….the maps can diagram particularly interesting relations by circling (and boxing, triangling, etc) certain elements and connecting them. The same element can, of course, be "related" to multiple others. (p. 389)

The fundamental assumption here is that everything in a situation *both constitutes and affects* most everything else in the situation in some way(s). Everything actually in the situation or understood to be so *conditions* the possibilities of action. People and things, humans and nonhumans, fields of practice, discourses, disciplinary and other regimes/formations, symbols, controversies, organizations, and institutions, each and all can be present and mutually consequential. (p. 365)

This concept enhanced the analysis of the participants' perceptions on factors influencing situations they referred to as (personal experiences). These concepts are found in multiple situational diagrams illustrated throughout Chapter 6. The categorization of these situations subsequently led to the development of the categories and themes shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Table of Categories and Themes

Categories	**Themes**
Transition	Interests and Motives
Information	Cycle of Job Search
Skills	Making Decisions
Person	De-Skilling and Re-Skilling
Society	Social Institutions
Feeling and Reaction	Social Condition
	Reaction/Social well-being

The mappings of the grounded theory analysis diagrams in Chapter 5, Table 3, outline the sequence of how the seven major themes of this study were developed. For example, the theme *interest and motivation,* emerged from the (*cycle of job search*) through situational analysis of participants interest in finding jobs, giving up profession, seeking permanent position or full-time jobs, losing jobs, getting employer's feedback or giving up job search. The theme *re-skilling and de-skilling* was linked to situation surrounding participants experience with taking training, or accepting employment in different profession etc. The theme *transition* to employment emerged from situational analysis of participants' description of factors that supported decision of finding jobs, training or leave the city to other municipalities. These perceptions also linked to personal reaction to the *social institutional gaps* identified by participants as lack of programs and services to mitigate barriers experienced by minority migrants during the quest for jobs or training of their choice.

Chapter 5

An Interpretation of Research Outcomes

The purpose of this chapter is to present findings of the study. In this approach, data and discussion were inductively analyzed through five levels of grounded theory in the following sequence: (1) initial coding of the study (83 codes); (2) six categories; (3) six themes; (4) interrelations discussed through social norms, workplace culture, political and economic opportunities and bureaucratic policies; (5) development of outcomes and conclusions of the study. This process led to the development of a major statement that described the experience of visible minority migrants in Ottawa from their own perspective, as shown in Figure 1 (p. 89). It also provides a virtual process of the grounded theory process from initial coding constant comparison to the theoretical samplings being applied throughout the data analysis.

In this process the 83 codes were categorized in six categories, per the events and incidents that better explain the codes. The interrelation among these six categories through discussion of events and incidents, as well as a constant comparison of these events, developed seven themes. These themes led to the development of a storyline from memos that explained the experiences of visible minority migrants in the city of Ottawa. The process finally led to findings through analysis of categories, memos, themes and the story lines. Figure 1 below shows the visual process of how this research project was developed and its findings in this chapter were developed.

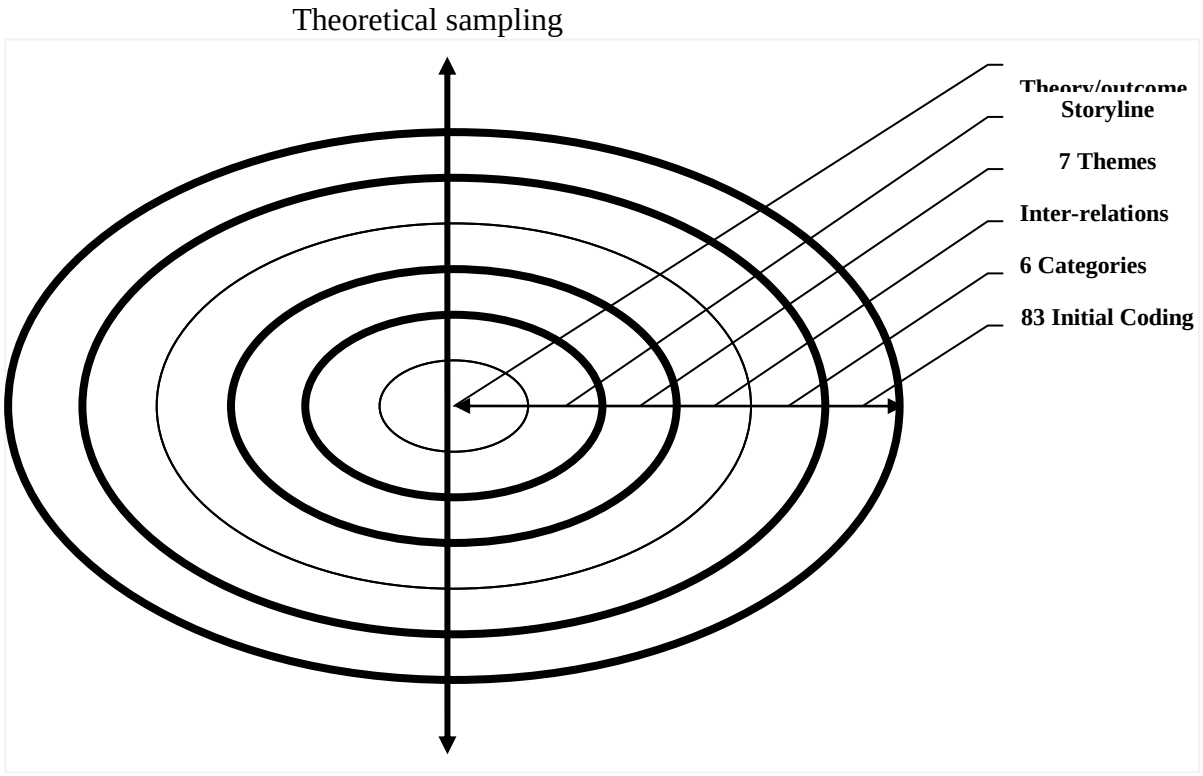

Figure 1 Levels of Grounded Theory Analysis

The outcome of the analysis was based on discussion of interrelation among themes, categories, literature review, and content of incidents developed using the concept of situational analysis matrix in writing up memos supported by participants' statements. The outcomes indicated the multi-faceted socio-cultural, political, economic, and bureaucratic factors that complicate visible minority migrants' pursuit of employment and integration into Ottawa's work force. These incidents subsequently led to what has been discussed as the "experience" of these job seekers with employment and under-employment in Ottawa. Table 3 below provides a virtual explanation of the five grounded theory stages used in data analysis utilizing the inductive reasoning process. It also maps the process from initial codes to the research outcome, as explained in the methodological section of this dissertation.

Grounded Theory Stages	Theory/outcomes
Stage [5] Theory	Interrelations of multi-faceted socio-political, cultural, economic, and bureaucratic factors experienced by members of visible ethnic minority migrants through requirements for entering the local labor market have had a profound impact on their psycho-social interactions, hindered their ability to effectively contribute to local economic development and created a cycle of lifelong job search, everlasting training, instability, and difficulty of integration into their new labor market.
Stage [4] Interrelations	Social norms, workplace culture, political, economic opportunities, bureaucratic policies, classification and categorization
Stage [3] Themes	Interest and Motives Cycle of Job Search and Retention Making a Decision De-Skilling and Re-Skilling Social Institutional Motivation Reactions/ social well-being
Stage [2] Categories	Transition, Information, Skills, Person, Society, Social condition
Stage [1] Initial coding	83 Initial codes

Table 3. Mapping of Findings Using Grounded Theory

The following synopses further explain the process outlined above to present findings grounded in participants' stories about their experiences from their own perspectives. In this respect, constructionists "view data as constructed rather than discovered, and we see analysis as interpretive renderings not as objective reports or the only view point on the topic" (Charmaz, 2009, p.131). The following points therefore, present an interpretation of participants' stories and description of their experiences.

Working in a Profession: The participants came to Ottawa with previous work experience, education, and training, and considered working in a field or profession of choice. The goal of working in the field or profession of choice has driven plans and perceptions of effective integration and is considered a major determinant of a successful transition into the local work force. Finding a job in the field or profession of choice was influenced by personal interest, training, work experience, and qualifications and confirmed by the immigration *point system*, which gives educated foreign trained professionals higher points for their education and previous work experience and is considered an asset for candidates wanting to migrate to Canada.

Immigration Policies: Individuals have frequently taken immigration policies for granted as a viable process in selecting qualified candidates who would succeed professionally in the local labor market, and these candidates spent many years in the process of trying to obtain jobs that match their previous work experience, training, or qualifications. The end result was experienced as a waste of the time, resources, energy, and talents. These employment challenges were experienced by people who were defined and categorized by the government of Canada through the Employment Equity Act of 1986, and immigration policies, under the cluster of *visible minority group in Canada*. The construction of this term and similar classifications obtained by migrants in the process of migration policies and resettlement in Canada created multi-identities, categorization, and feelings of isolation in a stigmatized community within the larger Canadian society.

Categorization: Government categorizations were perceived by visible minority migrant workers and job seekers as a construction of discrimination through race, region, religion, and ethnic affiliations to eliminate them from job opportunities. Accordingly, related educational qualifications and previous work experience were dismissed, even in finding interim jobs as a

short-term goal to survive while pursuing training or completing requirements of regulatory and accreditation assessment to secure jobs in their chosen profession. In this regard, accepting interim jobs meant (1) diversion from pursuing jobs in their chosen profession, and (2) being trapped in manual jobs forever.

Protectionism: Completing training or education and obtaining Canadian credentials did not mean guaranteed entry into a desired job. Identity and ethnicity in the Canadian employers' eyes remained defining factors in the hiring process. The most controlled and protected professions identified were the fields of engineering, medicine, management, and related regulatory professions in which certification or professional affiliation was required to secure jobs.

Resources and Information: These barriers to jobs could not be overcome without having access to accurate employment information resources. Participants found that accurate information at the early stages of arrival to Canada was helpful in finding survival jobs and training. It was also used in the decision-making process for determining options of employment services programs that suited an individual's employment goals. Further, such information helped in making faster adjustments in any individualized plan made during the initial phase, "the honeymoon period," for completing prerequisites or requirements of finding jobs in a certain field or profession. Their professional competencies were questioned if valuable information was not provided to help in the effective transition into the local work force. Information valued in this circumstance was received from relatives and friends who had been in Canada for long periods of time, including professionals who were seeking jobs in related fields or professions. Information received about the difficulties of securing jobs in the field or profession with foreign qualifications and work experience from the country-of-origin

warranted seeking re-training and developing new skills. Thus, re-training was a reaction to employers' and regulatory bodies' requirements that did not support employment with foreign credentials, as in the case of internationally trained visible minority professionals. These difficulties were realized through employers' feedback and from job seekers who experienced difficulty in finding jobs with foreign credentials. As a result, training was considered an alternative investment in skills development that could help in finding a job in the local public and private sectors. The newly acquired skills were also utilized in job searches overseas and in the countries-of-origin.

Services and Programs: Other barriers mentioned by the participants were social institutional gaps in services and programs, such as lacks in information, customized training, access to internship, and work placement and apprenticeship programs. Especially important was the lack of early intervention in areas such as information, training, and employment resources upon arrival in Ottawa. Another barrier was the protectionism they experienced with union practices, regulatory bodies, professional associations, and employers' discretion in the hiring process. In this regard, discrimination was perceived by the job seekers in the unwillingness of institutions such as hospitals and federal, provincial, and municipal institutions to accept foreign-trained migrants to practice, and to support them with mentoring by mainstream professionals. The licensing process to work in regulated professions was also characterized as time-consuming and involved several screening tests that were costly for individual migrants with limited resources.

Labor Market Integration: These social institutional gaps included difficulties in securing residency, with no guaranteed access to employment after completion or placement, or graduation if secured. The influence of Canadian social norms was also

discussed in terms of unwritten rules of workplace culture and biases in assessing foreign credentials and performances. The assessment was required to be completed to prove the equivalency of the foreign certification; it did not add any value to a degree obtained outside Canada. The accreditation of foreign credentials assessment was "meaningless" and not recognized, especially in the field of medicine. Lack of exposure to the system was also noted as one of the social institutional gaps, as many of the migrant job seekers did not know what to expect in a workplace, nor did they have preconceived ideas of workplace culture and social norms within mainstream organizations. This social institutional gap created job retention issues among visible minority migrants/foreign-trained professionals. Canadian employers referred to these experience gaps as *Canadian experience*, with no clear definition of what that term really means and how it could be certified, since there was no way to obtain the job before gaining Canadian experience, and no experience if no job was obtained in Canada.

Psycho-social Problems: These various challenges caused a high degree of frustration with the system and were a source of diminishing self-esteem, which in turn, became another barrier to finding and maintaining jobs. The overall experiences led to depression, and a lack of motivation that led to permanent unemployment. At the level of social interaction, these experiences led to mistrust in employment and community programs; such programs were perceived as unhelpful and only serving the employment needs of mainstream communities. Some of those who have been in Canada for more than 30 years participated in these programs several times with no tangible outcomes.

Departure from Ottawa: The consequences of these challenges at the personal level led to mistrust in social institutions, interest in social activism, and isolation from mainstream organizations. Preferential treatment in hiring, job retention, and promotions were discussed in relation to both gender and age, especially in the services sector, including hotels, tourism, and retail jobs. A concept that emerged in this dialogue of visible minority underemployment was that of protectionism, noted in employers' and regulatory bodies' influence in the hiring process, and complicated requirements making jobs only accessible to cliques within the "circle of power." Accordingly, the mainstream gatekeepers (employers, regulatory bodies, and unions) within public and private sectors were experienced as a system that preserves jobs for its local members and eliminates outsiders, regardless of the skills and qualifications they may bring to an organization. This practice was also mentioned by minorities who have been employed with mainstream organizations for more than 20 years in both the public and private sector. Participants thought that this practice was one of the factors that contributed to unemployment and underemployment in Ottawa.

Chapter 6 provides discussion on participants' perceptions about their experiences with the process of integration into the local work force in Ottawa.

Chapter 6

Unheard Voices: Stories of Labor Market Integration

This section discusses the storylines that emerged from the data provided by the co-researchers. The time frame they spoke about was from the earliest stage of their arrival in Canada to the date the interview was conducted. The storylines are discussed in terms of the categorizations and themes developed above. The story excerpts and discussions begin with looking at the transition/integration phase, followed by perceptions of access to information about the integration requirements into the Ottawa labor market. They also include skills development during the integration phase, reasons for developing new skills and credentials recognition, the role of society and social institutions, and dealing with unforeseen incidents.

Transition Phase

The transition phase is the "action phase", as discussed by Donaldson (1998). He looked at the "action" phase as the stage where people begin to adjust their behavior or change their environmental context in order to initiate change. For the minority migrants in Ottawa, it entailed self-referral to programs and services, reaching out to their community members and friends for support, and reflecting on their own skills and qualifications. It also included planning on how to successfully capitalize on skills and experience gained in their professional fields back home in their anticipated employment in Ottawa.

Accordingly, participants discussed starting out to join the labor market by identifying job sectors within Ottawa's labor market that could use their skills, experience, and educational background at their time of arrival in Canada. The idea was

to utilize prior knowledge, work experience and qualifications to attain future jobs in their chosen profession in Ottawa, Canada.

Anne states,

> *I wanted to find a job to work as a Medical Assistant helping in doctor office... because I was a doctor in my country of origin; I thought it would be something easier for me to do here in Ottawa.*

The perception was that even if one could not get the exact position held in the country-of-origin, at least taking an entry level job in the same field could permit them to gain work experience, skills development, and an understanding of workplace culture, which would help in subsequently obtaining a more advanced job in their field. Participants stated that they do accept interim jobs, or what are known to them as "survival jobs", with no intention of making these a career, seeing them as a stepping-stone, or a means of support for the longer term goal of working in their profession. Anne, for example, has the ultimate goal as a foreign-trained medical doctor to work as a physician in Canada; therefore, she planned her employment goal within the parameters of the field of medicine and related healthcare jobs. Thus, self-awareness was developed of current transferable skills as personal strengths to identify entry-level jobs in the field of her original profession. Participants often looked at transferrable skills in terms of training and work experience gained in the country-of-origin.

I was also looking for information about Nursing and Midwifery programs, as I had experience from back home delivering babies.

In this statement, Anne reflected on whether her obstetrics training and experience as a physician could offer transferable skills that she could utilize in Canada to work in nurse-midwifery.

Participants added volunteerism as another way to both utilize transferrable skills and keep them current while gaining Canadian work experience and workplace culture. Volunteerism was highly recommended to foreign-trained professionals, who come to the city of Ottawa as a venue for practicing new skills and gaining workplace culture, access to references and networking with professionals in the field. The volunteer sector has been well utilized by the highly skilled during the transition period and early years of arrival to Canada. Participants discussed volunteerism and working in paid positions in non-profit organizations as positive, as long as the sector did not require the approval of regulatory bodies or professional and union affiliations.

Robert stated,

> *I have volunteered with the following agencies: United Nations Association in Canada for six months, Catholic Immigration Center, and Overbrook Forbes Community and Resource Centre simultaneously for four years. I am currently working for not-for-profit sectors in which there is no room for promotion unless a higher position becomes vacant. However, there were opportunities to develop new projects; also a promotion may be available through creation of new projects. We have lot of independence within individual job description, opportunity to excel and to do more and better programs. Moreover, there is no seniority consideration in job assignment, as well as respect for diversity at workplace.*

Robert's discussion of the not-for-profit sectors provides a unique insight into how the workplace environment fostered and enhanced the skills development of people who are classified as racially and ethnically different—in addition to being relative newcomers in a new labor market, new culture, and new society. Focusing on related

experience was also discussed as having an impact not only on the selection of jobs and sectors related to the field of employment, but also as a determining factor in pursuing further trainings to obtain Canadian skills and professions. In this case, participants acknowledged language proficiency, both verbal and nonverbal, as being a barrier due to the fact that employers preferred those who could speak one of the official languages without an accent, a requirement that many minority migrants find challenging because of the impact of their first language, or what is known as their mother tongue. Speaking with an accent was also understood by employers as being less intelligent, and subsequently degraded among co-workers if employed. Therefore, participants have perceived the Canadian workplace as lacking a sense of inclusion of people who are perceived as culturally different.

Abdul thought,

> *Canadian workplace culture limits new immigrants' access in gaining, advancing or retaining employment. Some of the challenges I faced, for example, were verbal and non-verbal communication, i.e., requirement of having positive body language and eye contact, which most of the time was translated without a consideration of cultural background, as not being confident or respectful.*

According to most participants in this study, they considered working outside their profession as a result of life pressures and meeting basic survival needs: better to have any job than to have no job. As a result, highly qualified visible migrants take on low paying jobs in service sectors as a short-term goal, while pursuing training and building a network and the resources to secure jobs in their profession. Therefore, interest in working in the field of profession drives plans around the perception of effective integration into the Canadian labor market, and measurable determination of

what is known among minority professional migrants as a successful transition into the Canadian labor force. Working in their original profession is reinforced not only by personal interest and qualification, but also by the immigration point system, which gives the impression that they are needed and will be utilized, as it does give higher scores for their education and previous work experience, identifying them as additional assets for candidates wanting to work and live in Canada.

Subsequently, transferable skills were identified by participants as personal assets to enter the labor market in jobs related to their field of education, qualification and previous work experience. Some participants stated that they would rather work as volunteers in their fields to further develop their skills and experience than work in jobs that would divert their focus from their profession. Thus, focusing on finding jobs with related experience was noted as one of the major characteristics of the transitional phase. In this process, language acquisition was perceived as one of the elements that facilitated effective integration into the Canadian labor market and could accelerate adjustment and integration into the field of profession. For example, English unilingual participants who arrived in Canada through Quebec spent most of their first years learning French before looking for jobs in their prior profession. The same also applied to unilingual French speaking participants who arrived in Canada through Ontario. Language was considered more as a tool than as a barrier in the transitional phase, as something that could be learned if that was what it took to secure a job in the field of profession. However, participants agreed that it was used against them by employers as a reason for being disqualified to obtain a job.

The initiation phase, or “transition to labor market” in technical terms, was identified as the span of time in which individuals customized plans and longer-term

future prospects based on their own skills and experience, or professional development. In addition, they planned the professional trajectory they would undertake to become effective contributors to Canadian social economic development and deserving beneficiaries of their investment in their new country. This phase is known among visible minority migrants as the "*honeymoon*" period due to the energy, excitement and hope they held about their new homeland when they first arrived.

Cycle of Job Search and Retention

This theme emphasizes the minority migrants' interaction with employment professionals, employers and social institutions during their quest for integration into their local labor market. The analysis was based on individuals entering a labor market with socially constructed multiple identities in a new local labor market. This theme evolved from discussion of interrelated incidents in the stories of the visible minority migrants having to do with (1) finding the first job, (2) sustaining the job, (3) seeking a permanent position, (4) employers' feedback, (5) losing a job, and (6) focusing on current job long term. The interrelatedness among these factors was supported by participants' stories and my field notes.

I begin this discussion by outlining figures from Statistics Canada on the participation of visible minority migrants in Ottawa's labor market or what I term in this work as Ottawa's *local* labor market, because participants tended to conflate and confuse the Ottawa labor market and the Canadian labor market more generally. According to Statistics Canada, 64.9% of degree-qualified 1996-2001 arrivals to Canada were employed by 2001. As mentioned prior, these new arrivals were also referred to as "landed immigrants" in Canada. This term was used by Immigration Canada to identify people who were legally sponsored by the government to migrate to Canada and

subsequently become Canadian citizens. As such, it is helpful to say that "landed migrant" is the first constructed migrant identity, one that gives migrants legal status to enter the Canadian labor market for three years before they must pass exams to become a naturalized Canadian citizen. The status of "landed" also comes with limitations on the kind of jobs migrants should obtain, i.e., a landed immigrant is not looked upon favorably when applying for federal jobs, regardless of skills or experience. For some jobs at the federal level, migrants must live in Canada for 10 years after becoming a Canadian citizen before being eligible to apply (Canada Immigration, 2010b).

Gradually, social, economic and political forces encountered by migrants as they interact with systems and society further mold a new constructed identity. In this process, visible minority migrants are the most disadvantaged group, as they tend to acquire multiple identities as their country-of-origin, skin color, religion, culture and ethnic background begin to define their place in their new country. All of these newly acquired identities come with limitations due to bureaucratic policies and socio-cultural barriers erected by the larger mainstream society. These barriers include restricted representation of visible minority migrants in public and private sectors and the related intolerance of migrant cultural variations and difficulties in understanding Canadian social norms. The ascription of "other" identities in Canada was mentioned by migrants as something they had not anticipated when they migrated to Canada, nor did they realize the extent to which it hinders the process of finding jobs.

Angela, a Latino Canadian visible minority migrant who has been living in Canada for more than 20 years, stated:

> *I didn't even know that I belong to the visible minority classification or group till I came in contact with a professional in Canada who told me that I belong to a*

> *visible minority community. The reason was my skin color and accent due to second language, a classification that I didn't know would hurt me later in the process of finding jobs, or relating to people in my new homeland.*

These classifications limit individuals' access to certain jobs and over-represent the same group/people in other sectors. Visible minority migrants with different skill sets, qualifications and work experiences take multiple approaches in the initial phase of integration to find jobs to sustain or utilize as a stepping-stone toward their intended profession. In this study, participants identified finding jobs during the initial phase of their resettlement in Ottawa as being obtained through school placement, in the form of contracts, part time, or casual jobs.

Anne, a Medical Physician who changed her career to social worker to obtain Canadian experience, stated that she secured her first job in Canada when she was completing a Master's degree in Social Work (MSW),

> ...a*fter I finished my placement there was an opening in the Francophone women's program, and I was asked to apply if interested. I did apply and got the job part time.*

According to Anne, it was a long struggle going from a professional medical physician in Mexico to a first job as a social worker in Canada, a position that lasted less than three months because it was temporary and depended on a government social program's funding. In this case, Canadian work experience and credentials helped her to secure a job, although it was not permanent. The experience of individuals in securing jobs during the transitional period in Ottawa varies by group, individual, community, profession and individual personal circumstances, even though all visible minority

migrants were covered by a single set of rules as far as the requirements for their employment in Canada were concerned.

Angela, a foreign-trained professional psychologist has completed her second university degree at Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec, and speaks both official languages (French and English). Angela thought that her chances of employment in Canada would be rather better than individuals who did not graduate from a Canadian college. As a result, she consulted friends with the same qualifications and work experience for job leads in her field of profession.

Angela stated:

> *I started asking my friends where to go and look for jobs having a BA in Psychology and previous work experience as therapist. My friend said to me, forget it; for us immigrants we have to work in factories only [...] it is a quick way to finding employment [...] When I finally gave up and went to the factory to look for a job to support myself, a person in the building saw me and said in French go away, there are no jobs, in a very rude manner... I was shocked to find myself being demoted and treated like that.*

Surgie related similar experiences:

> *I got difficulties finding jobs in my field, though I had a good education and skills. I was under-employed and worked on call, or did part time jobs unrelated to my field of study. My first job was in McDonald's restaurant, which I didn't keep because of type of language young people used at work place.*

Notwithstanding difficulties visible minority migrants have in finding and keeping jobs in Ottawa, they are still over-represented in service sector employment, where jobs are done manually and relatively free from local competition. Angela

worked in the services sector for about six of her first years in Canada with a university degree and says,

...I had to work as cleaner, housekeeper, and all sort of jobs that I wouldn't have done with a University degree back home.

Angela was later employed with a municipal government in a position that she has been struggling to keep and has job retention stories she will live with for the rest of her life. She also feels that her appointment had more to do with the department needing to hire someone with a particular ethnic affiliation and language ability than it did with candidate's qualifications and suitability for the job.

Richard had the same perception about the hiring process of visible minorities in social work programs for the City of Ottawa, saying:

> *We have to remember that these people only hire us to work with our own people. I don't think it is because they want to fight discrimination, or to support affirmative action policies; it's just another way of meeting operational needs.*

Both Angela and Richard felt that compared to their Canadian-born counterparts, they were overqualified for the jobs they were hired into. Being "overqualified" seems to be a term of convenience for employers, something to be overlooked when it was convenient (as in the social work hiring program) or something to be used to eliminate visible minority candidates rather than acknowledging their abilities, skills and credentials suitability for other jobs. In professions such as hospitality management, employers tended to hire white young Canadians rather than visible minority migrants,

regardless of the skills they possessed in the field. Richard, who has been living in Canada for over 30 years, and Abdul, for 25 years, related the following:

Richard:

> *I had my BA and Master's degree in the field of hospitality from Canada, but employers would prefer hiring young high school nice-looking white men or women to promote business rather than old visible minority migrant like myself with high degrees in the sector. They would think they might have more business. I did apply for several years to work in my field, but I don't think my resume reached managers. ..I think my resumes were being destroyed. Out of suspiciousness, I always provided them with extra copy of my resume when I did follow up, but there was no success.*

Abdul:

> *Employers did not have any policies or procedures in place to assess my credentials as a foreign-trained individual. They often rely on regulatory bodies that are often discriminatory, in particular against black migrants. Some employers were not able to hire me as an immigrant professional because they told me that I was "overqualified" for the job for which I was applying for, but at the same time they did not give me an opportunity or access to work in my actual occupation. It is viewed that the visible minority immigrants have lower educational standards because of their country of origin.*

Visible minority migrants who were Foreign-Trained Professionals took on entry-level jobs with a strong feeling of demotion and frustration and with no hope that these jobs would change their status. They usually kept these feelings to themselves, thinking there was nothing to be gained in sharing them with employers or professionals,

since employers seemed to be a big part of the unemployment and underemployment problem. Some continue to work and move from casual to part time jobs; others quit and go back to school or attend short-term training. All these aspects of workplace culture, employee interaction, age variation at work and social norms have contributed to anger, resiliency and frustration among visible minority job seekers, especially in the transition phase.

Richard:

> *When you have a job is a different story; in this case it would be difficult for them to hide that they (employer) have own preferences. They always try to work with you nicely and respect you, but when it comes to making decisions of who they should promote, they would prefer to hire one of their own. It is not just information I am giving, but it is experience I went through myself for the last 30 years.*

Doris:

> *Lot of things to learn, unwritten rules about workplace dynamics and attitudes; the "sell yourself" approach, as opposed to being recognized. Nobody briefs you about what is expected of you. It's as important what you do but also the how and with who makes a difference. After all, there are no clear directions on how things should be done, and also the rules for promotions are not clear.*

Abdul:

> *When we cannot access employment opportunity in our field due to certification and skill set requirement, we tend to look for survival jobs due to family obligations and responsibilities. We always begin with jobs that will help us get*

> *immediate income. Moving out of these 'survival jobs' usually requires a lot of effort and may even mean going back to school to pursue a second career.*

As discussed, movement between casual unstable jobs, trainings, and education was a common phenomenon in the visible minority migrant life cycle throughout their residency in Ottawa right from the day they arrived. As a result, visible minority migrant professionals in Ottawa eventually come to analyze their unemployment and underemployment in terms of power and privilege.

Emelda, for example, says:

> *I think in this country employment is treated as power. They know that if you gain access to employment your status will change, your kids would live in a nice neighborhood...it is about class, you know!!...whether we want it or not, these employers have power over us, a power of hiring, firing or sharing, and also labeling [...] for example, if you discuss your rights or question their judgment, then you would be labeled as having attitudes. Even people who we think are promoting us are the ones that made it difficult for us to move on. It is all about power, which we don't have.*

Understanding visible minority unemployment and underemployment in terms of power, privilege and protectionism offers the researcher new insights and a useful alternative to the usual discourse of *discrimination* and *racism*. Moreover, it opened a new area of research and another dimension in this ongoing dialogue on Ottawa's visible minority migrants' unemployment and integration in the local labor market. However, in this research, I found that the emphasis remains on discrimination and racism as the main causes of visible minority unemployment and underemployment.

Surgie stated:

> *It has been very difficult for me to find job in my field. I could not even find a permanent job in any other fields, such as services sectors… most of my work was on-call, or part time jobs which were unrelated to my field of studies. From my personal experiences, I think employers in Canada are exploitative and materialistic…despite many policies and legislations developed to address fair hiring practices, still there is systemic discrimination in Canada.*

The migrants' struggle did not end with securing a job, as discussed above, but it continued throughout as the process of keeping the job and getting promotions. Furthermore, most of the jobs were temporary contracts, casual or part time. Accordingly, the search for a permanent position becomes highly competitive, with visible migrants vying against people with the same degrees but more work experience, knowledge of the labor market and the advantage of being fully embedded in the socio-cultural structure, social norms and the composition of the society.

To narrow the gaps, many visible ethnic minority migrant professionals came upon the notion of further education or retraining to start fresh—a degree, a diploma, or a certificate—in their field from a Canadian institution, hoping that the newly acquired Canadian training and Canadian credentials would offer the boost they need. Often, however, the new training does not complement their previous training gained outside Canada, nor does it address the issue of acculturation and understanding of Canadian social customs. Thus, the newly acquired training was equal in content or subject matter but did not provide cultural orientation and applied social norms of the society. Thus, the degree evaluation was considered the same by employers, but not equal to a degree obtained from reputable Canadian universities. Hence, members of visible minorities

view employers as unwilling to hire them and support their efforts to integrate into their local labor market.

The migrants in this study felt that the Canadian credentials failed to accomplish the goals of placing visible minority migrants professional applicants at the same level as mainstream graduates of the same field of specialization in Canada. Participants thought that employers gave preferences to Canadian-born applicants with the same qualifications and work experience but more socio-cultural experience that would give the employer a sense of ease in knowing that the applicant understands and will abide by social expectations. Therefore, most of the employers' feedback was discussed by participants in terms of "work experience" rather than "qualification," a concept that becomes difficult for many migrants to digest because of the fact that their countries-of-origin mostly believe in "know-how" and academic qualifications, regardless of social accountancy.

As **Emelda** said:

> *I was trying to apply for more permanent jobs but it was difficult, as I was being told I am competing with people with the same qualification but who have more Canadian experience...that is the answer I was getting from employers.*

The employers' feedback in this segment was reported per participants' statements. No actual interviews were conducted with employers in Ottawa. In other Canadian municipalities, some scholars like Philip Oreopoulos (2009), an economics professor at University of British Colombia, have done research on how employers favor job candidates with English names over those who were applying for jobs with

non-English names, regardless of skills, experience and credentials. According to Oreopoulos,

> Canadians and landed immigrants with names such as "Jill Wilson" or "John Martin" are 40% more likely to be offered an interview than someone with a name like "Sana Khan" or "Lei Li," given an identical resume... He further stated that job applicants with mixed names like "Vivian Zhang" had a 20% better chance to land an interview than job-seekers with non-English names, but still less than the English-only names. (p .43)

The findings of his studies suggested that “a distinct foreign-sounding name may be a significant disadvantage on the job market even if you are a second- or third-generation citizen” (pp. 43-44). Job applicants with foreign names have a lesser chance for interviews, according to a University of British Columbia study.

The same arguments were discussed by Senator Donald Oliver who has alluded to one of his studies on *barriers visible minorities face in advancement in both the public and private sectors,* in which he stated:

> If you have an Indian- or Japanese-sounding name and you apply for a job, very often you won't get a second call or invitation for an interview based upon your name alone. The report also outlined other kinds of barriers that cut visible minorities out at a very early stage. It was systemic, said Senator Donald. (Friesen, 2010)

Accordingly, visible minority migrants’ job retention depends on their perceptions on the stability of funding, employment turnover, and socio-cultural interaction with mainstream co-workers and managerial approach at work. Participants

have discussed the implication of losing a job because most of jobs were part-time and contracts that depended on funding that were not stable in nature. Other participants have discussed cultural variations and Canadian social norms as one of barriers in their local labor market.

Anne states,

> *. . . I continued to maintain my part time job with the community agency, which was also unstable and depended on funding. So I was laid off for three months and applied for an employment insurance (EI).*

Other participants have experienced poor job retention and cite age, cultural variation, language, and difficulty with the behaviors and sub-culture of younger people in the workplace, especially with service sector employers such as McDonalds, Tim Horton's, and fuel stations. Older visible minority migrant professionals who considered themselves working temporarily in these types of jobs to make ends meet found the language and behaviors of younger workers to be rough and disrespectful in terms of their culture, religion or social norms.

Surgie, who lived in Canada for about three years, stated,

> *I started my first job working in McDonald's restaurant. In that job, I had difficulties getting along with the youth who worked in restaurant with me and later, I decided to quit that job in three months because they were treating me like I was their age. Back home, people at their age wouldn't disrespect me.*

The process of integration of visible minority migrant professionals into the Canadian labor market was cited by policymakers and scholars in the literature of visible minority migrants' unemployment and underemployment in Ottawa as challenging culturally, politically and socially.

This discussion has further indicated that the prospects of visible minority individuals' obtaining jobs in their original professions in the local labor market are dim. Some visible minority migrants prefer to continue finding ways to work in their fields, while others give up their professions due to the time and resources they have invested in acquiring new skills and training in their current jobs. As such, the focus shifted to the current job due to the long process required to obtain a job, investment and years of experience spent, either on the current job, or on the process of looking for the current job, and continued uncertainty and difficulty of finding a job in the original field of profession.

Anne said:

> *. . ..anyway, now that I have a degree from Canada I will continue to work here as a Social Worker. I know I have a Master's degree from Canada, but it would not be the same as people who were born and finished their schooling here and have the same Master's degree.*

Focusing on the current job was due to the time invested in it. Nonetheless, it did not mean that they will settle in their jobs until retirement; rather, the causal factors of losing a job rest with labor market trends and employers' discretion. Figure 2 below illustrates the visible minority migrants' cycle of job seeking and retention in the Ottawa labor market.

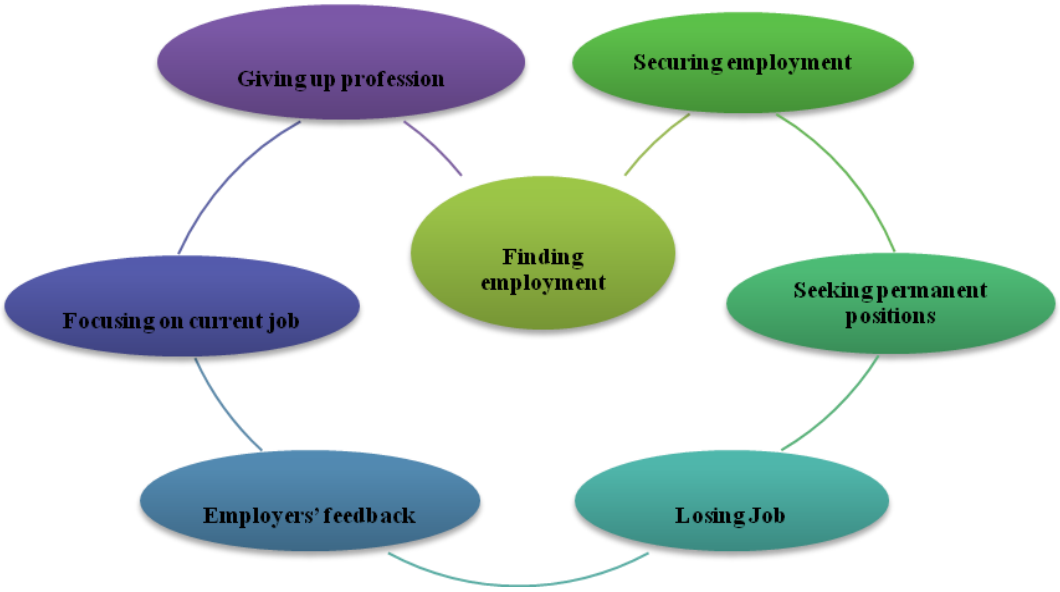

Figure 2 Factors Influencing Cycles of Finding Jobs

Figure 2 illustrates the situational relation of the cycle of job search activities, beginning with finding employment as a central focus. Once employment is secured, a permanent position is sought. Jobs are lost due to their often temporary nature. Workers seek their employer's feedback, and they frequently change their profession or settle for jobs not related to their original profession. This cycle continues for years, until self-awareness of their new identity begins to develop and is recognized as a barrier to employment. Participants stated that because of their special immigrant admission status, they did not know or even suspect that their identity, regional affiliations, and all related educational qualifications and previous work experience could be dismissed as meaning nothing in Canada. Accordingly, when securing a position in their field proved difficult, the fallback plan or short term goal was to find any type of job to survive while continuing to look, or attending training or completing requirements of regulatory and accreditation bodies, while holding onto the long term goal of a job in their profession.

Employment professionals responded by recommending that accreditation and evaluation of foreign credentials be obtained to meet employers' expectations and labor market requirements. Visible minority migrants who were in need of employment services in the transition phase were asked to provide these documents. The common understanding was that once the assessment found the foreign credentials to be equal to Canadian degrees, visible minority migrants would find jobs in Canada. Participants found that this perception was not true. Participants further added that this process of credential assessments was time consuming, costly and unnecessary.

Surgie:

I heard about foreign credential accreditation from people but did not send my document for assessment, because I have learned that many people who got their credentials assessed were still unemployed and under-employed. In my opinion, it is a process of systematic exclusion of migrants from employment opportunity.

Abdul:

The foreign credential accreditation and assessment in Canada when I arrived was very challenging, as it was taking too long to assess, and when it was assessed and processed, employers were less receptive to my assessment when they saw me as a black immigrant. There was no fair treatment compared to white immigrant individuals who may obtain their degrees outside Canada.

Anne:

It is not useful in the case of Foreign-Trained Doctors because nobody will ask you to evaluate your degrees. I was referred by a community center profession to do my equivalencies, which I actually didn't need, in order to go through the process of the licensing. To do licensing they don't ask you about your

equivalences, they only ask you to provide translation of your diploma and that was it...

Completing trainings in Canada in the case of visible minority migrants does not guaranty entry into a job. Regardless of training, education or experience, the defining characteristics in the hiring process and success of job retention all over Canada are the identity and ethnicity of the applicant.

Participants agreed that the most barricaded and controlled professions were engineering, medicine and other highly regulated professions in which certification or affiliation was required to secure a job. The difficulties and complexities of these requirements often led migrants to decide that a career change—in which participants took training in a different profession or simply learned new trades that helped in securing an entry-level position in a different profession—might be more feasible and certainly more practical.

In this context, changing a career or securing a survival job also comes with a great deal of cultural conflict that makes it difficult for visible minority migrants to retain a job, and the addition of discrimination, favoritism, and protectionism frustrates their efforts to succeed in the workplace. This dynamic has established a cycle of (1) constant job search, (2) seeking permanent positions, (3) losing job, (4) retraining to certify employers' needs according to their feedback, (5) focus on current profession, and (6) giving up a profession to either focus on current job, or start looking for jobs in different sectors.

The Decision-Making Process

In this theme, I discuss and analyzed how the employment-related information received from community members, employers or professionals influenced participants' decisions in making transitions to jobs or training. Participants' perceptions were that they come from countries where networking and access to information do not play a significant role in acquiring a job. Further, social skills such as networking and socialization were not a requirement for gaining access to opportunities, as in the case of North America; rather, it was part of the lifestyle and social norms. Unlike the information society in the West, word of mouth was the common traditional way of communication in most of the visible minorities' countries-of-origin. Nonetheless, the value and importance of information was judged by individual characters and a level of trust was earned through social, cultural, political or religious relationship and status in society, not professional position.

Accordingly, participants have explained that finding a source of information when they first arrived in Ottawa depended on members of their countries-of-origin they met, their cultural group, their ethnic affiliation, and their friends and relatives, who were utilized as the first source of information. The sources of information included the Internet, newspapers and community organizations. None of the participants interviewed knew much about issues of migrant unemployment or had information about employment before they came to Canada. On the contrary, they felt that they were led to believe there was opportunity based on the selection process, in which they were marked according to their educational qualifications, language, work experience and prospect of finding employment when they arrived in Canada.

Surgie stated:

> *The information I had about the labor market in Canada before I came here has been entirely different from the reality in the country. I thought the labor market in Canada was stable, secure and transparent in terms of employment opportunities, and also thought it had a lot of prospects for personal growth. But the reality is completely different. ..If you ask me now, I will say that the labor market in Canada is unstable and very complicated.*

Participants stated that they received accurate information about Ottawa's labor market employment, such as pre-requirements for migrants and regulatory bodies, directly from employers. Information about these barriers was received in terms of feedback from employers, not through consultation with employment professionals. According to participants, feedback received from employers gave them a first shift in their perception of how things are done in Canada and brought new plans into play on how to succeed in the local labor market. Participants said the feedback received in many cases had little to do with the individual's ability to do the job; rather, it centered on the kind of certification required, credential assessments, or professional affiliations (colleges). This type of information came from different employment sources and multiple channels. Therefore, the information received was contradictory and led to confusion about trainings, fields of profession and labor market requirements.

In general, participants described the information received as discouraging or instructive. The discouraging type arrived in the form of rejection from employers, educational institutions and regulatory bodies; the instructive sort offered new insight on how local labor market requirements are met by visible minority migrants. Participants described discouraging information as a demoralizing force that changed their

perceptions about the system requirements for entering the field or profession and about whether or not it is viable to pursue the goal of working in the field of profession in Canada.

Abdul:

> *Some employers were not able to hire me as an immigrant professional because they told me that I was "overqualified" for the job I was applying for but at the same time they did not give opportunity and/or an access to my actual occupation.*

In this context, discouraging news came from employers, community, friends and professionals in the field of intended occupation. Visible minority migrants who have been without a job for longer periods of time have developed their own notions about trainings or certain fields of profession due to personal experience with employers and trainers in their fields. Their experiences were shared with newer migrants seeking to enter the same field of profession to help prepare them for what to expect if they were interested in pursuing any particular profession or training. The information shared about professions, trainings, and employers led new migrants to reassess barriers and provided good means of evaluating the cost and sacrifices involved in the process should an individual decide to pursue jobs in their field of profession, attend training, or identify a sector to work in Canada. It also helped in recognizing difficulties members of visible minority migrants profession experienced when not working in their profession, or when taking entry-level positions not relevant to their training, education or qualifications.

Richard:

> *The credentials of Foreign-Trained visible minority immigrants are evaluated less satisfactorily and favorably than those of white immigrants and Canadian born. I had to network and establish contacts to find my first job. I also preferred to start a new career or profession because it was easier and faster than obtaining Canadian certification in my occupation at that time. I was aware that it would cost me time and money to obtain further education to acquire Canadian education and experience.*

Accumulation of negative experiences over the years has led visible minority migrants to mistrust employment professionals and to consider them an unreliable resource for information on how to succeed in the local labor market. Participants think that consulting employment professionals did not enhance their ability to make an informed decision on what training to take or what profession had viable employment possibilities for them. The lack of resources to support visible minority migrant integration into the local labor market was perceived by participants as gross incompetence on the part of professionals in field of employment. Figure 3 below shows the interrelations of incidents that influenced job seekers' decisions during the transition phase to find employment or training in their chosen field or profession and also those that helped in making effective career plans that best suited individuals' need per skills, qualification and education or training background.

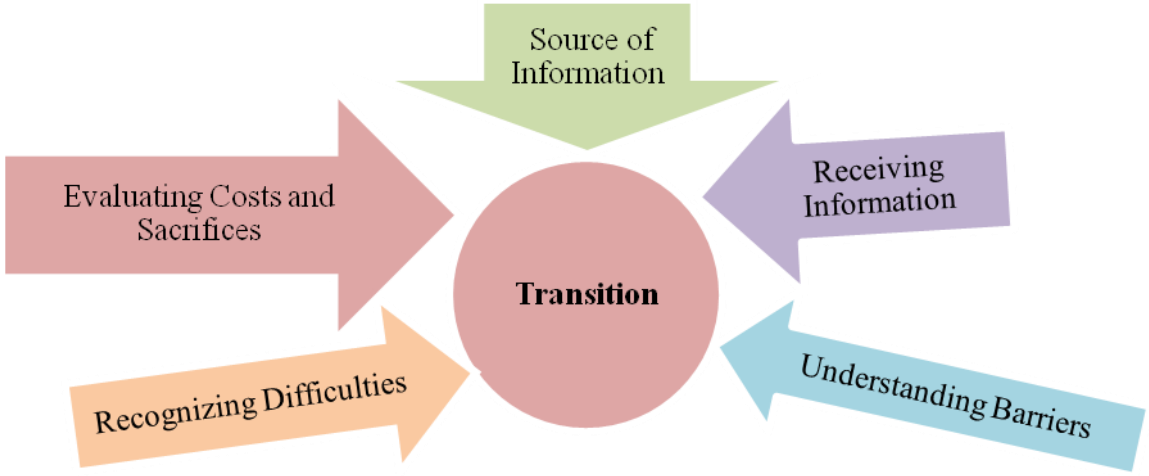

Figure 3. Perception on Factors Influencing Transition into the Labor Market

Figure 3 above depicts the interrelation of situations discussed by participants as factors hindered effective transition into the labor market. Transition, the central function, is influenced by the type of information received about the labor market, the source of this information, an understanding of the barriers to finding jobs, and a recognition of the difficulties in the labor market, as well as an evaluation of the cost and sacrifices involved.

Access to information helped in finding survival jobs and training. It was also effective in determining the employment services that best suited an individual's goals and needs. Information also helped in the decision-making process to adjust the individualized plan made during the initial phase (the honeymoon period) as individuals began to better understand the barriers to employment and the research training that would help them to find jobs.

At that stage, participants indicated that firsthand information was received from relatives and friends who had been in Canada for a long period of time. The other source of information was feedback from employers and employment professionals in the

community, which helped in understanding barriers in finding jobs in the field of profession, selecting training, and finding out about other formal institutions involved in the hiring process, such as labor unions, professional colleges and accrediting bodies. Accordingly, the awareness of the difficulties a person would encounter in terms of cost and sacrifices helped visible minority migrants in evaluating the type of training, job, a change in profession, and whether to settle in a minimum wage job or to give up and remained unemployed.

De-Skilling and Re-Skilling

This theme was discussed through participants' views on challenges they have encountered in the process of training and retraining to obtain jobs in a field of profession and the quest for Canadian experience that will be recognized in local labor market. These processes influenced individuals' decisions to seek new skills in demand, or to further their education to attain Canadian education and credentials to maximize their chances to gain meaningful employment in their original profession. Many factors determined which path was helpful to access skills development, and whether to continue further studies in the field of profession or to shift to a totally different field with better prospects of securing a sustainable job. The most influential factor in selection of training was comprehension of one of the official Canadian languages, French or English. The chances and opportunities gap narrowed if individuals comprehended both and widened if they grasped neither of the official languages. Participants' preference for training was driven by previously acquired work experience and education in the country-of-origin.

Surgie stated,

> *I had my first degree in sociology from back home...I am now on a career transition to do Master's program either in social work, or conflicts studies program to increase my employability skills. Since labor market is unstable and frustrating in Canada, it is hard to decide or say anything about my future career or employment situation at this time.*

Language of best comprehension was given as one of the determining factors in the selection of training and the path of career development. The two primary reasons Anne chose the Social Work program at the Ottawa University was that it was related to her community work experience gained back home and the program was taught in French, the official Canadian language she best comprehended and preferred over English.

Anne stated:

> *I found an advertisement in a newspaper for the Master's degree in Social Work taught in French at Ottawa University. It was much closer to what I did back home, because I was practicing community medicine, which was community related work.*

I asked Anne why she was interested in finding jobs or doing training in French, even though her first language was neither French nor English.

Anne paused for a moment, and responded,

> *I came to Canada through the province of Quebec, Canada, because we had a friend living there. Our friend let us stay in her basement with my husband and our little child. Newcomers in Quebec were paid incentives to attend French language training. Because of that, we have joint French language classes to*

learn language and also started to receive bursaries. Now, I feel that my French is stronger than my English; that was why I preferred to work or do training in French.

Focusing on related experience in selecting training was developed as individualized plans to narrow skills gaps between what is defined as foreign trainings and Canadian experience. In this context, a trained medical doctor, engineer, nurse, or a teacher prefers to pursue educations and trainings that would further develop previous knowledge in the context of Canadian socio-cultural perspectives and labor market requirements. The common "Catch-22" that many visible minority professionals did not at first understand was having the Canadian experience first before being employed. Hence, the legitimate question among these professionals that remained unanswered was *how could they get Canadian work experience without first being offered a job in Canada?*

The concept of Canadian experience and what it entailed was neither well-defined nor clearly understood by the visible minority migrants. They therefore concluded that taking up further training or volunteering in Canadian institutions could resolve the dilemma and help reduce the Canadian workplace skills gap. Even here, there was confusion over how to go about selecting training, as some institutions evaluated foreign degrees as equal to degrees obtained from Canada, yet the same foreign degree could not substitute for a local degree when applying for a position. In other words, one could not take the degree at a Canadian college because the college considered it redundant, yet the degree was not considered equal when applying for a job. One means of solving this dilemma was to earn a graduate degree from an accredited Canadian institution. Escaping this Catch-22, however, cascaded into

another. Completing graduate studies in Canada led to the classification of "overqualified candidate" for jobs available to them, which was another factor promoting unemployment among visible minority migrants. Accordingly, migrants came to the conclusion that accepting training in a *different* field, especially at the advanced level, was preferable to training that led to an entry level position in the field of profession. Another rationale for accepting training in a different field was to avoid feelings of demotion in the field of specialization, as visible minority foreign professionals felt that they had more skills and qualifications than their superiors in the workplace.

The decision to seek training was prompted by the unstable job market and lack of understanding of the systemic and bureaucratic barriers in the profession. The decision to select training was influenced by experiences of employed Foreign-Trained Professionals working in entry level jobs in field of profession. This included stories visible minority migrants shared with members in the community concerning how they felt about their jobs. Failure to achieve desired training left individuals feeling angry and frustrated at the society and its dysfunctional immigration and employment systems. Participants stated that at that stage they reached out for support from professionals in the community and government institutions.

Anne stated:

> *I was also confused about whether I should do a Master's degree in social work, or to complete a program in Nursing. A professional at the community center told me that "you are a doctor, and I know that some doctors who took Nursing jobs were not happy, because they were doctors, and when they see something wrong they don't have to speak up. They are encouraged to forget that they were*

doctors, which makes it very difficult for a person trained to be a doctor to accept.

The cycle of training and active job search continued until a full time job was attained, high debt was accumulated, or individuals were not financially able to pay for the cost of more training. Training was considered "successful" if it led to a meaningful full time job in the field of profession. Otherwise, re-training in the field of profession was revisited if an opportunity warranted. In this case, an advanced training gained from Canada had an impact on assessment for further training, or retraining in the field, when the financial burden was covered by government employment services and programs. **Anne** stated:

I had an opportunity to take a course to be an Ultra Sound Technician. That course was a fast track course geared toward foreign-trained doctors for three months to work as an ultra sound technician in Canada and the United States, as I could have written a test for the two Associations. The cost of the course was $3000 and I didn't have the money for it. I asked for the money through Employment Insurance, through Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) to cover the cost of training, but they denied me because of having a Master of Social Work from Canada. Their decision made me very upset with the system, because that course would have encouraged me to go back to work in my field as a Medical Doctor.

Training in the field and the possibility of gaining employment in the field of a profession was the central focus in interviews. Even after completing advanced training in Social Work, Anne was still scouting for an opportunity to return to working in her field as a Medical Doctor in Canada. In some situations, individuals preferred to

continue training because they thought working in entry level positions was waste of time and talents.

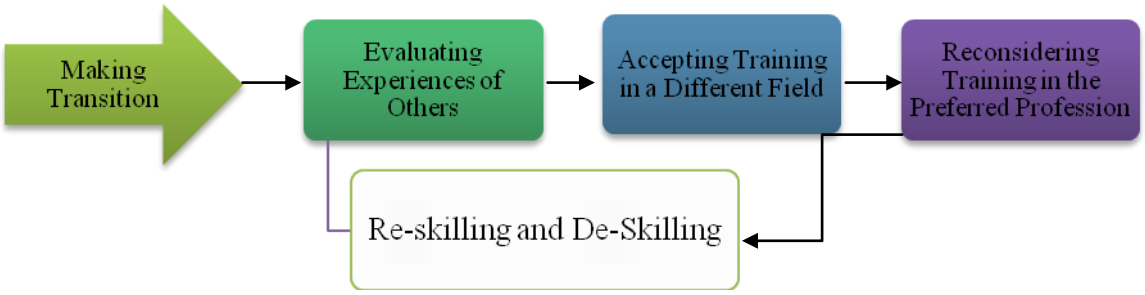

Figure 4. Factors Influencing the Process of De-Skilling and Re-Skilling

Figure 4 outlines participants' perceptions on factors influenced their decision in accepting training in a different field and recognizing the importance of training in that profession, i.e., those with doctoral degrees becoming taxi drivers, and medical doctors becoming personal support workers or nurses. Therefore, a career change was considered an alternative to obtaining Canadian qualifications and work experience. According to the participants, major substitutes for foreign credentials and factors that helped in attaining Canadian workplace experience were retraining, work placement and volunteering with public and non-profit organizations. In this respect, participants' interaction in local labor market jobs has shown that finding jobs with Foreign Credentials and qualifications is difficult. Accordingly, retraining was considered an alternate pathway, whereby the visible minority immigrant might enter the Canadian labor market with skills and trainings attained in Canada.

Participants discussed four avenues in their decision-making process that led to selecting a training that fit their aspirations and needs for their professional development. These consisted of (1) choosing training through evaluating experiences of other

individuals with the same profession and seeking jobs and training in the same field, (2) a struggle with letting go of previous qualifications and seeking training in different fields of specialization, (3) reconsidering training in the profession, and, (4) deciding what training fits their professional needs. These four stages are best understood as the factors influencing the decision-making process leading to selection of training and retraining, including volunteer work.

Social Institution Gap

The theme "social institution gap" are social and institutional services gap that reflects the participants' experience with programs, policies and requirements set by social institutions in Ottawa, and in Canada generally, as prerequisites that immigrants must meet before being recognized as a desirable candidate in the local labor market. In this context, participants discussed the inadequacies of provincial and municipal employment programs designed to help migrants secure jobs. One notable shortcoming was the lack of customized employment programs geared toward the employment needs of visible minority migrants. In addition, programs lack resources such as staff competent to deal with barriers to employment specific to visible minority migrant professionals. According to the participants, these programs should have more integrity, professional expertise, and the real world knowledge needed to maximize migrants' abilities to secure jobs in their fields of professions.

Doris stated:

> *In Canada, there are no institutionalized programs in place for immigrants to work in their fields. I know some doctors who are working as personal support workers, or driving taxis--what a waste of experience. I think government has a*

power to change this situation of foreign doctors, but why they don't do it, I don't know.

Further, participants also discussed concerns with the lack of early intervention through assessment and referrals to appropriate programs and trainings geared toward facilitating transition into the local labor market. They felt that the lack of customized employment programs has let them flounder until they figured it out for themselves. They thought that employment programs did not provide a clear understanding of the expectations of the Canadian workplace culture. Participants felt that current employment programs in Ottawa are mainly geared toward understanding the process of entering the Canadian labor market and understanding requirements for obtaining jobs in Canada. They felt inadequate to comprehend the complicated process and the endless hurdles and barriers to success in finding and keeping a job.

Richard puts it this way*:*

Ottawa and, Canada in general, lack a program that integrates migrants into their profession, a program that would start with assessment when a person is still fresh with their knowledge and experience when they first arrive in Canada. We need programs such as job placement and customized training to work in fields of profession. I think such an opportunity would give us an exposure to the system and maximize our chances to pass interviews and employment tests.

To the contrary, participants thought that experience gaps often perceived by employers as their personal deficit were, in fact, a matter of previous work experience obtained in country-of-origin and educational background being inappropriately assessed and recognized. The employers depended heavily on the regulatory bodies for credential assessment and interpreted this as an accurate indication of the candidates'

ability to function in their field of profession. Participants felt that this sort of evaluation and its letter of assessments were meaningless and worthless, except for the minimal confirmation of the authenticity of degrees and the degree-granting institution. Other professions such as medicine, engineering and teaching required further accreditation, licensing, regulatory body registration, and union affiliations. Participants' disparities were discussed in form of difficulties with licensing, accreditation and evaluations, which they thought took an unduly long time to assess, were costly and were not recognized by employers. The pattern of requiring minority foreign-trained doctors to take additional tests and training not required of their Canadian-born counterparts in the same field, with the same qualifications, was also a barrier.

Further, after passing the prescribed test, minority foreign-trained doctors in the field of medicine were required to secure residency in the rural areas to practice under the supervision of a practicing Canadian doctor. Participants discussed this requirement as challenging due to the unwillingness of many hospitals to allow minority foreign-trained medical residents to practice in hospitals under the supervision of a practicing Canadian doctor. Minority migrants who had passed the required exams were given a fraction of the residency spaces available annually—in fact, less than a quarter of the total number allocated to the Canadian born who graduated from Canadian medical institutions. As **Anne** commented:

> *to have a residency, I was asked for three references from previous teachers/professors at universities overseas. I finished my school five years before coming to Canada and lived in Canada for 10 years; it means that I will have about 15-20 years from school. So how would I find a teacher who taught me? I think they might not be there...also, immigrants write an additional*

> *screening test that cost $1000 and a language test, both oral and written. In addition, the provincial regulation demands additional residency and specialization, even if I had one already. Further, there is a problem of securing residency even if I passed the tests, because they have quotas of 100 positions for Canadians who finish here and only 25 for immigrants. I think they are mainly protecting Canadian graduates who normally have 125 positions. This number has recently changed, but I don't know how much it reflected the actual number of foreign-trained doctors who have secure jobs in their field after completing work placement.*

Socio-cultural realities of the Canadian labor market and the many and ambiguous requirements placed on Minority Foreign-Trained Professionals have created a perception that having a Canadian education may reduce prejudices when competing for jobs with people having the same Canadian qualification. As explained, it is relatively true that recognition of the Canadian education and abandonment of foreign credentials has improved the minority migrants' chances to gain jobs through work placement and internships. According to the participants, it did not mean an equal status with Canadian-born candidates when competing for a job, as employers would still prefer a Canadian-born candidate with the same qualifications because of such factors as cultural familiarity, gender, business experience, and age differences.

According to the participants, early exposure to workplace culture and the way the labor market works would save many wasted dollars, wasted hours and enormous turmoil, and this could be achieved through work placement, internships, mentorship and job shadowing. It would be added value if Canadian institutions were willing to accept Minority Foreign-Trained Professionals to join their institutions to practice and

be mentored by Canadian professionals. It does not make sense to give potential immigrants priority admission to Canada and tell them their skills are needed and then abandon them to a complicated process in which they endure systemic racism and protectionism and wherein jobs and access to economic opportunities are reserved for mainstream Canadian-born professionals. Protectionism was also discussed by the participants in the context of the additional requirements and hurdles, the detrimental wording of foreign credential assessments, and, in the case of the medical professions, complicated testing and additional residencies that are also subject to protectionist rationing in favor of the mainstream Canadian. These hurdles were ubiquitous, including the requirements of regulatory bodies, professional colleges, and even union affiliation. Relevant is

Richard's comment:

> *After 30 years of living in Canada, I started to feel that my age become a barrier to employment because some employers preferred young people, not a guy like me. I have also noticed gender biases in hiring practices in Ottawa, as some employers preferred hiring women than men to attract customers….of course color of skin is the obvious, even though employers are trying to be polite about stating it... also, nationality is another tool of discrimination employers used.*

Figure 5 below depicts factors perceived as social institutional services gaps discussed by the participants in this study.

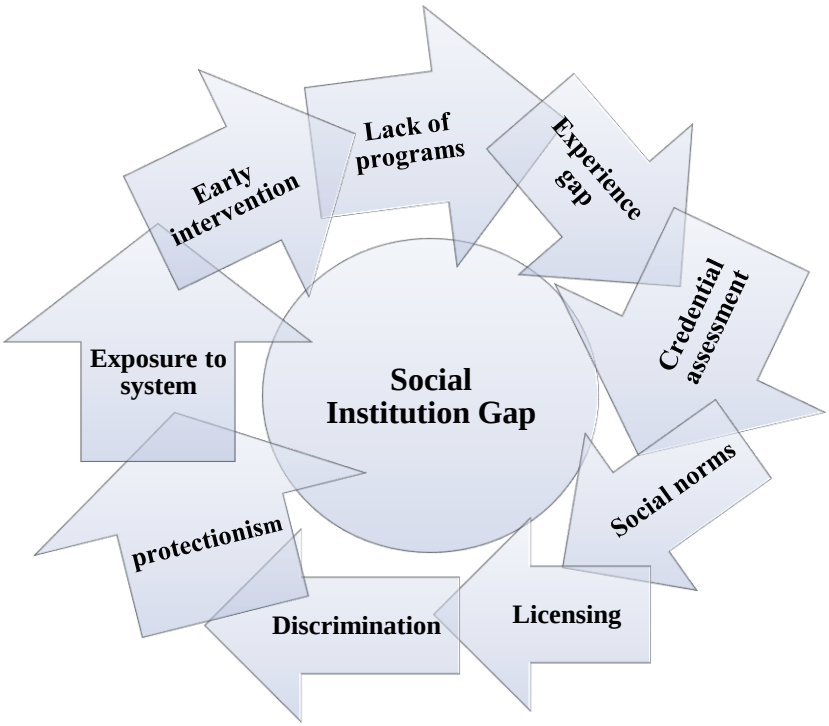

Figure 5. Factors Influencing Social Institutional Gaps

This Figure shows the complexity of the social institutional gaps, which participants discussed as having a large impact on effective transitions into Ottawa's labor market and creating demoralizing psychosocial and economic problems. The social institutional gaps consisted of (1) lack of programs specifically geared toward Visible Minority Foreign Trained Migrants, (2) lack of early interventions in areas such as information, customized trainings, employment resources and support, (3) protectionism as evident in the practices of unions, regulatory bodies and professional associations, (4) discrimination apparent in the unwillingness of hospitals, federal, provincial and municipal institutions to welcome Visible Minority Foreign-Trained Migrants to practice, supported and mentored by a mainstream professionals, (5) a

licensing process that was characterized as costly and time-consuming, involving multiple exams and a residency requirement made nearly impossible to fulfill that still did not guarantee access to employment at the end of placement, (6) biased credentials assessments and accreditation, (7) credential assessments required to provide proof of equivalency to local degrees and (8) unfamiliar and unexpected workplace culture and social norms.

Participants' Emotional Reactions

This theme concerns the participants' emotional reactions to their quest for training and jobs for a long period over the course of living in Ottawa/Canada. In this context, the feelings of discouragement were prominent, and discussed in terms of unexpected rejection from employers, trainers and professional associations. The participants acknowledged discouragement as a reaction to society and experiences with government services, including negative experiences associated with migration status, constant construction of new identities and social stigmas affiliated with these identities.

As **Abdul** stated:

> *The method of social and employment support services have been developed to create a lot of barriers to migrants in the City of Ottawa, as it has been designed for the mainstream in terms of accessibility, eligibility and delivery of the programs and services. This kind of practice in services provision or support created a systemic barrier to tools and support services required to help me achieve my employment goals. Canada's social and employment services have not been responsive to my needs; therefore, I felt marginalized and underserved. For me, one of the most important priorities is a need to develop more accessible*

and appropriate social and employment services that address specific needs of migrants, and in particular the visible minority migrants.

Feelings of discouragement also were expressed in the feelings of demotion when working in lower entry levels under professionals who hold the same qualifications with less work experience. This was the case both among professionals who worked in lower entry jobs in their own profession and among those who worked in a different profession unrelated to their qualifications and work experience.

Ongoing feelings of disappointment and betrayal gradually led to frustration and mistrust in the system. Participants considered the immigration system and its bureaucracy to be the main obstacles to individual progress, as professionals and policymakers believed that they understood migrants' problems better than the migrants did. Therefore, migrants questioned professionals' knowledge, judgment, and competence and subsequently discounted or ignored their advice. Frustration was discussed in the context of rejections associated with biased assessment of migrants' experience and qualifications. Inasmuch as employers and trainers were from the mainstream society, the participants suspected that professional judgments and decisions were influenced by racial, ethnic and cultural biases.

Interestingly, some participants felt they developed a stronger sense of determination to help them withstand the complicated process of obtaining jobs. This sense of determination in the face of adversity kept their spirits up while seeking meaningful employment or completing training in a society where they felt they were treated differently.

To share the words of some of my participants, **Emelda** said:

> *a person will notice that there is no hope in this country after it is too late. People always try their best to accomplish their goal here in Canada, but it usually takes years before they understand that they have wasted their time.*

Abdul recalls:

> *After I had acquired Canadian education and experience, I still had challenge to develop a network and contacts for employment leads, a simple task which I found very difficult to accomplish as a visible minority in Ottawa, Canada. I was also competing for jobs with people born in Canada and having experience, network and understand social contacts.*

Richard muses:

> *My hope is on the new generation in Canada who are known as color-blind generation; this young generation don't care where people come from, which makes me feel that my grandkids would live in a racist-free Canada. But right now ...forget it; there will be no change. I also feel that as a parent…I started to pass my frustrations to children because I think that I have failed, and that children should do well instead, because they were born here...I think that was an additional burden that children take on from parents.*

Pan stated:

> *I will not compare Canada to my country of origin, even though I found it difficult to find job here in Ottawa. But I always feel like a loser for being here without a job and unable to raise a family. I am thinking of moving back to Thailand to follow my friends who have left Canada to settle there. I heard they are doing well, helping people, and are not willing to come back to Canada.*

Participants discussed their strategies for dealing with negative emotions and unpleasant events by keeping focused on "*here and now*", which included challenging the advice of friends and professionals when it did not fit the their goals, or deciding to take training or to relocate locally or internationally. Progress was measured at a personal level through feedback from members in the respective communities of those who have been in the country for longer periods of time. Those who have been in one job for over 15 years thought that they had reached a "*dead-end*"—as they were trapped by the Canadian work experience Catch-22 that no one will hire you without Canadian work experience but you cannot get Canadian work experience because no one will hire you.

These social conditions were discussed as the elements that forced the participants to consider an alternative approach, such as taking retraining, accepting survival jobs, quitting jobs, relocating to other municipalities, giving up their profession, finding jobs overseas or returning to their countries-of-origin. The level of frustration in this regard was discussed in the context of years invested in trainings, job seeking and job retention. Participants who managed to complete training in Canada capitalized on their Canadian education and experience to look for jobs in field of profession, or related occupations. In addition, frustration was discussed as the cause of permanent

unemployment among participants with more than 30 years without permanent jobs since their arrival in Canada. At this stage the sense of mistrust, isolation and disappointment with the system and employment programs was highly developed. Hence, dealing with personal issues overtakes the focus on a job search.

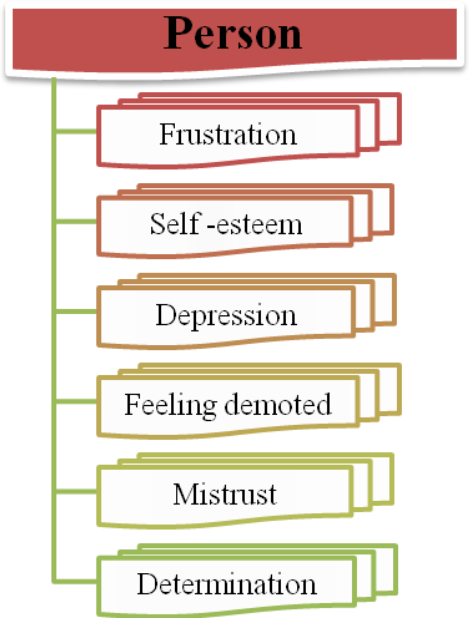

Figure 6. Psycho-social Factors Influencing Job Seekers

As shown in Figure 6 above, the employment barriers and the onerous requirements placed upon the visible minority migrants were perceived as the main causes of (1) frustration with self, system and society, (2) lack of self-esteem, which tended to become yet another barrier to finding and maintaining jobs, (3) depression that led to lack of motivation and permanent unemployment, (4) feeling of demotion, in which a person starts to underestimate his/her ability, or feeling unfairly treated by the society, and (5) mistrust, the final emotional stage, in which any social, community or professional employment programs were perceived as dysfunctional and designed to serve only the interests of the mainstream communities. This cynicism and sense of

futility is not surprising, since most of those who have been in Canada for more than 30 years have participated in these programs over and over without success.

Personal and Social Well-being

The discussion under this theme was based on the participants' perceptions of how the new society had impacted their personal growth, health, social relations and social status. The process of how society dealt with migrants' quest for jobs was deemed to have effects on their ability to effectively integrate into the Canadian labor market. Thus, those who were not successful in securing jobs in their field of specialization had to accept entry level, low paying jobs not normally accepted by their Canadian-born counterparts with the same skills and qualifications. The instability was discussed by participants in a reference to cycles of relocation among disadvantaged Visible Minority Foreign-Trained Professional Migrants groups between municipalities and provinces. The focus was not on any specific job, field, or profession; rather, the focus was on alleviating poverty and temporarily re-establishing personal or family finances (reducing debt). These relocations were discussed as having a more profound impact on families with children than on single persons, as for the families it entailed new efforts at finding shelter, school for children, financial services, family doctors and once again undertaking the whole adaptation process of entering a new culture in the new city.

Relevant is

Richard's comment:

> *I moved from Quebec to Ottawa because of the school system policies of forcing kids to study in French instead of English. As unilingual English, I have failed to obtain a meaningful job and am unable to help my children with their*

> *homework. I decided to move to Ottawa, where my kids have access to English schools...My employability situation didn't change, but at least I was able to help my kids and followed their progress in school. Moving to a new city was just like migrating to a new country.*

Individuals who possessed advanced skills and qualifications from Canada or back home preferred working overseas, where their training, education and skills were recognized and applied. Changes in socioeconomic development and the political environment in regional countries or in the countries of origin attracted some professionals to go to work in these countries, or to go back home. The phenomenon of working overseas or returning back home attracted men more than women. As a result, women can suddenly find themselves single mothers and having to cope with parenting, work and discipline of dependent(s), especially young adults, alone. As **Xu** stated:

> *I am not doing anything important here in Canada, and not sure why I am still here. Even though I will be leaving Canada, I still believe that Canada has great values I liked; however, I do not want to live here poor forever.*
>
> *…I have a Master's degree from Canada and learned to speak French; I think my skills would be competitive in China. I am also planning to complete another certificate at Algonquin College for one year if granted funding. After I finish, I hope to find a job here in Canada. If not, I will continue to look for jobs in China.*

Abdul also commented:

> *I tried my best to get Canadian education, skills and experience but they didn't take me anywhere… I applied for a Ph.D. at the University of Guelph, but found Social Services jobs were by employers who were receptive to work with visible*

minority migrants. Later, I found that it was difficult to reach all of my potential in Ottawa with my given skills and education. I then applied to international organizations and found a job overseas with the UNDP.

Figure 7. Factors Influencing Migrants' Perception of Social Well-being

Figure 7 above shows the factors perceived by participants as elements that impact their social well-being endured in the process of integration into the labor market in Ottawa. These factors included inter-municipalities movement searching for jobs or traveling overseas leaving children and spouses behind. These factors also manifested long term unemployment and subsequently dependency on social programs which reportedly had negative impact in family relations. In some instances, participants sensed they were being perceived by the society as failures and some preferred to live in isolation.

For some individuals and communities, overcoming difficulties of labor market integration has meant turning to political activism and pressure groups to advocate for

their employment concerns at the national level. Visible minority migrants practicing in regulated professions, such as medical doctors, have started to organize themselves as a pressure group to advocate for their right to work as Canadian citizens and to be treated fairly. According to Anne, they were making some progress and at least they are now allowed to job-shadow with Canadian mainstream medical doctors and to stand beside them when performing a routine check with patients. As Ann explained, before those doctors organized a not-for-profit advocacy group, they were not even allowed in a room while a Canadian medical doctor performed a routine check on a patient. Richard also discussed efforts of the Latino community to engage the Liberal Party MP of their constituency to address the unemployment and mistreatment of the members of Latino community in Ottawa. The discussion with the MP was expected to lead to establishment of a Multicultural Community Organization to advocate on behalf of the Latino community in Ottawa. As **Richard** remarked:

> *Many of Latinos are moving back to their country of origin after they receive their citizenships, as they no longer tolerate discrimination, which led to high unemployment among Latinos in Ottawa. I think they discriminate against us more than other visible minority groups... [I mean me and you]...for them, I am a black, too, like you (Kon). When I meet with the MP, I will give him more information on Latino Canadians who are leaving Ottawa to go back home. He also needs to know the number of eligible voters among the Latino community who isolated themselves from participation in voting exercises in Ottawa because they knew it would not change their situation.*

Unlike the Latino group, other unorganized visible minority migrants and groups have given up pursuing their rights due to cultural and religious stigma. These groups

have preferred to engage in smaller community businesses such as restaurants and convenience stores, or in technical and labor-related jobs. These job areas include computers, construction, security guard work, and driving. Giving up hope in this way simply means isolation from the mainstream community socially, culturally and economically. At this stage, any future plans for employment in Canada are suspended, alternate employment options were explored and the attachment to country (Canada) becomes unjustifiable. Subsequently, people begin to look for jobs regionally and abroad.

Isolation for some members of the visible minority group means chronic unemployment, settling for dead-end jobs and cycling through employment, social services and skills development programs until retirement. As discussed earlier, further research is recommended to look at the percentages of minority migrants who retire with a reasonable pension plan that provides a comfortable living during retirement. Future research should also look at correlations between unemployment and family breakdown, the impact on dependent children and spouses and the development of a negative image of the society and the country. I think a new path of discussion would add new information to the current discourse in immigration resettlement and social integration into the Canadian society. Such an inquiry should interest researchers concerned with integration and resettlement of the new Canadians socially and culturally.

These categories emerged from participants' stories about the impact of unemployment and underemployment on their progress in the local labor market, and its effect socially as well as economically. For example, moving to another municipality or working overseas negatively affected family relations in terms of separation, hardships of single motherhood and subsequent impact on dependents. Also, chronic

unemployment may lead to inter-municipalities movement, working overseas, or dependency on social assistance programs. Further, isolation was discussed in relation to unemployment as well as to the process of finding employment and the complicated requirements to re-enter the local labor market. Moreover, research on each of these implications separately will provide additional information on effective psycho-social integration of the visible minority migrants. Additional scholarly work in the field of migration, and particularly on visible minority migrants, is needed to effectively review immigration policies and local employment programs. Such work may provide new insights on whether or not the current immigration policies as an investment for Canada's socio-economic development have effectively incorporated the migrants' perspectives.

Chapter 7

Toward Improved Policies

In my view, this study has revealed important insights that can provide policymakers and employment professionals with visible minority migrants' perceptions of areas they believe were the cause of their inability to integrate into Ottawa's labor force. These experiences were openly discussed, including incidents that hindered their ability to acquire new skills and effectively take part in socio-economic development. This document also provides an overview of the status of visible minorities in the current labor market in Ottawa. It will also help in developing an individualized plan to understand employers' expectations and regulatory bodies' requirements. This work has mapped the experiences of visible minority migrants through inter-relating factors that further revealed the process of how participants have reacted to and dealt with their ordeal in the course of finding and retaining employment. To summarize the major outcomes of this inquiry:

Perception of Racism and Discrimination: There is a strong perception among visible minority migrants that they are being denied the opportunity to contribute, or provide input on employment support programs that enhance their contribution in socio-economic development because of their race and immigration status in Canada. Migrant job seekers should find this study a helpful strategy for effective job search plans by learning from the experiences of those who arrived in Canada before them, as well as understanding the difficulties associated with labor market integration. Further, this study will provide insight into the experiences of other migrants as to the whole process of local market requirements; clear understanding of Canadian social norms and workplace culture; and the correlation between lack of support and access to employment opportunities and isolation, marginalization and secondary migration. Moreover, it will help migrants to assess fields or professions of choice per sacrifices, time

investment, and implication of socio-political factors that are not normally shared by employment professionals or immigration officers. This study has outlined feedback on employment support models that were perceived as not helpful in reintegration of visible minority migrants into the local human resources. Most important were the reasons as to why these employment programs were not helpful to visible minority migrant job seekers. These included:

A**lternative Approaches:** The participants' stories and the literature review in this study indicate that visible minority migrants will continue to experience an endless cycle of unemployment, retraining, job search, and job retention issues. These employment challenges, as discussed above, will continue to hinder their ability to integrate or find a meaningful job if the current models of employment programs are not changed and modified to fit their needs. The current models continue to assess visible minority migrants' causes of unemployment under skills deficit rather than skills development, identifying interests and drives, bridging institutional gaps, and providing a clear understanding of Canadian socio-cultural norms. Nonetheless, these employment models, according to participants, do not engage employers and assess their willingness to support diversity in the workplace and recognize foreign credentials even when job seekers meet the merit criteria required for a job.

Over-Representation in Services Sector: According to my participants, the perception that all jobs are open to all candidates, including visible minority migrants has not materialized in Ottawa's local labor market. In this case, service sectors involving direct interaction with residents as customers and clients with federal, provincial, and municipal government and private sectors continue to be the sectors of choice in hiring visible minority migrants. They are hired as frontline and customer service workers with the expectation of supporting their own people (visible minority migrants) and reflecting the clientele as a business strategy.

Participants think that competencies, qualifications, and the skill set of the minority groups are not competitive, regardless of where their qualifications were obtained. Management, union and regulatory bodies have control and power over who they would like to hire or not to hire.

Customized Employment Programs: Mistrust in the system and lack of customized employment programs and services to address the issue of unemployment among visible minority migrants, including integration into the local labor market, were translated as incompetence and unwillingness of professionals to support migrants' efforts to find and keep jobs. (previous sentence needs help) Nonetheless, the requirements to obtain a job and employers' expectations of what is required of minority job seekers to secure meaningful jobs was cited as complicated and not well understood by the job seekers. This complicated process was perceived as an obstacle that prevented job seekers from meeting local job requirements or changing their careers to access skills to meet employers' expectations, licensing, and certification.

The Concept of Power and Privilege: The participants voiced a need to understand the issues of unemployment and underemployment. Often they linked denial of jobs to the concept of "power" and "privilege." From this perspective, employment as power and privilege was perceived as concentrated among the wealthy within the mainstream segments of society. These communities also determined wealth sharing, thus sustaining class and status in society. This perspective, as discussed, has correlated unemployment and underemployment in practice to prejudice and discrimination. The question that remained unanswered was to what extent discrimination implicates the whole process of unemployment. These questions will need more research to explore employers' perspectives on both discrimination and protectionism.

Categorization and Stigma: As my participants suggest, the historical construction of the migrant identity in Canadian society and the workplace has created a stigmatized social relationship in which they were not treated as equals socially and culturally, and most acutely in terms of employment. Politically, there have been significant attempts to correct social disparities through multiculturalism, affirmative action, and human rights acts that granted fair treatment and a safe workplace environment for all Canadian citizens, regardless of their race, sex, age, or religion. The question that remains, however, is the extent to which institutions and employers have respected and implemented these policies. This is a question that will require further discussion and research, especially from the employers' and policymakers' perspectives.

Citizenship: Even though most of the minority migrants became citizens in the host country (Canada), citizenship did not normally improve their lives or facilitate access to socio-economic opportunities through active participation in the local workforce. Per participants' information and the literature review, it would be fair to say that minority job seekers will remain a distinct community culturally, socially, and economically, with no prospect of successful integration, unless current practices of social and economic marginalization and isolation are changed within the labor market and Canadian society.

Construction of Identity: According to participants, the designation of "visible minority migrant" is interpreted by employers as a demand to hire candidates who do not possess skills required to do the job. The special designation did not normally reflect the skills and qualifications of the minority migrants. The purpose of the Employment Equity Act has been eclipsed by the powers of managers, unions, and regulatory bodies, especially in public organizations. Further, this discourse in the coming decade will include Canadian-born citizens of the visible minority who are holders of Canadian education and training and who

are categorized under this designation. These issues will dominate future discussions in Canada if policymakers and bureaucrats continue to ignore the systemic exclusion and construction of identities that marginalize a segment of community whose sills could effectively contribute to the nation's socio-economic development.

Limitations of This Inquiry

Little emphasis was placed on socio-cultural adjustment of the visible minority migrant in Canadian society, and whether or not adjustments and social integration were important in making an effective transition into the local work force. No emphasis was placed on the variation of impact and experience of the participant regarding his or her cultural group, country-of-origin, or region. This was because the process and requirements of integration into the local labor market have judged the categorized visible minority groups with a blanket set of rules and policies that treat the visible minority group as a homogenous ethno-cultural group, which, in fact, it is not. This research did not show any cultural or regional variations in responses, even though participants came from different ethnic, national, and cultural backgrounds. It was also true that some communities with a fair number of cultural, ethnic, and regional affiliations within Ottawa's visible minority community have managed to develop an ethnic local market and maintain a strong ethnic identity with grassroots local ethnic communities. Among these groups were Chinese, Indian, and Middle Eastern Arabs. Blacks always appear at the bottom of the list at any level.

In this regard, other concerns noted were already discussed by the grounded theorists in limitation of the usage of grounded theory as a method in discourse of diversity issues. Green, Creswell, Shope, and Clark (2007) have stated that grounded theory (GTM) has not been used as much in researching issues of diversity as it has been with other social phenomena. However, they further stated:

> Regardless of specific design...(GTM) as a qualitative approach can potentially help social scientists and educators in understanding unique diversity-related problems, such as changing demographics, (e.g., race ethnicity, class, nationality, or place of origin) in developed countries that are impacting ... with immigration and immigration issues, as well as conservative governments, that foreshadow the need for different frameworks and ways of conceptualizing old problems and dysfunctional solutions. (p. 473)

In addition, grounded theory has been noted as having a limited interpretation of psychological factors and explanation of historical phenomenon. Seale (2004) has discussed this limitation of grounded theory in his work *Search the Society and Culture*, in which he has cited difficulties in analyzing unconscious processes to find a connection between mental and social factors through the use of grounded theory. However, he has also indicated that grounded theory could be helpful in pointing out sequences of behavior that are directly observed by a researcher.

Accordingly, this study did not attempt an explanation of what participants referred to as the mental or psychological impact resulting from their frustration with the complicated process of securing and retaining jobs in Ottawa. Instead, feelings such as depression, frustration, motivation, and low self-esteem were coded, categorized, and interpreted as social phenomena or a reaction to the labor market, resulting from everlasting unemployment, isolation, and constant movement between municipalities. More research is recommended in areas that further link the visible minority experience in the workplace to psychological factors such as depression, frustration, motivation, and low self-esteem.

Moreover, it is worth noting that this research project was limited to participants' perceptions of local reality in their job search, training, and job retention in Ottawa, which was also their new city of resettlement. Therefore, there was no emphasis placed on the perspectives of employers, employment professionals, or bureaucrats (government). Further research on these three pillars may add valuable insight to the discourse of visible minority unemployment, issues of diversity, and workplace culture in the city of Ottawa. The new research should be looked at from employers' and bureaucrats' perceptions through their own stories (i.e., what employers who worked, or intended to work, with visible minority migrants think about barriers to employment and the job retention of the visible minority in the host city (Ottawa) and Canada-at-large).

The same research prospects apply to employment professionals who may share their stories of working with visible minority migrant professionals looking for job opportunities in Ottawa. For example, what did they find as deficit, or understand as opportunities? I think such research will facilitate an effective transition of visible minority migrants into the local work force and support the effective contribution of migrants in rebuilding their city socially and culturally and contributing to economic development.

I think creation of alternate knowledge that would bridge the understanding of unemployment and underemployment of visible minority migrants among employers, migrants, bureaucrats, and professionals in employment services and skills development within the three levels of government and the community partners would be a significant development. In this study however, employers, professionals in the field of employment and bureaucrats were not interviewed. Figure 8 below shows the main subjects that were not included and the subject matter of my study. These excluded

subjects require comprehensive future studies to bring all stakeholders' perspectives on effective integration and employment prospects of migrants in the Canadian labor market.

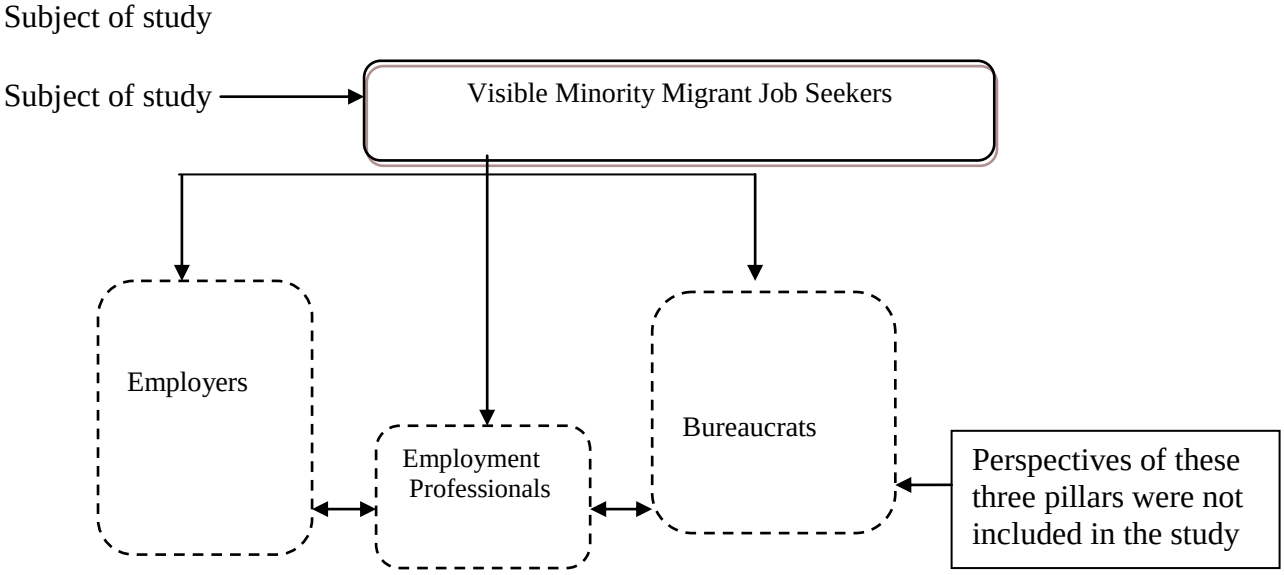

Figure 8. The four pillars in the discourse of employment assistance.

Figure 8 outlines the mutual roles of participating stakeholders (employers, professionals in the field of employment and bureaucrats) in the pursuit of providing employment support and opportunities to the visible minority migrants in Canada but these stakeholders were not included in this study, as its focus was on the firsthand accounts of visible minorities' perspective on barriers to employment. In this process, bureaucrats set up guidelines, policies and procedures for programs, services and skills development to integrate migrants into the Canadian workforce. It is a responsibility of the professional in the field of employment to develop programs that meet the criteria as determined by the bureaucrat to be funded or approved per their policies and guidelines for employment programs. The expectation is that professionals prepare migrants according to employer needs and expectations. The assumption was that bureaucrats and professionals knew the best path for

finding migrant jobs in the Canadian public and private sectors, more than migrants themselves. Therefore, migrants' views and perspectives on issues affecting them were not given any consideration as far as the employment development initiatives, programs, and services were concerned.

Challenges

The most challenging aspect of embarking on this study was the fact that I was not any different from the research participants as far as my Canadian identity, classification, qualifications, categorization, and immigration status are concerned. I have revealed as much as I could from my past experience in a crafted story of self in migration, discussed from personal experience being an immigrant, employment professional, and a classified foreign-trained professional. In this regard, Charmaz (2006) has acknowledged that the role of researcher in this case should not be limited to the form of a tool that has nothing to do with the research process, but rather an active participant in the whole research process itself. As such, she thinks that data and theories are not discovered, but rather constructed, by the researcher and the interviewee, who have given their responses according to the questions asked by the researcher.

In addition to the above challenges, there were also unforeseen obstacles encountered with individuals in employment programs at the community level because of the perception that I was a member of this particular migrant group who is still pursuing graduate studies outside Canada. My attempt to continue studying outside Canada was perceived as problematic in itself. As result, I have noticed during the process of the data collection phase that employment service providers who dealt with visible minority migrants at the community level were cautious as far as giving me access to interview their clients. Several e-mail attempts were made to managers

requesting meetings, with no success, especially when I explained the reasons I wanted to interview their participants.

Additional challenges I encountered included gaining participants' trust and access to their specific communities. Access to the communities required a recommendation from a community member or a professional relationship with colleagues, who recommended participants who were willing to share their stories. Further, participants expressed their interest after the interview sessions in extending social relations beyond the research setting, to a personal social relationship. Moreover, they indicated that making their voices heard was more important than the outcome of the research itself. In this context, personalization of their issues has taken precedence over re-integration into the local work force. Visible minority migrants in Ottawa have limited trust in bureaucrats and employment professionals, especially among those who have been seeking a job in the city for more than 15 to 30 years. The later migrants have utilized these programs for years without securing sustainable employment. In this process, I have received calls from participants who were surprised by my decision to complete my Ph.D. program outside Canada. They have a strong perception that Canadian universities are the only viable institution of learning, even though many mainstream Canadians studied in the U.S., Europe, Australia, or South America.

At the theoretical and conceptual level, I have noticed that visible minority migrants explained their experiences in context of the country (Canada), instead of the city where they resided. Their rationale was that individuals migrate to Canada as a country, not to a specific city in Canada. This type of response was analyzed based on the number of years a participant resided in the city of Ottawa for verification of whether or not the participant was discussing his or her specific experiences as they

pertained to Ottawa's local work force or another municipality of residence before moving to Ottawa.

Other factors presenting challenges during fieldwork data collection included the element of time available to discuss participants' lengthy life stories before and after migration to Canada. Participants usually became carried away by general issues of resettlement in Canada instead of employment issues under discussion. It took a constant reminder to bring participants back to focus on the question being asked and acknowledge references to experiences with socio-cultural integration in the mainstream Canadian society since arrival to Ottawa. As stated above, I think that there are a lot of outstanding resettlement issues among visible minority migrants, resulting in complicated socio-cultural and economic adjustments to living and working in Ottawa. This will require additional research that will be translated into new policy directions and customized social and employment programs. The members of migrants who participated in this study had overwhelming experience and countless stories, both personal and group, few of which have been heard so far. I think that exploring these stories further may help end systemic injustices and unfair treatment experienced in their own city because of classification along social, cultural, and ethnic factors that force them to become socially and economically marginalized and isolated.

The programs, policies and human rights acts introduced to bring about social justice and equality in the local labor force have had limited impact on the progress of recruitment of visible minority migrants.

In conclusion, this dissertation could benefit individual migrant job seekers, who would like to know more about the experiences of other migrants who came to Ottawa/Canada before them. It also provides policymakers with perceptions and

understandings of the causes of unemployment and underemployment from the migrants' perspectives. Moreover, it should serve as an effective tool for professionals in the field of employment to better understand these particular job seekers in context of their perceptions on employment barriers and systemic regulatory and socio-cultural implications. Even so, this study has mapped and coded major issues of unemployment and underemployment among these groups in the city of Ottawa and the rest of Canada. These codes and themes would be difficult to ignore in any future research concerned with the discourse of visible minority migrants' employment integration into the local labor market in Canada. The suggested future research should look at the future prospects of visible minority migrants in Canada. Most importantly, how could Canadian society effectively utilize the talents of visible minority migrants in developing their country, regardless of ethnic, religion, social, or cultural affiliation?

Social Constructionist Reflection

From the social constructionist's point-of-view, the experiences of a visible minority as described from their own perceptions could be interpreted as their own construction of what they define as the reality of the local labour market and mainstream social norm in Ottawa. These realities are interpreted through concepts in social science, psychology, or history. Because these concepts are found useful—and widely used to describe social phenomena in the culture of social science—it does not mean that these perceptions are scientifically-proven realities. Rather they are a description of what participants thought, felt, and perceived as real. For Berger and Luckmann (1966), our world consists of multiple realities within everyday life. According to Breger and Luckmann, our everyday realities are impossible to ignore; it is ordered daily and readily objectified, justified, and coordinated by language. Subsequently, normal

common sense is developed because of knowledge shared with others in the routines of everyday life. Two concepts of *otherness* perceived by the participants in this study will demonstrate the reality of social relations in Ottawa; the concepts of (a) construction of mainstream Canada, and (b) construction of a visible minority group. These concepts of otherness are fostered by the effects of globalization, which Hermans and Dimaggio (2007) have described as "…having two intercultural trends that are closely intertwined: (1) globalization as boundary crossing and leading to international and intercultural connectedness and exchange, and (2) localization as sets of customs or practices emerging from particular places, regions or countries" (p. 33). They state that "…the two trends do not exclude each other, but rather coexist and complement each other in dialectical ways" (p. 33). Therefore, a possibility of rethinking the old ways of doing things and finding alternative approaches in bridging socio-cultural and economic gap between nations and groups can be attained. For McNamee and Hosking (2012), this may mean "…opening up space for multiple local-communal forms of life and their conventional ways of relating" (p. 74). Berger and Luckmann (1966) support the above mentioned notions because of "…the very fact that all social phenomena are constructions produced historically through human activity" (p.106). Humans have historically found the practice of classification and categorization useful, however, classification and labeling according to Gergen et al. (2009), "…can have a powerful impact on how person is treated…blind us to the exceptions to the rule…and we become imprisoned by common construction of real" (p. 20). As such, I think development of self-awareness, recognition of constructions, categorization, and labels may foster communal contribution and collective sense of belonging in local communities or societies. It is such a sense of belonging that participants in this study think does not

exist, putting them at a disadvantage in their host local market For that, Gergen (2009) explained

> …our trusted patterns remain unchallenged; our lives are arranged so that we seldom stray from our zone of comfort. However, it is this kind of paralysis that is responsible for much of the antipathy separating ethnic, religious, and economic groups. *We* cannot stand the way *they* talk, the music they listen to, their slavish of worship, their silly clothes…Because of crystallized forms of relationship, our capacity to engage in productive coordination is disabled. It is far easier to remain snugly disdainful. (p. 188)

The categorization of communities, groups, or individuals based on construction of ethnicity, religion, or culture, is perceived by research participants as a factor that undermined effective contribution in their Canadian socio-economic development. Accordingly, Berger and Luckmann (1966) offer another possibility for *reconstructing our world*:

> ...as soon as an objective social world is established, the possibility of reification is never far away. The objectivity of the social world means that it confronts man as something outside of himself. The decisive question is whether he (man) still retains the awareness that, however objectivated, the social world was made by men—and, therefore, can be remade by them (p.102).

This conclusive social constructionist narrative offers a possibility of reconstruction of meanings that have been taken for granted as a social reality for centuries. Therefore, Gergen (2009) thinks that, "…most effective means of enchanting these comfortable patterns is to ally them with the discourse of Truth…to possess 'the

truth' is to be in touch with what is actually the case, beyond dispute" (p. 188). In short, social constructionists offer possibilities of an alternative approach in dealing with byproducts of constructions in social interaction and social relations through communal participation and contribution of groups, individuals, and cultures worldwide.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Letter of invitation

Help Not Wanted:
Experiences of Visible Minority Immigrants in Ottawa, ON

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Kon Kornelio Madut. I am a doctoral graduate student in the Taos/Tilburg University Ph.D. program. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements to obtain my Ph.D. in Social Science, and I would like to invite you to participate. I am studying the experiences of Ethnic Visible Minority Immigrants in the City of Ottawa in gaining employment. Participants will be asked to discuss their personal experiences in their efforts to gain meaningful employment.

The interviews will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and place, and will last between one and two hours. The interview will be audio-taped and the tapes will be reviewed, transcribed, and analyzed by only myself and my doctoral supervisor. After two years, the tapes and transcripts will be destroyed.

During the session, you may feel uncomfortable answering some of the questions. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to. Although you probably won't benefit directly from participating in this study, we hope that others in the community/society in general will benefit by my analysis of these stories.

Participation in this research is confidential and all study information will be kept in a secure location. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but your identity will not be revealed.

Taking part in the study is your decision. You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. You may also withdraw your participation at any time, and you may decide to not answer any question(s) you are not comfortable answering. I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at my cell, (613) 219-8997, or e-mail me at kon.madut@gmail.com, or contact my Taos/Tilburg faculty advisor, Dan Wulff, Ph.D., at calgary_home@shaw.ca if you have study-related questions.

Thank you for your consideration. If you would like to participate, please contact me at my number or e-mail listed below to discuss participating.

Thank you in advance,

Kon Kornelio Madut
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About Tilburg University: http://www.tilburguniversity.nl/
About the Taos Institute: http://www.taosinstitute.net/

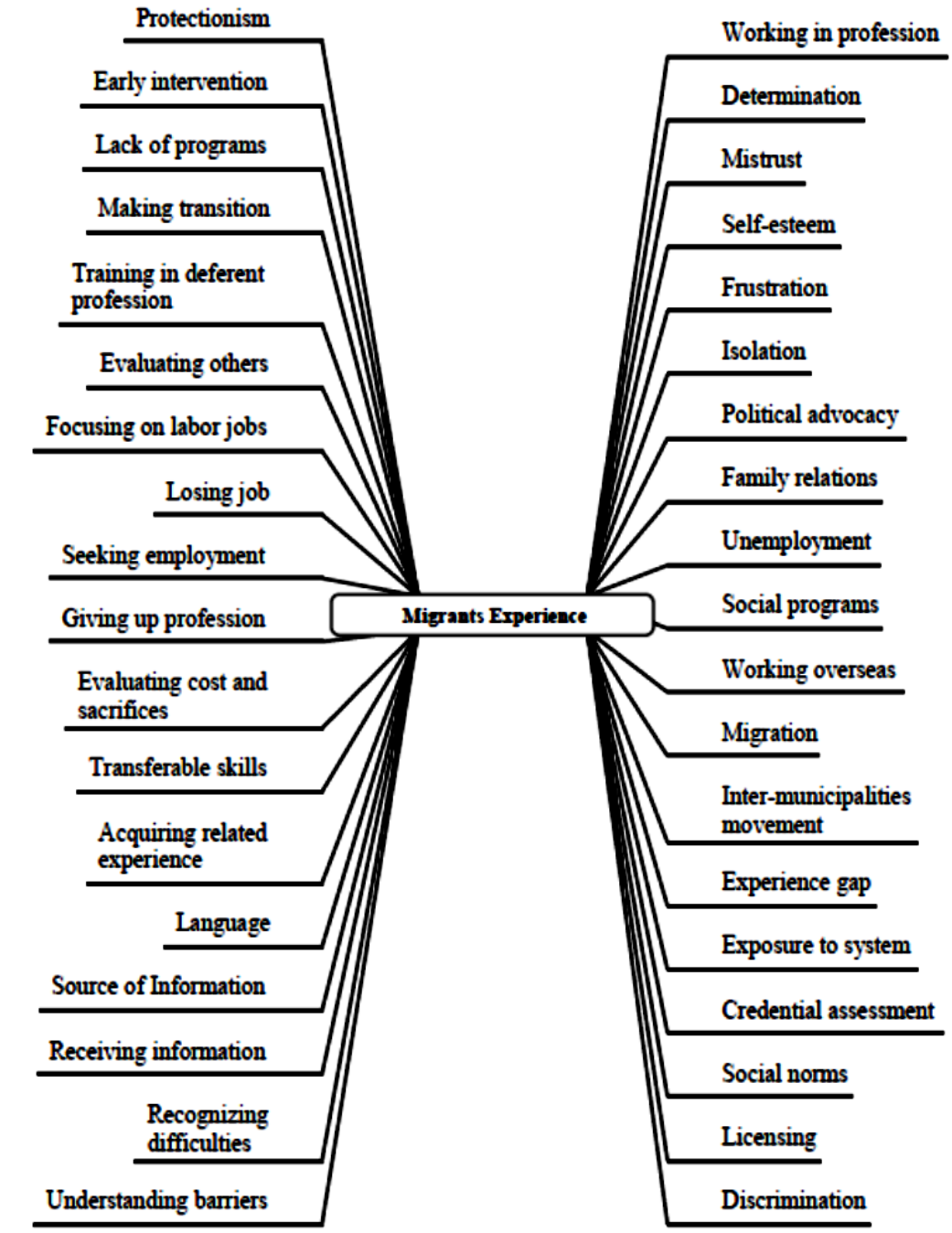
Appendix B. Interview Log Form 1

Interviews	**Setting**	**Duration**	**Location**
Interview#1	One-on-One	1.5 hour	Blue Nile Restaurant
Interview #2	One-on-One	1 hour	Ottawa Public Library
Interview #3	One-on-One	2 hours	University of Ottawa
Interview #4	One-on-One	2 hours and fifteen minutes	Participant's Home
Interview #5	One-on-One	2 hours	Participant's Home
Interview #6	One-on-One	1 hour and thirty minutes	Second Cup-Coffee Shop
Interview #7	Group	5 hours and thirty minutes	Centre for Multiculturalism
Interview #8	Group	5 hours and thirty minutes	Centre for Multiculturalism
Interview #9	Group	5 hours	Centre for multiculturalism
Interview #10	Group	5 hours	Centre for Multiculturalism

Appendix C. Initial Codes

1=Discouragement 2 =Determination 3=Feeling of demoted
4= considering alternatives 5=Language 6=Questioning professionals
7=Keeping focused 8=Rejection 9=Frustration with the system
10=Giving up a profession 11=Factors in selecting training 12 =Focusing on related experience
13=Confusion on selecting right training 14=Motivation
15=Reconsidering field of profession 16= considering retraining 17 =Job retention
18=Making decision 19 =Seeking support 20=Age
21=Nationality 22=Gender 23=Language 24= Feeling stigmatized
25=Accents 26 =Political activism 27 =Job retention
28=Migrants' profession 29=Hope 30 = Community influence
31=Understanding status 32=Lost hope 33=Sense of belonging
34=power 35 =Kids at work 36=Factors in selecting training
37=Focusing on related experience 38 =Confusion on selecting right training
39=Motivation for accepting training in different field 40=Reconsidering field of profession
41=Community satisfaction 42=Countries of origins 43=Discrimination
44=Identifying a sector 45 =Focusing on the field of profession 46=Political activism
47=Recognizing transferable skills 48=Focusing on related
49=Experience 50=Finding first job 51=Sustaining jobs
52=Seeking permanent positions 53=Protectionism 54=Employers' feedback
55=Losing job 56 =Focusing on current job 57 = Receiving information
58= Receiving contradictory 59= information 60= Receiving discouraging information
61= Finding source of information 62 =Discrimination 63= Understanding barriers
64= Understanding the cost and sacrifices 65 = Consulting professionals
66= Recognizing difficulties 67= Receiving discouraging news
68= Evaluating choices through difficulties in the field 69 = Policies and legislations
70= Point system 71= Country of origin 72= Employment as power
73=Consequences on immigrants 74= Lack of programs
75= Lack of program 76=Important of Early intervention
77=Exposure to system 78=Seeking support 79= Giving up a profession
80=Focusing on current job 81= Canadian Experience.
82=Assessment of Canadian qualification 83= Labeling

Appendix D. Mind mapping of Categories and Themes



Appendix E. Focused Codes and Categories

Person C4	**Society C5**	**Social Condition C6**
Discouragement Determination Feeling of demoted Considering alternatives Language Questioning professionals Keeping focused Rejection Frustration with the system Giving up a profession Gender Age Nationality Feeling stigmatized Country of origin	Community influence Lack of programs for immigrant professionals Lack of program Important of Early intervention Exposure to system Giving up a profession Protectionism Capitalizing on Canadian education and experience Assessment of Canadian qualification Policies and legislations Point system Canadian experience Employment as power	Primary migration Working overseas Country of origin Engaging politician Unemployment Isolation Social programs Family relations Poverty Parenting Discrimination Political and social activism Hopelessness Dependents at work
Transition C1	**Information C2**	**Skills C3**
Finding first job Identifying a sector Focusing on the field of profession Recognizing transferrable skills Focusing on related experience Finding first job Sustaining jobs Seeking permanent positions Employers' feedback	Receiving information Receiving contradictory information Receiving discouraging information Finding source of information Understanding barriers Understanding the cost and sacrifices Consulting professionals Recognizing difficulties Receiving discouraging news (about the social work program) Evaluating choices through difficulties in the field	Factors in selecting training Focusing on related experience Confusion on selecting right training Motivation for accepting training in different field Reconsidering field of profession Considering retraining Considering further training Making decision Seeking support

Appendix F. Participants' Profiles

Pseudonym	**Age**	**Gender**	**Canadian**	**International**	**Foreign Profession**	**Years in Canada**
Dr. Anne	40-45	Female	MSW	B.A Medicine	Medical Doctor	10-20 years
Angela	40-45	Female	M A	BA. Psychology	Psychologist	15-25 years
Emelda	40-45	Female	MSW	B.A. Psychology	Psychologist	15-25 years
Surgei	30-35	Male	MA Student	BA. Sociology	Sociologist	5-10 years
Robert	55-60	Male	N/A	BA. Economics	Researcher	10-15 years
Abdul	40-45	Male	SSW-Diploma	BA. Engineering	Engineer	15-25 years
Richard	45-55	Male	MA	BA. Hospitality	University Instructor	30-35 years
Doris	45-55	Female	N/A	MA Education	Teacher/Researcher	10-20 years
Pan	25-35	Male	Certificate	Diploma	Computer Technician	5-10 years
Xu	35-45	Male	Master degree	BA Business	Never worked	10-20 years