Learning how to “Skill” the Self: Citizenship and Immigrant Integration in Toronto, Canada

by

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Abstract

The underemployment of foreign-trained professional immigrants became an intense focus of Canadian immigration policy and integration programs in the 2000s, particularly in Toronto, which receives more immigrants than any other Canadian city. This thesis examines how government conceived of this ‘skilled immigrant underemployment problem’ and in turn promoted particular solutions to address it. Rather than viewing the role of government as needing to intervene in the labour market, it largely focused on reforming individual immigrants. In particular, integration programs tended to focus on “soft skills” training, which construed individual immigrants as skills deficient and as requiring training in ‘Canadian workplace culture’.

This dissertation thereby examines the ways in which immigrants were urged to sell the self, and how they were asked to become particular kinds of Canadian workers and citizens. I argue that these integration programs largely did not ameliorate un(der)employment, for they did not address the systemic discrimination new immigrants faced. Rather, I show how they increased the regulation of the un(der)employed and attempted to shape subjectivities in line with values
dubbed ‘Canadian’, which were integral to post-Fordist forms of labour and (neo)liberal rationalities of government. More specifically, I demonstrate how immaterial labour is deeply assimilatory. Rather than merely produce material products, workers must embody a brand/product, affectively and effectively, in ways that are deeply classed, racialized and gendered. These behavioural dispositions, however, were rendered technical and thus governable through a skills discourse. Additionally, I argue that these interventions reproduced a transition industry that facilitated and contributed to the cycling of new immigrants through endless job fairs and other training programs, a process through which they became flexible and entrepreneurial citizens who accepted responsibility for their own “employability”. These programs thus constituted a means of rationalizing and managing (un)employment insecurity and of reproducing and regulating flexible labor.
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Chapter 1
Introduction

The bus ride was longer than I had expected. We kept traveling further and further north up the city until we reached the desolate intersection where I needed to get off. Like so many other intersections in Toronto’s outer regions and suburbs, it was not designed with pedestrians in mind. Cars whizzed by me. When I finally got the pedestrian walk signal, I crossed the major street, searching for an address. I located the right number across a large, sparsely filled parking lot. My destination was a low-rise brown brick building, part of a strip mall indicative of the older commercial developments in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). But once I walked up to the second floor, where an agency was hosting an Engineering Job Fair, I was greeted with a cheery buzz of activity. I saw several familiar faces - students, teachers and counselors - from an immigrant settlement organization, Multicultural Immigrant Services,¹ where I had been observing and participating in employment programs for professional immigrants. I was overwhelmed, however, by the number of exhibitors, and in particular, the lack of employment recruiters. In a large, open room lined with computer-equipped cubicles, only a few tables featured displays. The majority of these exhibits represented college programs, service agencies and credential assessment services. One table was staffed by recruiters from the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC). In a smaller adjoining room there were tables and representatives from only four companies, including a government agency.

One of the five company representatives, a recruiter, had visited Multicultural Immigrant Services the previous day. Mike had come to the Enhanced Language Training and Bridge-to-Work (ELT) class for foreign-trained engineers to look for potential employees. This was a rare opportunity for professional immigrants, because few recruiters were willing to engage with organizations that exclusively offered “immigrant” candidates. Mike was heavyset, middle-aged and wore black pants, a black jacket, a white dress shirt without a tie, and two big gold rings - one a horseshoe - on each pinky. He introduced himself to the class, explaining that he represented a mining company located in Northern Ontario. He sells the cosmopolitanism of the

¹ This is a pseudonym, as are all of my informants’ names. My Chinese informants most often chose English names when they immigrated to Canada. Although I would often learn their Chinese names, I chose to use English pseudonyms since in the immigrant service sector and in their interactions with employers, recruiters etcetera, they were known by their English names.
nearest city, noting that they ‘have streets named Finland, Poland, Little Italy, Little China, Big China: it is a melting pot.’ He tells us about the city’s world-class university and how his company has branches in Saudi Arabia. ‘We buy and sell with China, Romania, the whole eastern bloc. We are progressive and the city is beautiful,’ he said. ‘You have an opportunity to get good paying jobs and advancement. If you have language skills from your country of origin we may want you to head up an operation in another country, maybe in the part you left. You have a high pay scale and good pensions and benefits.’ He then tells the story of an engineer he knows who worked his way up from mining smelts to being the president of a company in the United States. He told the business he represents that they would not have hired this engineer because he was from Pakistan. Mike thereby displays the racist nature of the labour market while self-professing to be enlightened and cosmopolitan. After he finishes his spiel in which he sells the value of diversity and the merits of his Northern city, an employment counselor, Saba, suggests we go around the room and introduce ourselves.

Neil is up first. He tells the recruiter he worked in mineral processing in China. Mike asks for clarification: ‘You did mineral processing in mining?’ ‘Yes, I worked at the China [Institute],’ he says while pointing at his resume, which trembles ever so slightly, as his hands are shaking. Neil, who was always soft-spoken, speaks slowly although clearly. He says that he has worked for over twenty years. Mike asks, ‘what did you work on?’ ‘Gold and iron.’ Mike asks Saba if he has his resume, to which she replies, ‘yes’. Next up is Felix, also from China, who introduces himself as having a PhD and training in HVAC [Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning] engineering. Leaning forward, he asks Mike: ‘Do you have work for this kind of engineering at your company?’ His question, logical and comprehensible to me, is met with silence. I wondered why Mike wasn’t answering: Does he not know what HVAC means? Or did he not understand Felix’s “accented” English? Through the awkward pause, Felix hands Mike his resume. After looking at it, Mike asks Felix if he would be able to do some energy related process I did not quite understand. Felix notes that he would. Glancing at Felix’s resume again,
Mike says, ‘it is all here, but you need to work on sequencing.’ He continues: ‘Language is a barrier, you need to be able to read and write or you are off the job because if there is a sign and they say read it and you can’t you are off the job because of safety. It is not like in the old days.’ After he goes on about this for a while, Saba comes to her client’s defense, informing Mike that Felix had been employed, but that the funding for the project he had been working on was on hold. Miro, an ELT teacher, also intervenes, telling Mike that ‘Neil and Felix are really impressive candidates.’

The introductions continue. A woman named Lily hands Mike her resume, telling him that she is pleased to meet him. ‘There is only one page,’ Mike observes. She responds by hesitantly taking a stab at “selling herself” as instructed in class: ‘I worked on improving products using new materials to save money.’ There is a pause and Mike says, ‘I see you speak Mandarin?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘You can use your ability in Mandarin, if you have English, then it can be used.’ After everyone had finished introducing him or herself, Mike notes:

I need to say that when you look at resumes all the time they all start to look the same. You know, I would like a half a paragraph on who they are: do they have children, their age etc. Just so I get to see them as a person. One page is not enough, I get ones four and five pages long, so two would be a good number; one page doesn’t tell me enough. If I have a stack of resumes up to here (he places his hand above his head), and I get a resume with a name I can’t pronounce, you know... I would like to know about your character, social clubs etc. People from the Philippines often have a picture attached; it’s personalized. I think this person looks nice, or maybe they look like Jack the Ripper, but usually they don’t. And you need to talk about continuous education. You have to be a good employee, a good Canadian. What church work do you do? Scouts? I want to see your hobbies. If I have two people with equal skills, both top of their class [unclear] I’ll look at their sports hobbies. If one plays tennis and the other football and hockey, I’ll choose the one who plays team sports because I know he can be a team player. Well I wish you well. You need to change your resume, spiff it up a bit or get Saba to spiff it up. You need to sell a product, smile. Win them over with a smile.

Beth, a settlement counselor, retorts, ‘well you offer a different perspective about personal information. We don’t recommend someone share personal information normally because of the chances of getting exploited.’ Mike replies, ‘well the chances of getting exploited never go away,

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3 At this point, most of the students would have worked on refining their resume with an employment counselor. The latter would have already proof read them and worked on the format.
but we need to break down barriers. [He puts on an imitative voice.] What you’re from Albania? I would never want to go to Albania? You are a selling a product.’ The settlement staff thanks Mike for coming and Saba tells the class to let her know if they are interested. Mike interjects, ‘well nothing is going to happen immediately.’ Rather than contacting him, he suggests they go through Saba. As he stands to leave he says to the counselors, ‘I thought we would be further down the road’, but he encourages the class to keep working on themselves. Otherwise, he warns, they will ‘end up in dead-end jobs – you don’t want to spend five years at Dunkin’ Donuts.’ Miro, the ESL teacher, replies,

My dad was an engineer in another country and he was not good at marketing himself, he just had a resume and gave it with his information, but here we need to learn to sell ourselves. We [Multicultural Immigrant Services] have two-hour workshops and we learn how to sell ourselves and you can say, ‘yeah yeah I get it,’ but it is difficult to look at yourself as a product. These people are smart, but you need to change the way you are looking at yourself, culturally. It doesn’t happen overnight.

Sarkis, an Armenian electrical engineer who emigrated from Syria, jokes ‘to say you must sell yourself in my country does not have good meaning.’ Miro jovially gives the punch line: ‘like prostitute.’ But, Miro insists, ‘you still need to role play.’ Saba tells Mike that ‘they do have a two-page format for resumes, but maybe they haven’t all had time to work on their resumes.’ It seemed to me that the settlement staff were hurriedly trying to save face. After Mike leaves, another settlement counselor, Samantha, reminds the class that they have the skills, so they need to come across as confident. Although the settlement workers defended their clients, particularly when Mike denigrated their English and asked for personal information, they also simultaneously constructed their clients as problematically not confident enough. They did not sell themselves adequately; they did not embody the right ‘cultural’ values. They did not connect with Mike or convince him that they had the right kind of attitudes.

At the end of the job fair the following day, I walked across the expansive grey parking lot to the bus stop with Neil, Lily and Sarkis. They all expressed their dismay at the having come so far, for so few job opportunities. It was yet another disappointment: the promise of making connections with employers never seemed to pan out. Lily, dressed smartly in a black pantsuit, with her hair tied neatly back into a ponytail, wore discouragement on her face. The recruiter, Mike, had dismissed her and the job fair was not teeming with other opportunities to ‘sell the self.’ Expectations for work in Canada seemed further and further out of reach. While some like
Lily were discouraged, even depressed, others were angry at a broken system: a system that recruited them based on skills that would not be recognized in a systemically discriminatory labour market. Unfortunately, settlement counselors and employers often interpreted such anger as ‘another barrier to finding employment.’ As one skills training expert, speaking at a settlement agency, stated: ‘Try not to let your frustrations show, for employers don’t hire problems, they only hire solutions.’

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The underemployment of foreign-trained professional immigrants became an intense focus of Canadian immigration policy and integration programs in the 2000s, particularly in Toronto, which receives more immigrants than any other Canadian city. This thesis examines how government conceived of this ‘skilled immigrant underemployment problem’ and in turn promoted particular solutions to address it. Rather than viewing the role of government as needing to intervene in the labour market, it largely (although not exclusively) focused on reforming individual immigrants. In particular, integration programs tended to focus on “soft skills” training, for professional recruitment processes in the Canadian labour market - as Mike illustrates - require one to “sell the self” using culturally appropriate scripts. Such training thereby construed individual immigrants as skills deficient and as requiring training in ‘Canadian workplace culture’. Yet the opportunities to perform an “appropriate” or assimilated self were few and far between for new immigrants. Very few employers were willing to hear the 30-second commercials of immigrants from “Third” or “Second” world countries for they assumed, a priori, that their foreign credentials and work experience were inadequate. The few who were willing to listen sold the right diversity discourse - just as Mike espoused the value of cosmopolitanism and multilingualism - yet ultimately reproduced various forms of parochialism. They might be willing to hire immigrants, but only if they walked and talked like ‘good Canadians’: they needed to be as white, “western” and middle-upper class as possible, embodying the right kinds of values, affects, behaviours and personalities.

This dissertation thus examines the ways in which immigrants were urged to sell the self, and how they were asked to become particular kinds of Canadian workers and citizens through

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4 In 2006, 45.7% of Toronto’s population was foreign born, with the top five immigrant source countries being India, China, Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka (Stasiulis et al. 2011:91). Toronto also received 40.4% of Canada’s recent immigrants between 2001 and 2006. Vancouver received 13.7% and Montreal 14.9% (Statistics Canada 2006).
programs for ‘internationally educated professionals’ (IEPs). I argue that these integration programs largely did not ameliorate un(der)employment, for they did not address the systemic discrimination new immigrants faced. However, taking my cue from Willis (1977) and Ferguson (1994), I do not merely assess whether or not these programs were successful according to their own criteria, but rather I focus on what their actual effects were. In particular, I show how these programs increased the regulation of the un(der)employed and attempted to shape subjectivities in line with values dubbed “Canadian”, which were integral to post-Fordist forms of labour, and (neo)liberal rationalities of government. I show how the post-Fordist labour market, through its valuing of immaterial labour (Berardi 2009, Hardt and Negri 2000) is deeply assimilatory. Rather than merely produce material products, workers must embody a brand/product, affectively and effectively, in ways that are deeply classed, racialized and gendered. These behavioural dispositions, however, were rendered technical and thus governable through a skills discourse. Additionally, I argue that these interventions were embedded in and reproduced a “transition industry” (Ehrenreich 2005) that thrived on the need to improve and flexibilize the un- and under-employed in the regime of flexible accumulation (Harvey 1989). More specifically, they facilitated the cycling of new immigrants through endless training programs and unpaid forms of work, a process through which they became flexible and entrepreneurial citizens who accepted responsibility for their own “employability”. Employment counselors tried to encourage new immigrants, like Lily, to hope for better futures. Hope or future-oriented anticipation, rather than anger, was the appropriate affect and temporal alignment that facilitated continuous improvement of the self through life-long learning, and endless self-commodification, through which one became more “Canadian”. Such citizen-workers were not created overnight or after a two-hour workshop. Rather, becoming “integrated” into the Canadian labour market was for many new immigrants an expensive, distressing journey that included many desolate intersections and long, winding bus rides.

In this introduction, I will briefly outline how the ‘skilled immigrant underemployment problem’ is constructed and addressed, before examining how these programs aimed to teach new immigrants how to labour, in line with the demands of immaterial labour. I will then

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5 Flexible accumulation is David Harvey’s (1989) term for the regime of capitalist accumulation, with a particular system of social and political regulation, that followed the oil crisis of 1973. This shift entailed confronting the rigidities of Fordism by, for example, increasing the insecurity of workers, by focusing on economies of scope rather than scale, etc.
examine how these programs also encouraged immigrants to accept the insecure and precarious nature of the post-Fordist labour regime. Finally, I provide summaries of this dissertation’s chapters.

“Surgeon in that country, taxi driver in this one? We need to talk”: Canada’s ‘Skilled Immigrant Underemployment Problem’

Since the 1990s, the ideal immigrant privileged by immigration policy has been the highly skilled immigrant, who is viewed as the key to economic growth and national prosperity. With economic restructuring in the 1980s and early 1990s, which involved a shift towards developing service and information sectors, the Government of Canada reconfigured its labour and immigration policies to address a perceived “skills dilemma”: Canada was seen as needing more highly skilled workers to develop innovative industries in the increasingly competitive “new global economy.” The government’s perception of a skilled labour shortage continues, due to Canada’s negative population growth. Canada’s aging population and decreasing birthrate mean that immigration plays, in the government’s view, a key role in maintaining the health and wealth of the national economy and citizenry. For instance, a larger tax-base is needed, as baby boomers are projected to become a drain on the health-care system. This demographic discourse is the dominant discourse through which the government justifies high immigration rates. The question is not whether Canada should have immigration, but rather which type of immigrant/future-citizen should be admitted. Immigration policy, in line with neoliberal discourses, aims to capitalize on international human capital, casting the ideal immigrant-citizen as a self-sufficient entrepreneur who contributes to, rather than draws on, Canada’s welfare.

In the 2000s, there was a growing concern over the underemployment of such skilled immigrants among academics and the non-profit sector, among others, particularly in urban areas, where the rise in chronic low-income poverty was concentrated among the immigrant

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6 “Skilled” here connotes professional. I trace this historical shift in more detail in Chapter 3.
7 Here I am talking about the federal government, which controls immigration policy with the exception of Québec, which has had control of its own immigrant selection since 1991.
8 The terms “the new global economy” and “skills dilemma” are taken from policy documents, such as People and Skills in a New Global Economy (1990).
population (Picot and Sweetman 2005:15). Despite immigrants’ increasing skill levels, their representation in knowledge occupations\(^9\) was lower in 1996 than in 1981 (Reitz 2007). Only 35% of recent male and 28% of recent female immigrants (arriving in the previous five years) with bachelor’s degrees were working in knowledge occupations in 1996, compared to 59% of native-born men and 57% of native-born women with bachelor’s degrees (Reitz 2007:51-52). Furthermore, recent immigrants with university degrees who immigrated to Canada between 2000 and 2004 earned $27,020 less ($51,656-$24,636) than their Canadian-born counterparts (Satzewich and Liodakis 2013:135). Scholars have concluded that the earnings of recent immigrants have steadily declined since the 1980s:


Furthermore, approximately one-fifth of immigrants entering Canada during the 1990s had chronically low incomes\(^10\) at a rate of 2.5 times higher than those who were Canadian-born (Picot et al. 2007). By the early 2000s, “the face of the chronically poor immigrant” changed when 52% were in the skilled economic class, and 41% had university degrees (Picot et al. 2007:5).\(^11\)

The doctor or the PhD driving a cab has arguably become the most prominent figure of the ‘skilled immigrant under-employment problem’ in Toronto. For instance, I encountered a billboard while driving in Toronto (in September 2008) that displayed the following: “Surgeon in that country, cab driver in this one? We need to talk.” This advertisement for CFRB, a local talk-radio station, used the underemployment problem as one of many hot topics used to entice

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\(^9\) Knowledge-based occupations, according to Statistics Canada, include professional fields such as engineering, health and education, in which a high proportion of workers have a university education (Reitz 2007:51).

\(^10\) Picot el al. define chronic low income as “being in low income at least four of the first five years in Canada” (2007:8). They define low income as a family income below 50% of the median income of the total population.

\(^11\) This poverty seems to be quite persistent, for after ten years the rate of chronic low income was only marginally lower (Picot et al. 2007:8). At the same time, the low-income rate among the Canadian-born decreased. In Toronto, between 1990 and 2000 the low-income rate rose 1.9 per cent in spite of stronger economic conditions (Picot and Sweetman 2005:14).
potential listeners with their slogan “We need to talk”. During my fieldwork there was a great deal of talk about the underemployment of skilled immigrants in the media, particularly in Toronto, which receives about 40 per cent of the nation’s immigrants (Boudreau et al. 2009:85). There was also talk about how immigrants’ talk was the problem: language was often construed as the key to labour market integration (see Chapters 5 and 8).

In the mid-2000s, all levels of government committed to investing in immigrants’ integration into the labour market. At the federal level, in 2004, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) announced that it would provide funding to develop improved foreign credential recognition procedures, provide Enhanced Language Training and Bridge to Work (ELT), and an information portal for prospective immigrants. Through these programs, the government aimed to help the Canadian workforce be “adaptable and resilient,” “flexible and efficient,” and to build workplaces that “are productive, innovative and competitive” (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada 2005). ELT, which promised advanced and sector-specific language training for professional immigrants, addressed CIC’s characterization of the ‘underemployment problem’ as, in large part, a language problem. CIC argued that some immigrants “do not have the language skills in either English or French to be able to use their skills optimally. Increasing the current levels of language training would help realize the human capital gained through immigration.”

I analyzed these language training programs ethnographically in Toronto, Canada, for over a year, in 2008 and 2009, in addition to various other bridging programs for skilled immigrants (see Chapter 2 for a more detailed account of these programs). Despite these programs, the 2006 skilled immigrant cohort fared worse than the 1996 cohort (Reitz et al. 2011), many of whom would have been my informants in 2008 and 2009. Why were these programs not effective? And what, then, did they accomplish?

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12 This dissertation focuses on English, not French, although these programs are also offered in French. For information on the commodification of French in Canada, see da Silva et al. (2007).


14 However, although many highly educated immigrants experience un(der)employment, “statistics consistently show they do better than less educated and unskilled immigrants. Many well-educated immigrants achieve a significant degree of success in Canada; as noted, in 2006, over half of university-educated immigrants worked in professional or semi-professional fields and another 23% worked as managers, supervisors, or in other skilled occupations” (Reitz et al. 2011). Consequently, the government was still invested in recruiting skilled immigrants, but it was also invested in trying to help them increase their employability in order to maximize the
Learning to Labour in Canada

This thesis examines the side effects of employment programs for skilled immigrants (particularly ELT); that is, what they actually accomplished, although they failed to ameliorate un(der)employment. While Ferguson (1994) argues that development projects in Lesotho consistently failed to achieve their stated object (end poverty), he does not primarily aim to show that development is wrong, but rather “that the institutionalized production of certain kinds of ideas about Lesotho has important effects” (xv). For instance, development reduces political and structural causes of poverty to the level of individual values, attitudes, and motivations, thereby casting political problems as technical ones in need of development intervention (Ferguson 1994:180). In Lesotho, development was thus “a machine for reinforcing and expanding the exercise of bureaucratic state power” almost invisibly “under cover of a neutral, technical mission to which no one can object” (Ferguson 1994:180). Development programs erroneously assumed that the state was neutral: it was “seen as a machine for delivering services; but never as a way of ‘governing’ people” (Ferguson 1994:225). Ferguson calls development’s expansion of state power and its simultaneous depoliticizing effect “the anti-politics machine” (1994:21).

Similarly, while the ‘skilled immigrant under-employment problem’ was systemic and structural, the majority of programs for skilled immigrants were designed to address individual deficiencies. In particular, as Chapter 5 shows, individuals’ language skills and knowledge of Canadian workplace culture were viewed as in need of improvement. Here socio-cultural difference and underemployment get constructed as cultural and skills deficiency problems in need of intervention. Through integration programs, and in everyday practice in ELT classrooms, political issues (e.g. discrimination and the nature of the labour market) became cast as apolitical technical problems (e.g. needing to be addressed through individual skills training).

Ferguson finds Paul Willis’ *Learning to Labour* helpful in developing the above argument. He notes that Willis (1977) rejects the liberal view of education, in which it is an instrument for creating an egalitarian society and equal opportunity. However, he does not returns their human capital made to the nation as well as decrease their integration costs (e.g. poverty) to urban areas as well.

15 Ferguson explores one rural development project, the Thaba-Tseka Project, funded mainly by the World Bank and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).
merely subscribe to a Marxist critique of education either, in which schools are established by the capitalist state to reproduce labour power. Willis goes beyond the reproduction thesis, by examining how reproduction occurs through education ethnographically. He found that a school achieves what reproduction theory suggests but in an unexpected way, through British “working class lads’” resistance, “in a world that is always structured but never determined” (Ferguson 1994:13). This thesis is also about how social actors, through their entanglements with training and educational institutions, learn to labour. Like Willis and Ferguson, I aim to address how labour power is reproduced, often in unexpected ways. Whereas Willis examined the prototypical working class of industrial capitalism and the Fordist era, learning to labour in advanced capitalist and post-Fordist times requires a different kind of labour. In particular, the latter requires one become appropriately “flexible.” Furthermore, learning to labour in “the knowledge-based economy” requires that skilled immigrants fit appropriately with the demands of immaterial labour (that which produces a service or knowledge) by embodying a particular kind of worker. Immigrant integration is a particularly productive site of “friction” (Tsing 2005) for examining the dominant or common-sense notions of what constitutes desirable workers and labour in Canada, since employment counselors often made implicit values explicit for new immigrants. Drawing on Willis and Ferguson’s insights, I explicate how, in Toronto, Canada, integration programs for skilled immigrants reproduce social inequality and become a means of regulating labour.

I also employ the analytic of citizenship since “successful” immigrant integration is understood in terms of what constitutes a good and desirable Canadian citizen. By prescribing particular subjectivities and values required by employers, skills training for new immigrants reproduced governmental technologies of citizenship; or rather, “discourses, programs, and other tactics aimed at making individuals … capable of self-government” (Cruikshank 1999:1),

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16 I use this term because it is prevalent in government documents and discourse. I do not mean to imply, however, that Canada’s entire economy is “knowledge based”.

17 I mean government in the broadest sense as per the governmentality approach that confounds binary oppositions between the state and civil society. In the governmentality frame the state “is but one node (although at times a “coordinating” node) in a horizontal network of institutions and individuals through which power is exercised, and not the vertically highest institution in which power inheres” (Sharma and Gupta 2006:25). I understand the state to be a “multilayered, contradictory, translocal ensemble of institutions, practices, and people” (Sharma and Gupta 2006:6). Or rather, the idea of the state is reproduced through practices, institutions and representations (Sharma and Gupta 2006:5).
by conducting people to conduct themselves (Foucault 1991, Dean 1999). Although the prescription of certain norms may be well-intentioned, for mastering certain kinds of scripts and personhood may be essential for obtaining professional employment (see Roberts 2013), such practices are nevertheless simultaneously attempts to “constitut(e) and regulat(e) citizens: that is, strategies for governing the very subjects whose problems they seek to redress” (Cruikshank 1999:2).

These interventions constitute an “anti-politics machine”, for the political nature of skilled immigrants’ un(der)employment is constantly de-politicized in practice as a technical skills deficit problem, which individual immigrants are responsible for ameliorating. To understand these programs we must also situate them within Canada’s restructured neoliberalized welfare-state, which aims not to grant immigrants training or a job as a social right, but rather as a means of enabling them to govern themselves better. Under neoliberal rule, becoming “integrated” is, in part, about fostering the right kind of relation to the self, the state, and the economy. For instance, I show how neoliberalism, as faith in the freedom of the subject through the market, was reproduced in everyday practice. Integration programs for skilled immigrants thereby played a role in encouraging citizen-workers to accept responsibility for their own un(der)employment.

Faith in the free-market, however, did not go unchallenged. Throughout the dissertation, I show how new immigrants often critiqued the government for recruiting them, only to abandon them when it came to obtaining employment. Scholars have emphasized the need to examine the limits as well as “the indigenization of neoliberalism in different places, the spatial unevenness of its spread, and, perhaps most importantly, its articulations and intersections with other political-cultural formations and governing projects” (Kingfisher and Maskovsky 2008:115, see also Harvey 2005). Rather than view neoliberalism as “a unitary external structural force”, they “are concerned with the diversity of actually existing neoliberalism” (Kingfisher and Maskovsky 2008:120). Studies of government have also been critiqued for not being ethnographic, that is, for not demonstrating how governmental programs unfold “on the ground”, and for not investigating their unintended effects as social actors (re)produce, negotiate or contest governmental tactics (Li 2007, O’Malley et al. 1997). In line with these insightful critiques, I show how many of my informants were simultaneously implicated in and reproduced neoliberal discourse, even as they challenged it. Like Kingfisher and Maskovsky (2008), I thus “treat
neoliberalism as a [contested] process rather than a \textit{fait accompli}” (115). For instance, unlike in Ferguson’s context, in the case described here, government workers were more aware of the situation on “the ground” than the development planners in Lesotho ever were (see also Li 2007). It was not that settlement workers were unaware of larger systemic political and economic barriers and the limitedness of their interventions. But outside of their mandate, government workers only focused on reforming the individual in everyday practice, which was often at odds with their own intentions and beliefs (e.g. that underemployment is a structural issue).

Also distinct from the 1970s-era situation that Ferguson describes, “the government/state” is not seen to be the proper deliverer of development; rather, it is to be achieved through public-private partnerships. As Li points out, “by the 1990s, development experts recognized that bureaucracies were often flawed, but treated this, once again, as a problem that could be rectified by technical interventions” (2007:134). As a result of welfare-state restructuring in the 1990s, non-profit or private partners in service delivery became governable in new ways. These organizations and their integration programs were “judged according to...[their] capacity to produce results” and the state “governed indirectly, through contracts, targets, performance measures, monitoring and audit” (Rose 1999:151). In this sense the governors were governable as well through “the control of control” (Rose 1999:154). I explore how settlement workers were governed by funding criteria and audit mechanisms in Chapter 4. I argue that an unintended effect of such control of control was reduced quality of services. Audit mechanisms not only engendered precarious work conditions for settlement staff, but they also created a series of contradictions between short-term funding criteria and clients’ long-term settlement goals. Attempts to meet audit targets created a less “flexible” and more “precarious” sector, in which the “governors” were also governed. In Chapters 5, 6 and 7, I explore what kind of worker-citizen these programs tried to create.

To unpack this paradigmatic ideal worker, I will first examine theories of immaterial labour – privileged by Canada’s so-called knowledge-based economy – before discussing post-Fordist modes of governing through flexibility. Bourdieu refers to this as flexploitation, “a mode of domination based on the \textit{institution of insecurity}, domination through precariousness” (2003:29, cited in Kingfisher and Maskovsky 2008:117).

\textbf{Governing the Soul at Work: Desiring Immaterial Labour}
“Economics are the method, but the object is to change the soul.” Margaret Thatcher (cited in Harvey 2005:23).

Learning to labour entails the production of particular kinds of workers through post-Fordist, neoliberal modes of governance (cf. Molé 2012). The production of subjects, understood in terms of Foucault’s notion of governmentality, can also be examined through a Marxist lens “as the capitalist appropriation and exploitation of labor power for maximizing production through free individuals choosing to work for a wage” (Song 2009:xix). In particular, the knowledge-based sectors of Canada’s economy, in which professional immigrants seek work, predominately requires immaterial labor “that produces an immaterial good, such as a service, knowledge, or communication” (Hardt 1999:94). Such immaterial labor is not new; rather, affective immaterial labour “has long been invisible to capitalist calculations of value by virtue of its apparently ‘natural’ feminine qualities” (Freeman 2011:359). Materialist feminists, however, have expanded the category of labour (Weeks 2007:233, see also Harmann 1979, Rubin 1975, Freeman 2011), recognizing “productive and value-producing activities outside of the formal labour process and the walls of the factory” (Adkins and Jokinen 2008:140), through extensive research on unpaid and low-paid domestic and caring work. For instance, Arlie Hochschild’s The Managed Heart (1983), which studied “pink-collar workers” (e.g. flight attendants), demonstrated how such work required feminized emotional labour, resulting in the commodification of subjectivity and feeling as well as “the colonization of life by work” (Weeks 2007:245).

What is new, however, is its extension across wide sectors of the post-Fordist economy (Hardt 1999:97), as the social core has shifted “from the domain of manual labor to that of cognitive labor” (Berardi 2009:79). As Adkins and Jokinen note, “it is now not simply women who are engaged in the production of value outside the formal work process but whole populations” (2008:142). Whereas the industrial labor exemplified by the Fordist factory had little relation to pleasure or communication, immaterial labour “takes the mind, language, and creativity as its primary tools for the production of value” (Berardi 2009:21, 84). When labour is interchangeable, performed merely in exchange for wages and consisting of selling one’s time, it is depersonalized (Berardi 2009:74). Whereas, “industrial factories used the body, forcing it to leave the soul outside of the assembly line, so that the worker looked like a soulless body. The
immaterial factory asks instead to place our very souls at its disposal” (Berardi 2009:192). In short, immaterial labor harnesses a worker’s entire being for its productive potential. In the economy of cognitive and immaterial labour, the division between work and life diminishes and “the exploitation of labour power extends beyond the boundaries of work into social and personal investments” (Coté and Pybus 2007, see also Lazzarato 1996): desire and self-realization are captured by economic enterprise (Berardi 2009:96).

Labour-power, or one’s capacity for labour, is transformed “into what managerial theories call human capital, harnessing and putting to work not an abstract, general force of labor, but the particularity, the unique combination of psychic, cognitive and affective powers I bring to the labor process” (Smith 2009:13-14). For instance, the line between work and life for skilled immigrants was blurred as work-on-the-self amounts to human capital – one’s capacity for labour (Urciuoli 2008, Lazarrato 2011). The belief that work should be the site of desire or self-improvement was held by employment and settlement counselors and is widespread in the current work regime, a belief or discourse that has very material effects. A plethora of experts, institutions and programs accordingly aim to change the “relation of individuals to their productive work” (Donzelot 1991:251, Rose 1999), urging new immigrants to find “pleasure in work” as a “means towards self-realization” (Donzelot 1991:251).

Such post-Fordist forms of labour thus constitute a politics of life, a biopolitics that involves the production and regulation of subjectivity (Berardi 2009:190, Rose 1999). When work is a means for self-fulfillment, “each employee will thus work for the advance of the enterprise” (Rose 1999:56). In this dissertation, I show how government steers immigrants to maximize their potential in labour and also in life. This (biopolitical) will to maximize one’s potential is reproduced in discourses of “life-long learning” and of “skills upgrading”, which confound the boundaries between work and work-on-the-self. I explore this belief in detail in Chapter 6 through an analysis of “survival jobs” and “success stories”. The former convey a

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18 By soul Berardi refers to “range of emotional, affective and aesthetic textures and experiences that are deployed in the contemporary experience of work” (Smith 2009:16).
19 For Foucault “biopower is the power of the emerging forces of governmentality to create, manage, and control populations-the power to manage life” (Hardt 1999:98). Hardt, however, critiques Foucault’s conception of biopower for it “only poses the situation from above, as the prerogative of a sovereign power. When we look at the situation from the perspective of the labor involved in biopolitical production, on the other hand, we can begin to recognize biopower from below” (Hardt 1999:98).
sense of lost or wasted potential, whereas the latter promises self-fulfillment for it fully utilizes one’s human capital: it is where one is most free (Smith 2009). I demonstrate how immigrants’ work on the self entailed “skills” development (Chapter 5), and how they are encouraged to orient themselves temporally towards the future through a logic of investment (Chapter 6). In the post-Fordist economy, surplus value also “resides in the discrepancy between paid and unpaid work” (Lotringer 2004:12). Un(der)employed immigrants were thus urged to maximize their potential through unpaid work, by endlessly cultivating their capacity to improve and to labour. In Chapter 7 I demonstrate how retraining and unpaid labour, in the form of volunteering, constituted a dedication to being “employable”. All of these chapters illustrate how the line between work and life is blurred in varying ways, indicative of a fundamental restructuring of the labour market under post-Fordism (Adkins 2012, 2005).

These theories of immaterial and cognitive labour, however, largely do not take into account sociospatial and sociocultural barriers to recognizing one’s value, which are often inscribed in one’s soul and embodied in one’s “epidermic capital”. I ask: How are the affective post-Fordist and neoliberal subjectivities that are reproduced in governmental programs differentiated, along gendered, classed and racialized lines, in both their imaginings and in their effects in Toronto, Canada?

When value is affectively and relationally determined, the intelligibility of one’s soul to particular audiences matters, for it cannot be segmented from work. Furthermore, one’s value is not only inscribed in one’s soul, but also in one’s body. Witz et al. (2003) argue that in focusing on the feeling self, analyses of emotional labour tend to lose sight of the worker as an embodied self, even though Hochschild’s work continually evokes embodiment in its discussion of the management of facial and bodily display (36). They thus use the term aesthetic labour, rather than emotional labour, to foreground “the stylization of workplace performances” (Witz et al. 2003:34). For Hancock and Tyler “aesthetic experience can pertain to any sensuous, embodied experience. It is a means by which we obtain knowledge of the world, not purely through intellectual cognition, but through the immediacy of our sensual faculties and the impression these sense perceptions leave on us” (2008:203). In the new economy, particularly in service work, the presentation of the (embodied) self should be a material signifier of corporate values and aspirations (Hancock and Tyler 2008:206). Aesthetic labour, then, is “the mobilization,

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20 The term epidermic capital is from Gregory 2007.
development and commodification of embodied ‘dispositions’” (Witz et al. 2003:37). Aesthetic and affective dispositions are privileged by the knowledge economy and “are taking on increasing significance in comparison with its more technical aspects” (Adkins 2000:206). Such dispositions, however, “are not equally distributed socially, but fractured by class, gender, age and racialized positions or locations” (Witz et al. 2003:41). Indeed, to gatekeepers in the Canadian labour market, many new immigrants did not embody the right aesthetic or emotional value, as Mike illustrated in the vignette that opened this chapter. Value, here, is not created through accumulated labour time, but through semiosis, through subjective evaluations of affective or aesthetic performances and through embodiment of a brand that is ‘sellable’.

Since individual workers were required to sell themselves by embodying a brand that fits with potential employers’ “cultural” values, integration programs for professional immigrants tried to teach new immigrants how to perform an appropriate notion of the self and how to embody the ideal (professional) worker. They tried to do so by teaching new immigrants how to convey these affects by focusing on the importance of networking and cooperation (teamwork), and of language and communication. For instance, new immigrants were urged to convey their love of work, and that they were good team players. This dissertation thus tracks how integration is a site in which embodied affect, personality, knowledge, and experience are problematized. The attempts to form the ideal worker in integration programs were deeply assimilatory, for they entailed trying to change and commodify one’s personality, one’s ‘self’, one’s dispositions, and even one’s very soul. However, they were not problematized as such for the economy and the labour market were still envisioned as separate from intimate “cultural” spaces, despite neoliberal ideologies. For instance, many workplaces encouraged the sharing of “cultures” in reified, homogenized forms so long as their “diverse” workers had the right soul and embodied the right kind of value(s). Whose bodies and souls, then, are recognized?

Selling Canadian Diversity

Like other settler colonies, such as Australia, Canada has adopted a pluralist national identity, as a flexible strategy to manage a diverse population (Mackey 2002:13). With official policies of multiculturalism and bilingualism, the state sanctions cultural difference (Mackey 2002:8). Canada’s international reputation as a tolerant and benevolent multicultural nation is a source of national pride and identity. Whereas Australia presents its official policy of
multiculturalism as a departure from an overtly racist past (Hage 1994, Mackey 2002). “in Canada the cultural pluralism of the present is often represented as on a natural continuum with Canada’s history…of tolerance” (Mackey 2002:24). However, as I discuss in Chapter 3, not only does this account erase the colonization of aboriginal peoples, official *Multiculturalism in a Bilingual Framework* constructs the unmarked dominant core culture of the nation as European – Anglophone and Francophone (Mackey 2002, Thobani 2007, Haque 2012). Furthermore, bilingualism was introduced as a means of managing Québec’s Quiet Revolution and maintaining white Anglo cultural, economic and political dominance (Mackey 2002). Multiculturalism was also a response to “ethnic groups” calls for inclusion into the original *Bilingual and Bicultural Framework*. *Multiculturalism in a Bilingual Framework* managed difference by constructing a hierarchy in which the core culture – as a whole way of life – encompasses fragments of subordinate folk “multicultures”. “Multicultures”, which are ethnicized and racialized, are united by common languages, English and French. Language is thus a terrain through which belonging to the Canadian nation is often constructed.

Although it is continually constructed as in-crisis, Canada’s national identity is thus not managed by attempts to erase difference. Rather,

In Canada, cultural ‘others’ – and Canada’s supposed tolerance – become central pillars of the ideology of nationhood, necessary for managing relations between Québec and Canada in articulating a national identity which differentiates Canada from the USA. While cultural difference and pluralism may be highlighted to distinguish from external ‘others’, they are also managed *internally* so as to reproduce the structuring of differences around a dominant culture (Mackey 2002:16).

The discourse of tolerance “reproduces dominance (of those with the power to tolerate)” (Mackey 2002:16, see also Brown 2006). For example, the 1995 Québec referendum – which asked voters whether Québec should proclaim national sovereignty and become an independent state – “brought definitions of Canadian identity to the fore, and nationalist discourses mobilized the notion of tolerance and pluralism as a central and persistent feature of English Canadian identity” (Mackey 2002:14). The demands of French Canada were “equated with intolerance and racism and *English* Canada, in opposition, is constructed as the opposite, a modern tolerant nation. English Canada transcends the particularisms of Francophone ‘ethnic nationalism’ and becomes a universal model of civic nationhood” (Mackey 2002:15). The construction of limited cultural difference and not just its erasure are thus integral to Canadian identity (Mackey
Consequently, Mackey argues that “one of the essential features of Canadian nation-building is its flexibility and ambiguity” (2002:18). However, “civic culture”, which is presented as neutral, unmarked, tolerant and inclusive, is conditional upon speaking English (outside of Québec), particularly for inclusion into the labour market.

The professional labour market is also a site where difference, except in very limited forms, is not tolerated (Ameeriar 2012). The values of “Canadian workplace culture” are not viewed as ethnically cultural and work thus evades being seen as a contested terrain of assimilation. That such integration requires assimilation – at the level of one’s soul – is constantly highlighted by the need to learn “Canadian workplace culture”, yet at the same time disavowed as a form of ethnic/cultural assimilation. Yet, “the state of being unmarked (and therefore ‘normal’ or ‘ordinary’) is both constitutive of, and an effect of, structural advantage and power, and the cultural authority that that power brings” (Mackey 2002:21). The unmarked and unnamed middle-class whiteness of “Canadian workplace culture” is seemingly invisible by virtue of being normatively Canadian/civic.

As Mackey points out, in comparison to other countries “the exclusions of Canadian nationalist discourse are subtler, less obvious” (2002:8). In particular, Toronto, a city that sells its diversity as an asset and which is dubbed “the most multicultural city in the world” is seemingly inclusive (see Chapter 2). Yet, at work sanctioned forms of difference are limited to “the neoliberal notion of culture as an individually possessed skill…Culture that fits this institutional mission is unmarked, normative. Culture that does not fit is marked-non-normative-and not modern” (Urciuoli 2009:34). Workplace culture is the “unmarked acultural modern” even as it is named Canadian, and “the marked cultural nonmodern” includes practices that do not conform to the former (Urciuoli 2009:34). In the latter instance, “culture” for new immigrants is frequently associated with racial and ethnic markedness (cf. Urciuoli 2009). Workplace culture in the knowledge-based economy is thus particularly assimilatory. In paradigmatic forms of Fordist work, one might need to submit their bodies to the temporal discipline of the assembly line. But one’s “cultural” and classed soul – one’s values, affects, beliefs as well as one’s communicative means of expression – were less subject to the assimilatory measures that post-Fordist immaterial labour requires.
Commodifying the Soul: Human Capital and Soft Skills in Late Capitalism

The embodied dispositions and affects required of labour in Canada are rendered technical (Li 2007) in skills discourses, which attempt to make them knowable, trainable and commodifiable (Urcioli 2008). In particular, the seemingly personal and affective nature of immaterial labour and human capital is reified by the notion of soft skills. Conceptualized as skills, aspects of one’s personhood “are divorced from their user’s everyday social context and recast, entextualized, inculcated, and assessed by experts of work applications. They are commensurable as commodities insofar as they are aspects of productive labor with market value” (Urcioli 2008:224). As Urcioli points out, soft skills, such as communication skills, are what Foucault calls “technologies of the self”, a way of fashioning subjectivity that blurs the lines between work and self in late capitalism: “The capitalist does not buy a fixed amount of labor but a capacity for labor, which has now come to include a self re-imagined as an internalized skills set” (2008:223). I build upon Urcioli’s work, examining the ways in which, settlement counselors, through everyday ethnographic practice, attempted to instill the varying and seemingly endless soft skills they believed immigrants needed in order to be employable in Canadian labour markets. I will show how these skills were vague and ever-shifting, depending on context-specific and subjective evaluations.

Skills discourses also became a means of justifying immigrant un(der)employment as part of “an anti-politics machine” (Ferguson 1994). Soft skills training is often depicted as apolitical, masking the social and political context through which some people are deemed effective communicators and others are seen to be in need of training (Mirchandani 2012b, Cameron 2000). Rather, emotion work occurs in the context of power and hierarchies which compelled new immigrants to conform to Canadian ways of being and speaking. Similarly, through discourses of skill, training reinforced and reified differences between immigrants and the native-born. While skills are generally seen as things that can be learned and are transferable – an idea amenable to a flexible workforce (Urcioli 2010:169) – skills discourses exist in tension with ideologies of embodied, tacit knowledge and authentic personalities, which I

21 “Hard skills”, in contrast, are defined as technical skills or occupational requirements of the job, such as a degree, certificate, computer programming knowledge, etc.
explore in Chapters 5 and 7. Since an embodied trait cannot be learned so easily, it is thus advantageous for immigrants to construe language and aspects of one’s person as skills which can be learned through successful training (Mirchandani 2012a:47-48). Skills discourses imagine immigrants as having the potential and the ability to integrate or to be included in the future. Yet, it was difficult to imagine that anyone could change the self in a matter of weeks, as Miro pointed out to the recruiter Mike in the opening vignette (cf. Mirchandani 2012a:44).

Furthermore, self-commodification through the process of skill-ification is continually undone by the recognition that one’s “human capital investments” are experientially learned and accumulated through sociocultural practice (cf. McElhinny 2012). The tensions between these two processes produce contradictions and precarious attempts to reconcile them through experiential skills training (e.g. practice interviews, internships). I highlight the tension between experiential and codified knowledge that unfolded in ELT classrooms, as well as the move to “render technical” (Li 2007) tacit cultural knowledge through skills training.

Language and Communication in Late Capitalism

In cognitive capitalism or in the knowledge-based economy, “social surpluses take the form of cooperative interactivity through linguistic, communicational, and affective networks” (Hardt and Negri 2000:294, see also Rose 1999:118). Networking, which is required for one to be “employable” in Canada’s knowledge-based economy, puts communication to work (Berardi 2009:86). Furthermore, in the new economy, labour is also increasingly asked to sell their “communicative capacity” (Heller 2011:50). Drawing on recent scholarship on language in late capitalism (Duchêne and Heller 2012, Urciuoli 2008, McElhinny 2012, Lorente 2012, Boutet 2012, Cameron 2000), this thesis pays particular attention to the ideologies of language (see Woolard 1998, Briggs 1998, Gal 1998) reproduced in assemblages of rule in which communication is viewed as key to labour market integration in the knowledge-based economy. For instance, Boutet found that in factories in 19th century France, language use was believed to decrease productivity and disrupt labor: it was not yet imagined as productive (2012:214). Of course, the language practices of the model worker should not be confused with the actual worker who certainly spoke, and inappropriately at that. I similarly focus on ideologies of language and communication, or rather, on what is considered by governmental programs to be appropriate “talk” for work.
Chapters 5 and 6, in particular, look “at the relationship between the characteristics of late capitalism and the ideologies and practices of language which help to organize and legitimize them” (Heller and Duchêne 2012:3). In the Enhanced Language Training Program, advanced language and workplace communication skills were viewed as prerequisites to participation in Canada’s knowledge-based economy. However, as Heller has pointed out, there are “tensions between standardization and variability in the space between language-as-skill and language-as-identity, both of which are commodifiable in the globalized new economy. This tension represents a gap, or troubled space of contradiction, between established nationalist discursive regimes and emergent destabilizations of those regimes” (2010:103). In the context of integration programs for skilled immigrants, linguistic capital and skills simultaneously index one’s “authentic” identity as a good Canadian citizen and as an entrepreneurial worker. By examining language training programs, this thesis traces how language is a key means through which the Canadian government attempts to regulate immigrants and reproduce labour in the competitive global economy. Specifically, language training encouraged immigrants to conform to Canadian “civic” values and to accept responsibility for their need to be continuously employable in insecure labour markets (e.g. through continuous skills accumulation). However, Canada’s focus on multiculturalism and bilingualism has a depoliticizing effect, overemphasizing ‘cultural’ and linguistic barriers to equality (Satzewich and Liodakis 2013:166), while concealing others. For instance, the insecure and flexible nature of the labour market, which I outline below, creates new class divisions, which are gendered and racialized.

**Flexible and Precarious Labour**

“Market volatility itself becomes a form of labor regulation” (Ong 2003:233)

This dissertation also shows how government programs, government workers and new immigrants grapple with and manage the insecurity of post-Fordist regimes of accumulation. As Molé points out, “At the same time as individuals are asked to invest more fully, psychologically, and affectively in their own labor, labor is simultaneously more uncertain” (2012b:377): it is saturated with insecurity. The more sanguine term for precarity and insecurity is “flexibility”, a keyword (Williams 1977) in the post-Fordist-neoliberal regime. As a positive euphemism, flexibility pervades governmental discourse: governments, public-private
partnerships and individuals alike should be flexible (see Chapters 3 and 4). Some scholars have argued that today insecurity is everywhere, experienced by people from diverse class positions (Bourdieu 2003; Berardi 2009, Wacquant 2007). Even those not in precarious work, that is, those who have permanent jobs, nevertheless have lower wages and face increasing instability: “Perpetual insecurity becomes the normal form of labour” (Rose 1999:158). Whereas work was once “a secure site for inclusion, in the form of the lifelong career, the permanent job” (Rose 1999:158), it is now something that must be continually earned. The ethical worker is now obligated to take risks, inhabiting a state of insecurity (Sennett 1998). I explore such temporal politics in Chapter 6, arguing that managing and taking risks “frames how neoliberal agents are oriented toward the future” (Gershon 2011:540). Immigrants are asked to make self-investments in the present, anticipating future returns, while being rendered responsible for any potential failures and miscalculations, despite uncertainty.

For Berardi (2009) and Sennett (1998), the effects of insecurity are detrimental. While Sennett argues that it arouses anxiety and corrodes one’s character, Berardi argues it creates existential precarity. However, as Muehlebach and Shoshan (2012) point out, not all experience flexibility as precarity in the same way. While some workers, such as Wall Street bankers, thrive in extremely precarious environments, others “experience their precarious lives as anxiety-filled states of exception because they are set up against both the real and imagined securities of the Fordist-Keynesian life-world. Such understandings of precariousness set up Fordism as the norm” (Muehlebach and Shoshan 2012:337). These workers long for security and belonging, and a less precarious existence. Here, Fordism functions not just as a “regime of accumulation…but also as a field of influence that extended itself both spatially and temporally” (Muehlebach and Shoshan 2012:318). My informants' experience of (in)security varied, depending upon their complicated transnational histories. However, the majority, who came to Canada as skilled immigrants with the promise of a better life, longed “for a future that will showcase that material affluence they associate with Europe or North America” (Weston 2012:432). They were confronted with remnants of Fordist work – full-time, relatively well-paying employment – which they had difficulty accessing. Although discussions of Fordist and post-Fordist regime shifts are generalizing and obscure a variety of diverging processes, they were nevertheless taken seriously by the teachers of ‘Canadian workplace culture,’ who also longed for work that was more secure than in the precarious nonprofit sector. I trace how these general shifts have become
socially meaningful for social actors, examining how the affective and temporal dimensions of (post-)Fordism are felt from the precarious positions of NGO workers and un(der)employed new immigrants.

**Precarious Labour in Toronto, Canada**

In relation to my ethnographic data, I make a distinction between flexible and precarious labour. Both are predicated upon insecurity: it is the value of insecurity-as-flexibility that new immigrants in integration programs are urged to understand and accept. However, as I point out in Chapters 6 and 7, while the goal of government programs is to produce flexible workers – who are part of the core, relatively secure full-time workforce, while realizing that their jobs are never guaranteed – new immigrants often join the growing ranks of precarious labor instead (work that is temporary or part-time) where insecurity is relatively greater.

The majority of Canada’s employed population has full-time, permanent jobs (63% in 2002; down from 67% in 1989) (Vosko et al. 2003), “highlighting the continuing significance of the standard employment relationship” (SER) (Vosko 2000:21), which was forged in the Fordist era and which to some degree decommodified labour (Lewchuk et al. 2011:5-6). However, since the mid-1970s there has been a shift away from the post-war welfare state’s normative SER model towards a temporary employment relationship (TER) model, as well as nonstandard forms of employment (Vosko 2000). The latter includes short-term contracts, seasonal and casual work with predetermined end dates, solo self-employment (e.g. with no paid employees), and work obtained through temporary employment agencies. As a normative model, “the SER has played a central prescriptive role since the Second World War as the model for wages’ policy, labour legislation, and social policy in Canada and abroad” (Vosko 2000:29). Furthermore, the SER emphasized worker loyalty as a means of discipline, rather than depending merely on the fear of job loss (Lewchuk et al. 2011:42). Managers who practiced welfare capitalism believed that it would be more cost effective to retain long-term employees, for they could “recoup the cost of training and…retain organizational knowledge acquired through time on the job” (Lewchuk et al. 2011:43). Unionization in Canada also provided a disincentive to change employers. In the post-Fordist regime, where the focus is on short-term rather than long-term profits, long-term investments in productivity (e.g. through training and investing in employees’ human capital) seem costly. Consequently, human resources tend to be contracted out, and temporary
employment agencies have emerged to supply companies with labour (Lewchuk et al. 2011:52). When there are weakening commitments between employers and workers, the latter are obligated to make themselves more employable by investing in their own human capital and by selling the self on the market, as a “me & co” while also bearing all the risks of doing so (Lewchuk et al. 2011:57).

The standard employment relationship, however, was not as widespread as it is nostalgically remembered to be. Rather, it was reserved for a privileged few, namely white males working in mass production (Lewchuk et al. 2011:48). Furthermore, those privileged workers often engaged in repetitive and routinized work that increasingly alienated them from their labour (Lewchuk et al. 2011:50, see also Vosko 2000:25). This normative model, then, masked insecurity for the majority of workers (women, new immigrants, racialized groups, elderly, disabled etc.) (Lewchuk et al. 2011:48). Accordingly, since precarious work is becoming more common, some scholars have referred to this process as the feminization of employment norms (Vosko 2000).22 Even (white) men’s average wages declined in the 1980s and 1990s, which “led many single-breadwinner families to rely on more than one income-earner” (Vosko 2000:162). However, research has shown that the unemployed, low-income and precarious workers are still disproportionately women and “visible minorities” (Vosko 2000; Cranford et al. 2003; Galabuzi 2004). Lewchuk et al.’s study in the GTA found that:

- Nearly forty-five per cent of immigrants who had lived in Canada for two years or less were working in less permanent employment relationships, compared with just under thirty percent of Canadian-born respondents. Recent female immigrants were more likely to be working in less permanent positions than recent male immigrants, and were slower to move out of less permanent employment. Even after two years, nearly one in three immigrant women were in less permanent positions (2011:65).

- Additionally, these new immigrants were often highly skilled (Lewchuk et al. 2011:114).

However, “immigrants who had lived more than two years in Canada were distributed across forms of the employment relationship similarly to Canadian-born respondents” (Lewchuk et al. 2011:65). That being said, the underemployment and poverty of new immigrants is higher than

22 Other feminist scholars, however, argue that although it appears as though “‘women’s work’ has become the paradigmatic model of labour and working in contemporary capitalism” (Adkins and Jokinen 2008:142) this is a superficial reading that makes other processes invisible. Although women are entering paid employment and their labour is vital for capitalist accumulation, the sexual contract is being reworked based on class divisions between women.
that of those who are Canadian-born, as previously discussed (see also Chapter 2). In Lewchuk et al.’s study, many individuals who were precariously employed “felt that they faced discrimination in getting or keeping work, but that they had no resources because such discrimination is *invisible* in the constant selection and reassignment that takes place in less permanent employment” (2011:81).

The specter of secure Fordist employment and the fact that the majority of Canadians had “standard permanent employment” was always present for those at the margins of the labour market. There was a tension between orienting immigrant-clients towards this work, but also at the same time orienting them towards an insecure labour market in which they needed to be employable by embracing “flexibility”. New immigrants longed for the norms and promises imagined in secure, well paying professional jobs in the global North. Yet teachers told students that ‘things have changed; they are changing in your countries too’ and that they needed to accept the insecurity and flexibility of the labour market by commodifying the self, as demonstrated in Chapter 6.

**The Training or Transition Industry**

When the individual became responsible for their own training and employability, a proliferation of services emerged to cater to the unemployed, which Ehrenreich calls the “transition industry” (2005). Labour market flexibility “contributes to the growth of intermediaries, which in turn help facilitate labor market flexibility” (Benner 2002:6). In Canada, the training industry that un(der)employed new immigrants were caught up in emerged with economic restructuring in the 1980s, when labour market regulations were dismantled (Lewchuk et al. 2011). Employment training was consequently privatized in the 1990s, “creating a proliferation of training institutions and certification systems that continues to bewilder workers and employers” (Lewchuk et al. 2011:79). The system also increasingly relied on private employment agencies to match workers with jobs (de Wolff 2006). At the same time, the government made eligibility for unemployment insurance (UI) more restrictive. For instance,

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23 The growth of the Temporary Help Industry also accelerated in 1980s, for companies wanted labour flexibility and numerical flexibility while not being responsible for the management of labour (Vosko 2000). The industry began to provide “‘employment and staffing services’ rather than simply supplying ‘stop-gap’ workers to take advantage of the ‘changing nature of employment’” (Vosko 2000:137).
87% of unemployed individuals received UI in 1990, but by 1994, this had plummeted to 58% (Vosko 2000:162). Furthermore, the reformed welfare program Workfirst\textsuperscript{24}

seeks to match ‘employable’ social assistance recipients with temporary help agencies with the objective of reducing the welfare rolls. Thus, it reflects what some analysts label ‘workfarism,’ a labour market reorganization strategy that involves privatizing the design, administration, and delivery of employment training and placement, and marketizing welfare policy. In contrast to welfarism, which involved a sustained commitment to maintaining the SER as the normative model of employment…workfarism seeks to transform the institutional and social bases of labour market regulation (Vosko 2000:230).

While it is compulsory for “employable” social assistance recipients to participate in training and register with temporary employment agencies, other welfare recipients are required to engage in “a broader set of work-related obligations such as training, job-seeking, schooling, and community work (i.e., ‘new style’ workfare)” (Vosko 2000:232). The Canadian government thereby legitimizes the spread of the temporary employment relationship. Just as workfare aims “to condition marginalized workers for a volatile labour market” (Vosko 2000:231), so too do immigrant integration programs.

I will show, throughout this thesis, how employment programs for underemployed immigrants also promoted the ideology of active citizenship that underlies workfare, while also socializing immigrants to accept insecurity as normative. Although the government pays for integration programs, the cost of further upgrading is privatized and borne by individual immigrants. A few of my informants were on welfare and were thus obligated to take skills upgrading courses. However, the majority of my informants were not (rates of welfare use are lower among immigrants than among the native-born, see Chapter 3). Integration programs were thus voluntary and employment counselors – such as Saba – often characterized their clients as being motivated to find work, unlike, in their opinion, Ontario Works clients. In some ways un(der)employed new immigrants were thus described as more worthy citizens than welfare recipients. On the other hand, they were seen as not quite Canadian enough in affect or skill level, and/or as not adequately viewing themselves as “companies of one” (Lane 2011:9). However, unlike welfare recipients, they were not coerced to take minimum wage work or work

\textsuperscript{24} In May 1998, the \textit{Ontario Works Act} (1997) replaced the \textit{Family Benefits Act} (1967) and the \textit{General Welfare Assistance Act}, creating the first workfare program (Vosko 2000:231).
through temporary placement agencies, for they were seen as having more potential and capacity, by virtue of their human capital, to improve themselves.

In the context of the United States, anthropologists have studied growing white-collar downward mobility and unemployment (Ehrenreich 2005; Lane 2011) as well as the industry that has grown in response to white-collar unemployment since the mid-1990s (Ehrenreich 2005). In Canada, anthropologist Thomas Dunk (2002) has examined assistance programs for laid-off blue-collar mill workers in Thunder Bay in the 1990s. He demonstrates how the agencies and agents of assistance perpetuated individualizing notions of employment complicit with neoliberalism and neoconservatism (2002:879), which encouraged displaced workers to accept responsibility for their employment futures, through what Dunk calls “attitude adjustment”. However, unlike in the 1990s, community colleges and employment programs increasingly cater to white-collar new immigrant workers. At an engineering job fair, I met a Canadian-born blue-collar worker who was upgrading his skills because, he told me, ‘the economy is changing and you just have to accept that and move on.’ So while layoffs from manufacturing sectors still produce an active unemployed, he seemed out of place at a job fair predominately attended by new immigrants.

In this dissertation, I complicate this scant anthropological research on the transition industry, which focuses on white male white-collar Americans and white male blue-collar Canadians. In doing so, I highlight how the underemployment problem is not merely an “immigrant problem”, but indicative of welfare-state and economic restructuring. It is also not merely a “cultural” and “language” problem, but rather a matter of growing income inequality between different class groups. That being said, underemployment is exacerbated by discrimination and racism. Ehrenreich notes that some “white-collar occupational groups—doctors, lawyers, teachers, and college professors—have done better at carving out some autonomy and security for themselves” (2005:233), through professionalization. It is precisely these regulative and secure jobs that are most prohibitive for new immigrants. Furthermore, Lane

25 In Bait and Switch: The (Futile) Pursuit of the American Dream, Barbara Ehrenreich attempts to gain a first-hand perspective on the midlevel corporate world, by going undercover and finding a white-collar position that pays at least $50,000 a year. Her search for work, without networks was unsuccessful and she remained unemployed throughout the year she searched for suitable employment. In A Company of One: Insecurity, Independence, and the New World of White-Collar Unemployment (2011), Carrie M. Lane examines unemployed white-collar, high-tech workers in the United States at the beginning of the 21st century.
(2011) shows how unemployed white-collar workers in the information technology sector had “faith” in the free market and dismissed most forms of government intervention, despite the job insecurity they faced. Although immigrants in Canada were asked to have this faith in the market, they did not so easily subscribe to its value (Chapter 6). In contrast to the existing anthropological work on the transition industry, by focusing on “Othered” immigrants, I pay attention to how discrimination is seemingly invisible and acerbated by insecure labour markets. I address how the un(der)employment of professional immigrants becomes an integration issue, one infused with racially and ethnically inflected “risks” that need to be added to the “risks” unemployment poses to the nation more generally (e.g. the racialization of the chronically poor).

I trace how new immigrants enter the ‘transition industry’, which helps the unemployed treat job searching as a job itself, and are prescribed the therapeutic genre of career coaching it proliferates. The transition industry that facilitates “active unemployment” relies on “the expert”. As Gershon notes:

“the expert becomes someone with the unique reflexive role of explaining to other autonomous entities how to manage themselves more successfully. Selves may intend to choose and risk well, but the potential for failure always haunts such projects. When failures occur the responsible self turns to an expert to learn how to choose more effectively…Experts embody an external reflexive corrective that a self can choose to remedy unsuccessful self-management (and thus continuing to be responsible for their own failures)” (2011:542).

“Expert” employment coaching or counseling, through discursive practice, adopts “ways of trying to shape desirable subjects and subjectivities, which concerns governing one’s self in culturally prescribed ways” (Fogde 2010:15, see also Rose 1999). However, ELT students often put the expertise of coaches into question. There were various moments when the students questioned instructor’s claims to authority over knowledge on how to sell the self, moments in which the immigrant in turn often gets constructed as a foreigner (see Chapter 4), in need of specifically “Canadian” expertise.

In sum, I examine how the transition industry plays a role in making the un(der)employed more “employable” by orienting them towards the “ideal”/imagined or paradigmatic worker of the knowledge-based economy. As I explore in Chapters 4 and 5, new immigrants are oriented towards particular values, embodied in social practice and communicated through particular genres and aesthetics. They link “the self-management of aesthetic labor to the discourse of the enterprising self” (Hancock and Tyler 2008:208). Asking new immigrants to work on their self
and to change accordingly is not seen as profoundly assimilatory, since the Canadian-born are asked to do the same. Yet, such training glosses over the discriminatory barriers that new immigrants face. Even if new immigrants emulate the “right kind of worker” they are nevertheless more insecure, subject to systemic discrimination. Active unemployment doubly inscribes new immigrants as deficient on the one hand, and as having potential or capacity to improve on the other hand. Yet, the more precarious one’s employment, the more effort they need to expend on finding work (Lewchuk et al. 2011, Standing 2011, Lane 2011), a process through which one often becomes in-debted. As Rose notes, training “became the major technology of re-attachment of the unemployed individual to the inclusionary lines of control immanent in the activity of paid labour…unemployment must become as much like work as possible if it too is to connect the excluded individual with the modalities of control which have come to be termed ‘freedom’ and ‘choice’” (1999:164). The ethical role of government is to give the excluded the opportunity “to achieve full membership in a moral community through work, while for individuals “citizenship becomes conditional upon conduct” (Rose 1999:267). New immigrants who are incapable of finding decent work on their own, and who elicit employment services, are taught how to become members of Canada’s moral community – to achieve inclusion through work on the self. This primarily does not involve technical information, but rather how they must act, as responsible and ethical citizens.

Summary of Chapters

Chapter 2, Selling Diversity: Integrating the Un(der)employed Skilled Immigrant in Toronto, a second introductory chapter, outlines in more detail, why immigrant underemployment garnered attention and how it was problematized in Toronto, Canada. It also examines the types of solutions and integration programs that were created to address this problem. Finally, it describes what my ethnographic fieldwork in Toronto entailed.

Chapter 3, Attracting the ideal future citizen: A genealogy of the “skilled immigrant” in Canadian immigration policy, briefly outlines the history of immigration policy in Canada, focusing on the key shift that occurred with the restructuring of the welfare state in the mid-1990s. Until the liberalization of immigration in 1967, Canada’s policies were explicitly racist, motivated by the desire to “Keep Canada White”. However, the government aimed to balance the goal of maintaining the whiteness of the nation with providing an adequate supply of labour
for economic development. I argue that following the liberalization of immigration policy, which eliminated race and nationality as a justifiable means of exclusion, the ideal immigrant has been skill/white-washed, whereby the ideal immigrant is viewed as likely to “integrate” due to their possession of desirable “skills” which are classed, racialized and gendered. “Skilled” labour steadily became more highly skilled and in the 1990s immigration policy prioritized flexible and transferable skills (which are possessed primarily by professionals) that were seen as needed in Canada’s knowledge-based economy. The ideal citizen that emerges from neoliberal welfare-state restructuring is an endlessly flexible and entrepreneurial subject who maximizes their contribution to the nation’s welfare with minimal cost. I thereby trace the shift from an explicitly racialized discourse of belonging to a skills based discourse of integration. The points system’s focus on human capital subsequently privileged an upper class, educated global elite that was as like middle-upper class Anglo Canadians as possible, if not white. I thus argue here, and throughout the dissertation, that the ideal immigrant is white-washed (assimilated) by virtue of their skills.

Chapter 4, Governed-by-contract: Working in the immigrant service sector, focuses on the ways in which the restructuring of public services in the mid-1990s has impacted integration programs. In particular, it argues that the government’s shift from providing core funding to contracts-for-services, decreases the immigrant settlement sector’s ability to provide “flexible” and individualized services to immigrants, despite New Public Management discourses. It examines how these contracts engender precarious conditions of work in the non-profit sector, which affects its ability to deliver services to professional immigrants. This chapter also examines the transformative effects of a form of audit as a central mechanism for enacting governmental ‘control of control’ (Rose 1999:154). The contracts’ techniques of control had performative effects, for they oriented action towards certain quantifiable ends. Such audits also rendered invisible integration outcomes that could not be measured or counted according to the contract. However, this control was never total and settlement workers often flouted the contract’s criteria. Settlement staff, then, had to manage the tensions between meeting short-term funding criteria as laid out in their government contracts, and long-term processes of integration, such as language learning as well as alternative definitions of program “success”, which they were also oriented towards. Although certain aspects of the contract were ignored in everyday practice, I argue that it still ultimately produced a series of contradictions, in addition to a
precarious service sector, that undermined the efficacy of employment services in the context of welfare-state restructuring.

Chapters 5 and 6 examine the ways in which language and narrative become technologies of governmental rule in attempts to construct neoliberal citizen-workers who accepted responsibility for their own flexible employment futures. Chapter 4, “Language Overload in Toronto”: Communication and Skill-ing Professional Immigrants’ Value in Canadian Labour Markets, examines the ways in which the discourse of “language as a barrier” characterizes un- and under-employment as the result of immigrants’ lack of language and communication skills. Furthermore, I argue that within this discourse language is often conflated with communication and soft skills, or rather, with affective and behavioural attributes. “Language as a barrier” as well as “skills” consequently become seemingly neutral glosses for many culturalized, ethnicized and racialized deficiencies. Chapter 6, From Survival Job to Success Story: reflexively learning how to labour, examines how the key phrase “survival job” and the genre of the “success story” perpetuate particular classed norms and values of work. Here, desirable work is work that must be loved, and which maximizes one’s potential, according to an investment logic. I also argue that the success story was used as a technology through which counselors attempted to reorient or reinterpret clients’ knowledge or experience of the job market to imagine new temporal horizons and inspire future-oriented action. Such action entailed investing in one’s human capital in the present in the hopes for future returns. Immigrants were rendered responsible for absorbing the risks of these investments. These chapters trace through the micropolitics and practices in integration programs, the prescription of neoliberal values. These lessons did not necessarily produce what instructors desired, entrepreneurial citizens, but rather they revealed the ways in which many former new immigrants, had consented to neoliberal modes of government.

Chapter 7, Becoming flexible labour: Gaining “Canadian Experience” through the active (un)employment industry, examines the ways in which un(der)employed immigrants, seeking employment commensurate with their training, often cycled through the transition industry, a series of (re)training programs, job fairs, and networking events that cater to and profit from the un- or under- employed. More specifically, I argue that the injunction to get “Canadian experience” through the training and education industry became a productive means of creating an active unemployed that invested in their future potential, and which constructed
unemployment as highly productive and eventful (Adkins 2012). Furthermore, this chapter examines how Toronto’s transition industry is a form of what Bourdieu calls “flexploitation”; that is, a means of rationalizing and managing (un)employment insecurity and of reproducing and regulating flexible labor.

Finally, Chapter 8 concludes the dissertation by contemplating the ways in which discourses on integration have started to shift, which highlights assumptions underlying the dominant discourses on integration I examine in this thesis. I outline how new immigration policy continues to prioritize responsible, self-sufficient and entrepreneurial immigrants. Rather than address systemic discrimination or the insecure and unequal nature of the labour market, policy continues to individualize and privatize integration. However, I end by discussing some promising new challenges to the systemic discrimination of skilled immigrations.
Let’s return to the ethnographic vignette that Chapter 1 began with, to the Engineering Job Fair I attended with ELT clients. It included a session provided by the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) about job opportunities at their organization in a room with chairs facing a screen, primed for a Powerpoint presentation. The room, which was predominately filled with South Asian men, was packed. People were standing at the sides and at the back, but luckily Sarkis and I secured seats. The presenter begins outlining, in painstaking detail, the process of becoming an operator for the TTC. After a while, an audience member puts up his hand, asking ‘Do you have any opportunities for engineers?’ He and many other audience members were clearly perplexed as to why they would be told about job opportunities that were not for engineers, when they were at an engineering job fair! The speaker was surprised. Perhaps there had been a miscommunication with the organizer. Or perhaps he assumed immigrants would only be qualified for this type of work. Regardless, in the context of the job fair, this presentation promoted the “de-skilling” of professional immigrants. Although attendees had dressed up in suits, expecting to network with professional engineers, they were now being instructed on how to become bus drivers. Once the floor was open, audience members started introducing themselves, explaining what type of engineer they were, and how many years of experience they had. This was the common formulaic introduction of many new immigrants: stating one’s profession and years of experience, a formula reinforced by the Canadian points system for skilled immigrants that prioritized professional training and job experience, along with official language skills (see Chapter 3). This points system gave immigrants the impression that Canada desperately needed them precisely because of their professional skills and work experience. Several audience members started to air their frustrations over having difficulty finding suitable employment in Canada, despite their expertise, much to the bewilderment of the presenter. Awkwardly, he tried to defuse the situation by quickly flipping through his Powerpoint slides until he found, near the end, one slide on engineering opportunities, as though it were an afterthought.
In Toronto, such common experiences of immigrant deskilling are understood through the lens of the doctor taxi driver, as highlighted in Chapter 1. Why is the latter the figure of ‘immigrant underemployment’? Perhaps moments of being bored in backseats, possibly stuck in traffic to and from airports, constitute rare opportunities for middle and upper class Canadians to talk at length with those offering them services, enough to discover that their taxi-drivers were well educated. Or perhaps it is because, in Toronto, like other large cities, the majority (over 80%) of taxi drivers are immigrants, primarily from India and Pakistan (Xu 2012). As a profession occupied almost solely and visibly by immigrants, it stands out in the public’s imagination. And a doctor, whether a MD or PhD, as the epitome of professional success and years of post-secondary education, is the most compelling and extreme figure of underemployment. The figure of the cab driver with a PhD or MD is so ubiquitous with the underemployment problem and resonated with so many people’s experiences that not only did it roll off the lips of those working in the immigrant service sector and in media publics or talk-radio shows, it warranted researchers’ attention: it became an object of analysis. While in the field, I attended an academic presentation on such a project, and recently while writing this dissertation a government study on taxi-drivers was deemed worthy of an editorial commentary in *The Globe and Mail*, titled: “Overqualified immigrants really are driving taxis in Canada.” This editorial was based on a study, “Who Drives a Taxi in Canada?” by Li Xu, published by Citizenship and Immigration Canada in March 2012. The brief editorial article summarizing the government report begins: “Thanks to the government of Canada, we now know that one urban myth is true. Overqualified immigrants do drive taxis – though not all of them are physicians. Many are in fact architects and engineers.” The editorial makes the common argument that underemployment “is a dramatic loss of economic potential” and argues for government reform in the immigrant selection process. The article concludes: “Everyone benefits if overqualified immigrant drivers can get out of their cars.”

It is important to note that the outcry over underemployment is not primarily concerned with the conditions of work in these less than desirable jobs, rather the outcry is over deskilling. The figure of the ‘immigrant doctor driving a taxi’ as indicative of Canada’s ‘foreign-trained under-employment problem’ is male, racialized, and unable to become at least middle-class in Canada, despite their training and class status ‘back home’. In this chapter, I describe how this figure of un(der)employment and the discourse which problematizes it, is integral to Toronto’s
strategy to become a globally competitive city. The global, middle-upper class immigrant
Toronto’s leaders hope to attract is whitened by his (or her) human capital. Their diversity is
recognized in limited forms, as reified, marketable skills which contribute to Toronto’s global
competitiveness. Before examining why immigrant underemployment became problematized
and addressed by public-private partnerships in Toronto, I will first outline the scholarly research
that aims to explain the systemic discrimination immigrants faced gaining employment
commensurate with their education and qualifications.

**Immigration: Canada’s Economic Apartheid?**

The declining employment outcomes of professional immigrants are, in part, tied to the
changing characteristics of immigrant source countries. Since the 1970s, a decreasing share of
immigrants have come to Canada from its so-called “traditional source countries”, such as the
U.S. and Northern Europe, while “regions increasing their shares included Eastern Europe, South
Asia (India, Pakistan), East Asia (China, Korea, Japan), Western Asia (Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan)
and Africa. Collectively the share of recent immigrants from these regions rose from 35% in
1981 to 72% in 2001” (Picot and Sweetman 2005:17). The foreign experience and credentials of
immigrants from “non-traditional” source countries are largely discounted in the Canadian
labour market (Green and Worswick 2004, 2002, Frenette and Morissette 2003, Aydemir and
Skuterud 2005, Li 2000, Pendakur and Pendakur 2002). Some scholars have argued that skilled
immigrants’ relative advantage has also declined due to the increasing levels of education among
the Canadian born and due to the fact that they primarily settle in urban areas (Reitz 2001, Reitz
and Banerjee 2007). Although jobs are plentiful in cities, so is competition, particularly from
native-born labour market entrants who are also highly educated (Reitz 2003:492). In the past,
Reitz argues, skills-based selection worked better even though credentials were significantly
discounted by Canadian employers, since immigrants had, on average, much higher levels of
education than the native-born (2003:471). However, the increase in the supply of native-born
workers with qualifications reduces the pressure on employers to evaluate immigrants’

In particular, the non-recognition of credentials by professional accreditation bodies
systemically disadvantages skilled immigrants. In 2006, “62% of the Canadian-born were
working in the regulated profession for which they trained compared to only 24% of foreign-
educated immigrants” (Zietsma 2010:15). Engineering, the most common regulated occupation for immigrants, had a match rate\(^{26}\) of 19%, while the Canadian-born’s was 42%. For doctors, 92% of the Canadian-born were matched, while 56% of immigrants were. Again, the lowest match rates were in big cities such as Toronto. However, immigrants who studied in (White) English-speaking countries, such as Ireland, New Zealand and South Africa had the highest match rates across occupations. Immigrants from Australia and the United Kingdom had match rates above average, at 50% and 44% respectively. Immigration is thus a disadvantage for even Anglo immigrants, but at a significantly lower rate than for immigrants from the global South.

The majority of my informants, whom I met in integration programs, were from countries whose match rates were lower than average, including: Bangladesh (23%), Pakistan (21%), China (15%), Albania (15%), Ukraine (14%); South Korea (12%); Belarus (10%); and Morocco (9%). Furthermore, in 2006, “unmatched immigrants were almost three times as likely” than the unmatched Canadian-born to be working in occupations that required no formal education (11% vs. 4%) (Zietsma 2010:19). More immigrants than the Canadian-born working outside their field were also working in service occupations, which are poorly remunerated and insecure (10% vs. 1%) (Zietsma 2010:18). While Canadian-educated immigrants had higher match rates, they were still not as high as the Canadian-born’s (Zietsma 2010:15), which suggests that racism and discrimination against foreigners goes beyond credential recognition issues. While it is a significant barrier, regulated professions make up only 23% of skilled immigrants’ professions. The non-recognition of one’s education and work experience is thus a much broader phenomenon than professional accreditation.

In Canada’s Economic Apartheid: The Social Exclusion of Racialized Groups in the New Century, Grace-Edward Galabuzi (2006) argues that the racial stratification of Canada’s labour market under neoliberal restructuring constitutes a “colour-coded vertical mosaic”. Updating John Porter’s 1965 study of the vertical ethnic mosaic, he argues that “skin colour has become the new dividing line…with racialized minorities at the bottom of the socio-economic structure and non-racialized, white Canadians at the top” (Satzewich and Liodakis 2013:155). Since racialized minorities and new immigrants experience lower incomes and higher unemployment

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\(^{26}\) Match rate is defined as the total number of people working in an occupation divided by the total number of employed people from the fields of study that would typically lead them to work in those occupations.
rates (Teelucksingh and Galabuzi 2007), the colour-coded mosaic importantly highlights systemic racism in the labour market. However, it tends to conflate racialized and immigrant groups as well as conform to Canada’s census understanding of racialized groups as “visible minorities”. As Satzewich and Liodakis point out “when we use racializing, homogenizing terms like visible/non-visible minority...we tend to conceal their internal differences along class, gender, and nativity lines” (2013:148). They further argue that, “it is predominantly among immigrants that the question of wage differentials for visible minority status arises. But because two of every three new immigrants to Canada claim membership in a visible minority group, it is too easy to conflate disadvantage due to colour with disadvantage arising from immigration circumstances” (Satzewich and Liodakis 2013:105). The problem with this latter formulation, however, is that the systemic discrimination new immigrants face getting their credentials recognized is a systemically racist process in which degrees and credentials from “Third World” countries are a priori devalued.

I nevertheless argue that conflating poor immigrants with “visible minority” status is problematic for it obscures that “Other” non-visible minority immigrants face discrimination. The emphasis I put on Other, and its reference to Orientalist discourses of “us” versus “them” (Said 1978), is purposeful. It is significant that in the integration programs I participated in there were many Eastern Europeans in addition to “visible-minority” groups, while there were no immigrants from the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand or Northern and Western Europe. Many Eastern Europeans are thus problematically seen as Other and in need of improvement in the Canadian labour market. As Arat-Koc points out, “In the post-Cold War environment, East Europeans experience simultaneous inclusion and exclusion, belonging in Europe and “the West,” but not quite” (2010:154). Eastern Europeans are Orientalized according to cultural, political and economic behaviour. Discussions of the racialization of poverty in its exclusive focus on skin colour obscures this form of Othering and simplifies how racializing discourses work in Canada. As I will outlined in Chapter 3, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many non-British European groups faced discrimination and were in-between white and non-white, as John Porter’s 1965 ethnic mosaic highlighted (Satzewich and Liodakis 2013:80). However, many scholars have argued that they have since moved “into the status of honorary whites” (Wallis and Fleras 2009:xix). My research suggests otherwise. By focusing on
skin colour, the “colour-coded” mosaic overlooks this process and other anomalies (Satzewich and Liodakis 2013:149). For instance,

individuals of Greek, Portuguese, Italian, and Spanish background do not receive equal rewards for their educational levels…. In the “degree in medicine” category, they make 50 per cent less than the British base group…In the category “earned doctorate,” Greek-origin individuals make 26 per cent less, which is lower than west and south Asians, the Vietnamese, blacks, and other east and southeast Asians. Similar patterns hold for other southern European groups (Satzewich and Liodakis 2013:149).

The colour-coded vertical mosaic is thus essentializing for its linkage of “racism to skin colour rather than to the structural location of particular groups in concrete and historically specific social relations and to the accompanying discourses that aid in the processes of denigration, subordination, and exploitation” (Stasiulis 1999:367).

My informants, who were all Eastern European and “visible minority” immigrants, experienced institutionalized discrimination and racism in the systemic devaluing of their “foreign” educational credentials and work experience. Employers, who make “generalized assumptions about the worth of their human capital, as may be the case when the value of qualifications from a certain country or region is considered unclear”, practice a form of discrimination (Teelucksingh and Galabuzi 2007:203). Such discrimination can constitute what Henry and Tator (2010) call democratic racism, which does “not necessarily rely on or make reference to notions of inherent biological difference and/or inferiority”, but rather it is based on a “negative evaluation of cultural difference” (Satzewich and Liodakis 2013:192, see also Stasiulis 1999:371). No doubt, racism based on assumed biological inferiority and on cultural inferiority are both at play in employers’ systemic devaluation of new immigrants who are not “Anglo” or “Western” enough. Eastern Europeans may not experience biologically inferior based racism, but may nevertheless be seen as “culturally deficient” if they do not seem Western enough. The “colour-coded vertical mosaic” glosses over such Orientalist discourses of race.

In this dissertation, I employ a Foucauldian approach to discourse and power to explore and understand race and racism (Said 1978, Goldberg 1999). As I showed in Chapter 3, the construction of Canada’s national identity, as a settler colony, has been tied to a discourse of whiteness. Yet, analyzing race and racism from a discursive approach entails recognizing race as a technology of power that goes beyond skin colour (Arat-Koc 2010), for “race is…conceptually pliable and elastic” (Goldberg 2009:330). Although the immigration points system appears to be
colourblind or raceless in its measurement of individualized merit and ability, neoliberalism merely privatized racisms (Goldberg 2009:339). More specifically,

At the center of neoliberal commitment is the principle that people should be free to express and exercise their preferences as they see fit. Given that preference expression throughout modernity was to greater or lesser degree fashioned and formulated in racial terms, preference expression and its products continue to carry racial weight. Cultural preferences, for instance, remain to be a considerable extent racially predictable (Goldberg 2009:341).

To attempt to successfully integrate, immigrants often must “mimic or emulate the standards and habits of whiteness, of Euro- or Anglo-mimesis racially preconceived” (Goldberg 2009:342). The inclusion or integration of racialized Others is possible, but always conditional (Arat-Koc 2010:154). Goldberg notes:

While no longer so explicit, racial determination still structures occupational possibility, through codes of class, inherited wealth and poverty, cultural presumptions about ability, and socio-physical conditions of inheritance. Like a noxious but odorless gas, race silently and invisibly strains and signifies the limits of “employability.” Less explicit perhaps, racial figuring of occupational possibility nevertheless now is not only less remarked and visible but to that degree also less easy, even less possible, to challenge (2009:356).

My research shows how, in Canada, racial discourse is reconfigured around notions of the presumed cultural deficiency of bodies from countries perceived to be less developed than Canada. Goldberg (2000) in his examination of what he calls ‘racial knowledge’ analyzes the ways in which “the theory of three worlds” was a product of the Cold War and of anxiety about postcolonial conflict (162). The Second World is “partially rational”, but “stricken unnaturally by ideology” which prevents efficiency (Goldberg 2000:163). The Third World “is the world of tradition and irrationality, underdeveloped and overpopulated, disordered and chaotic. It is also non-European and nonwhite” (Goldberg 2000:163). Discourses of the Third and Second Worlds “order new racialized exclusions” (Goldberg 2000:171). It is through this racializing discourse that the foreignness of immigrants’ credentials, mapped onto Second and Third Worlds, is devalued as of lesser quality.

As noted above, whiteness is also, to some degree, conditional on class (Arat-Koc 2010:149). Some scholars have argued that a “destabilization of whiteness along the colour line has to do with a growing phenomenon under neoliberal globalization of – to use Goldberg’s terms – “non-whites whitened by the classed colour of money’” (Arat-Koc 2010:155). For
instance, Ong (1996) argues that hierarchical schemes of racial and cultural difference intersect in a complex, contingent way to locate minorities of color from different class backgrounds. In particular, she compares the experiences of rich and poor Asian immigrants in the United States, demonstrating how institutional practices subject nonwhite immigrants to two processes of normalization: an ideological whitening or blackening based on an assessment of cultural competence, understood in terms of human capital and consumer power. Although, there are limits to the whitening of wealthy Asians, globalization nevertheless “provides for multicultural diversification of the global bourgeoisie”, a process that “does not break down the North-South colour line completely; it just complicates it” (Arat-Koc 2010:155). For Arat-Koc ““race”, as defined along or beyond the colour line, is increasingly relevant as a logic and technology of power which separates forms of humanity and treats them differently” (2010:162). The privileges of whiteness that the white working class have enjoyed are also eroding with the dismantling of welfare state and global capitalist modernity. However, while the increasing insecurity of global capitalism as turned even white bodies into “disposable labour”, there are simultaneously “attempts to incorporate all whites into whiteness through anti-immigrant, anti-refugee, anti-Arab, and anti-Muslim sentiments, movements, and ideologies, as well as policies on immigration and the “war on Terror”” (Arat-Koc 2010:164).

The shift to immigration from non-European origins, however, does not completely explain the decrease in income-earnings of new immigrants, since income disparities have continued to rise well after the shift occurred (Reitz et al. 2011). The growing poverty of skilled immigrants is also related to a more challenging labour market as outlined in Chapter 1. Indeed, native-born Canadians entering the labour market for the first time also performed less well in the 1990s. However, although the earnings of all new labour market entrants have been falling over the past few decades, the consequences were two-thirds greater for immigrants, particularly for racialized minorities (Reitz and Bannerji 2007:495, Green and Worswick 2004). Furthermore, immigrants are less well paid when working at the same skill levels as the native-born. Immigrants in non-regulated occupations earn 25% to 34% less than the native-born in the same occupations. Immigrants in “knowledge professions” earn 12 to 15 % less (Green and Worswick 2004:7). Yet, growing labour market inequality contributes to the decline in earnings of immigrants, as does reduced social services and the increasing costs of retraining (Reitz and Bannerji 2007:495). The jobs that deskillled immigrants often end up taking are lower paying
than in previous eras. If, as a result of deskilling, “immigrants are obliged to work in the most poorly paid jobs, then it matters how poorly those jobs are paid” (Reitz 2007:55). As I discussed in Chapter 1, cut-backs to the welfare-state and the increasing precariousness of the labour market have contributed to the underemployment and poverty of new immigrants. The insecurity of the post-Fordist labour regime, however, is frequently disavowed by the elite in Toronto, who focus on high-wage knowledge-based growth. Rather than call for more secure work conditions as a means of countering immigrant and racialized poverty, as the figure of the cab driver illustrates, the focus is on utilizing the global middle-classes skills more effectively.

**Capitalizing on Diversity**

To counter the discriminatory attitudes held by employers and to address the growing (racialized) poverty of immigrants, the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) and the Government of Ontario spearheaded public awareness campaigns that included billboards and advertisements in subway cars and bus shelters as well as television commercials. These campaigns, which urged employers to hire immigrants, featured de-skilled immigrants whose expertise was being wasted. Advertisements, which I discuss in more detail in Chapter 6, reproduced what Abu-Laban and Gabriel (2002) have dubbed “selling diversity” – the dominant discourse through which advocates of skilled immigration attempted to sell its merits. “Selling diversity” is a discourse in which diversity is individualized as “added value” in the global economy (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002, see also Heller 2003, Urciuoli 2008). In Canadian immigration policy, increasingly since the mid-1980s, a diversity discourse converts immigrants’ ethnic backgrounds, cultural difference and multilingualism into commodifiable knowledge and skills that can help Canada gain access to “other” markets in the competitive global economy, once a common set of language and cultural skills have been mastered (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002, Heller 2003). Diversity as an individual resource that can be possessed, commodified and marketed, can help companies succeed in competitive markets, for “diversified products and customers require, corporations reason, diversified employees whose individual differences are, like the market itself, assets for growth if not for liberation itself” (Gordon 1995:5-6). In this section, I show how public-private partnerships in Toronto, that emerged after welfare-state restructuring in the 1990s, sell diversity to attempt to better integrate skilled immigrants.
As I will discuss in Chapters 3 and 4, the devolution of integration and social services to provincial and municipal governments was motivated by a desire to cut federal government expenditures and was justified as a means through which services could more effectively respond to the needs of local communities and individual clients. Anthropological research on the public-private alliances that fill the gaps left by the retreating arms of the welfare state, including public-private partnerships (Holland et al. 2007, Hyatt 2001, 2011), demonstrate that such ‘government-by-outsourcing’ is often undemocratic, for it is devoid of guarantees that all segments of the population will be served (Holland et al. 2007:188). Nevertheless Holland et al. (2007) argue that “market rule is inadvertently open to groups whose members are committed to alternative visions” since there are more opportunities for non-profit groups to design local projects (240). These studies importantly highlight the need for situated analysis to understand the possibilities and constraints of new political arrangements for democracy and social change, in the context of restructured welfare states. This thesis similarly examines the contextual embeddedness of neoliberalism in Toronto, which is reproduced through the discourses and projects of an elite group, which privilege the growth of the competitive city.

**Toronto: Becoming a Globally Competitive City**

In the 1990s, when the federal government devolved responsibilities for immigrant settlement, the Ontario government followed suit. During the “Common Sense Revolution” of the Conservative Government, led by Mike Harris (and his short-lived successor Ernie Eves) from 1995-2003, most of the provincial immigrant support programs were dismantled or funding was reduced (Stasiulis et al. 2011:80). This period was characterized by what Tickell and Peck (2003) refer to as roll-back neoliberalism through, for instance, the reduction of funding. In line with New Public Management (NPM), which mimics the private sector, the City of Toronto underwent provincially imposed amalgamation in 1998, “in the name of efficiency and lower expenditures” (Stasiulis et al. 2011:89). The provincial government amalgamated seven local governments into one municipality and downloaded social welfare, housing, daycare, and transit costs to the city (Boudreau et al. 2009:61). Although a middle-class citizens’ movement against amalgamation was unsuccessful, it established new goals and alliances that advocated for the

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27 Although the movement did not seek the support of immigrants and ethnoracial minorities, the “New Voices of the New City” alliance of 63 immigrant service and community organizations,
city’s self-determination (Boudreau et al. 2009). In order to be competitive globally, they argued that Toronto needed the resources and power of other global cities. A number of groups were involved in what has been called the Toronto Charter Movement, which has produced numerous proposals arguing for enhanced municipal autonomy (Boudreau et al. 2009:79).\(^\text{28}\)

The Toronto Charter movement led to the forming of the Toronto City Summit Alliance (TCSA)\(^\text{29}\) in 2002, a broad coalition of civic leaders that aimed to address perceived threats to the city’s prosperity. This coalition included two labour groups and the United Way. Other than these three groups and government representatives it was led by the globally oriented economic elite, including members from the Toronto Board of Trade, universities, and various businesses.\(^\text{30}\) In 2003, TCSA launched a report, *Enough Talk: An Action Plan for the Toronto Region*, which claims that TCSA’s initiatives have emerged from “civic consensus on the actions needed to secure the Toronto region’s social and economic future” (i). *Enough Talk* opens as follows:

> We heard that our economy has been performing well: growth in employment and output have been strong. But we were disturbed by evidence of threats to our prosperity because of growing income disparity, the deterioration of our inner city, a drop in tourism, our decaying infrastructure, and the weakening of our public services. We heard about a once-great city on the verge of decline. This was not cause for despair but a call to action. The Toronto City Summit Alliance was formed to address the challenges the Summit identified as critical to our shared future – finance, infrastructure, education, immigration and the underlying health of our regional economy (i).


\(^\text{29}\) They changed their name to Civic Action in 2010.

\(^\text{30}\) It had a steering committee of 56 members, two staff members, 16 sponsors (including 5 banks) and 9 in kind donors (Boudreau et al. 2009:186). Its administration costs are paid for by the Maytree Foundation, which was started by Alan Broadbent, a philanthropist and chair of Avana Capital Corporation. The business community thus plays a prominent role in TCSA.
TCSA thereby emerges out of the vacuum of services that was left by the retreating arms of the welfare state. The report starts by emphasizing Toronto’s robust economy, but notes that the city’s infrastructure needs to support that economy: “Despite the strength of the Toronto region’s economy and the wealth it produces, we have witnessed a growing gap between the public investments required in the region and the financial capacity of our local governments to fund those investments. Regional municipalities face escalating costs but have limited abilities to raise revenues” (4). In addition to being responsible for more costs, the Alliance argues that “The amalgamation of the City of Toronto has not produced the overall cost savings that were projected” (4). They thus advocate for a “new fiscal deal” with the Ontario and federal governments, recommending that these levels of government “take back responsibility for some social expenditures downloaded to municipal governments” (5).

TCSA and the Toronto Charter Movement were successful in getting a “New Deal” in 2004,31 which provided new revenue sources for Toronto (Boudreau et al. 2009:205). In terms of funding for immigrant integration, in line with the decentralization of federal responsibilities, several federal-provincial accords were signed, in the 1990s and 2000s (Tolley 2011:27).32 Ontario held out for more money, with the federal government finally agreeing to Ontario’s demands in 2005. The Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement (COIA), signed November 2005, promised $920 million in additional funding until March 2010 (extended until 2011). In 2006 a memorandum of understanding between Canada, Ontario, and Toronto was signed “which recognizes the impact of immigration on the city as well as the important role it has played in the development and provision of settlement services” (Tolley 2011:28) and commits the federal government to work with Toronto. Intergovernmental consultations do not alter jurisdictional responsibilities for immigration or challenge federal governments’ primacy, but provides space for Toronto at the policy-making table (Stasiulis et al. 2011:103).

31 Paul Martin, the Ontario premier, promised a rebate on the GST Toronto had paid to stimulate infrastructure renewal. Public transit and arts and cultural institutions also received special funding. A new City of Toronto Act was proposed in 2005, which led to new legislation, The Stronger City of Toronto for a Stronger Ontario Act. Through this act the city gained control over appearance and design of buildings, to license and regulate businesses, and impose taxes on alcohol, tobacco and entertainment (Boudreau et al. 2009:81).

32 In 1991 Quebec was granted full responsibility for settlement and integration (Andrew 2011:59). In 1995-6, the federal government also offered other provinces full control over immigrant settlement, since CIC had to come up with $60 million of savings (Andrew 2011:59).
TCSA thus addressed the effects of restructuring which were seen as negatively impacting the city’s prosperity. Although this includes an increase of revenues for redistributive programs, such as housing, their value is framed by the city’s need to be economically competitive. For instance, in 2004 a leader of the Toronto Board of Trade argued that business now has a more “sophisticated understanding of what is involved in competitiveness…that it is not only about lowering costs and taxes”, but rather requires investing in infrastructure to generate opportunities for business to innovate (Boudreau et al. 2009:186-7). The TCSA thus represents a shift away from the austerity strategies of Harris and roll-back neoliberalism. Rather, it aims to examine the social problems created by such federal cuts, while remaining dedicated to entrepreneurial investment.

_Enough Talk’s_ section on immigration, “Becoming a Centre of Excellence in Integrating Immigrants”, begins as follows:

Every year, the Toronto region welcomes half of all immigrants who arrive in Canada. Nearly 44 per cent of the GTA’s population and 47 per cent of the City of Toronto is foreign-born. The majority of these newcomers to our city are skilled workers. More than 60 per cent of people who immigrate to the GTA are specifically selected for their skills, and more than half have some form of post-secondary education. In addition to job-specific skills, immigrants bring knowledge of their home country languages, markets and investors. These individuals can and should play an important role in our region’s economic, social and political life (19).

_Enough Talk’s_ reproduction of the “selling diversity” discourse further focuses on “high wage global service industries” (19). The report also notes that “the large numbers of immigrants in our region are an unparalleled competitive advantage in today’s global economy. New research at the University of Toronto suggests that the growth of knowledge-based industries is closely linked to levels of immigration and diversity, among other factors” (19). Here, the report cites Richard Florida’s book, _The Rise of the Creative Class_ (2002), which argues that the creative class, as innovators, is the key to a world-class city’s growth. Since the “creative class” prefers to live in “cool cities”, Florida argues that public money should foster its development. The creative index of a city combines the following indices: the Talent Index (the population with university degrees); the Bohemian Index (the population that works in art or creative sectors); the Mosaic Index (the population that is foreign-born); and the Tech-Pole Index (the population employed in high-tech industries) (Florida 2002:188). Florida’s theory was well received in Toronto, for it
meshed with the TCSA’s cultural turn in urban economic development “which focused on green spaces, culturally vibrant neighbourhoods, and diversity as a defining character of the city” (188-9). Behind the art and cultural development of the city is the “hope to attract the ‘right type’ of residents to Toronto: that is, the young, cool, educated, high-value-added worker of the knowledge economy” (Boudreau et al. 2009:183). The immigrants that are the focus of TCSA’s attention are thus skilled and cosmopolitan, contributing to the region’s knowledge-based economy.

_Enough Talk_ argues that civic action is required because: “Toronto is not fully capitalizing on this multicultural and highly skilled labour force advantage…In addition, Ontario receives only 38 per cent of federal settlement funding, despite taking over 50 per cent of total immigrants” (20). Furthermore, it notes that available settlement services focus on initial settlement needs rather than on addressing barriers immigrants’ face entering the labour market, such as “lack of information on employment in their trade or profession, difficulty in obtaining recognition of their educational and professional credentials, lack of access to employment-relevant language training and lack of opportunities to gain Canadian work experience” (20).

Toronto, _Enough Talk_ reasons, needs to become “a ‘centre of excellence’ for integrating immigrants” in order to capitalize on the advantages of immigration, which can be made possible only if we speed up the entry of immigrants “into the labour market in jobs that are appropriate to the education and skills they bring” (20). For instance, the report notes that: “The Conference Board of Canada has estimated that if all immigrants were employed to the level of their qualifications, it would generate roughly an additional $4 billion of wages across the country – the largest share of that in the Toronto region” (20). The underemployment of skilled immigrants is hereby cast as a loss of potential both in terms of economic growth and potential tax revenue.

Calls to capitalize on skills constitute supply-side strategies for attracting international investment indicative of the “competitive city” logic.

What geographers Boudreau et al. (2009) call the “competitive city” is comprised of three processes:

- the entrepreneurial city, which resembles more a business firm than a public institution; the city of difference, which makes ethnic diversity into a marketable commodity in the interurban competition; and the revanchist city, where more often than not the socially disadvantaged are also criminalized and where the middle classes have largely obliterated the spaces of the poor through gentrification and social exclusion (20).
The “competitive city” emerged as a strategy of capital accumulation or economic growth for cities in the post-Fordist or flexible regime of accumulation (Boudreau et al. 2009:26, see also Harvey 2001). The “entrepreneurial city” involves a supply-side-oriented accumulation strategy that “proactively pursues business investment for the (imputed or real) goal of intercity competition” (Kipfer and Keil 2002: 235-236). Investing in highly trained and skilled labour power, albeit expensive, is viewed as key to attracting new economic development (Harvey 2001:354). With decreased transportation costs and increased movement across borders, “the significance of the qualities of place has been enhanced and the vigor of inter-urban competition for capitalist development (investment, jobs, tourism, and so on) has strengthened considerably” (Harvey 2001:358). Urban regions thus often try to be more competitive by focusing on quality of life, which is achieved through “Gentrification, cultural innovation, and physical upgrading of the urban environment (including the turn to postmodernist styles of architecture and urban design)” (Harvey 2001:355). For instance, the 2000 City of Toronto report noted: “In a new knowledge-based economy, a City has to look good to attract the flexible and mobile information economy entrepreneurs and workers who can locate anywhere in the world” (cited in Kipfer and Keil 2002:243). The postmodern spaces of new middle-classes are aestheticized along with gentrification and multiculturalism (Kipfer and Keil 2002:236). Constructed as a tolerant place of “ethnic harmony”, Toronto’s multiculturalism is used to market the city and to attract business and tourism (Kipfer and Keil 2002:236-237).

Indicative of this marketing of diversity is an article featured in *Toronto Life*, a monthly magazine about entertainment, culture and politics. The first page of the article, “Eight portraits of the affluent, educated professionals flocking to Toronto from around the world” (Nov 12, 2012) by Carolyn Morris, features a globe with Toronto pin-pointed and the heading “Becoming Torontonian”. It begins: “As the global economy fizzes, our city is being inundated with a new cohort of foreign professionals. They’re coming for the stable economy, the chart-topping livability and the promise of a steady job. Meet the new refugees.” The article features pictures of affluent professionals in their well-kept homes or luxury rental apartments. Their names and professions caption the photos, while direct quotes explain why they moved to Toronto. The profiled people include University of Toronto professors from Oxford, an architect from Madrid, doctors from Boston, doctors from Mexico City, an investment VP from London, banking and
sales professionals from San Jose and Costa Rica, graphic and industrial designers from Belgrade, Serbia, and a corporate tax manager and campus recruiter from Edinburgh, Scotland. Many of these professionals sing the praises of Toronto’s diversity:

1. “I was attracted to Toronto because I heard about how diverse it is”
2. “the city allows you to keep your ethnic identity”
3. “we were happy to find that the kids at the playground talk in all different languages”

The article espouses an urban competitive model: Toronto attracts affluent and educated professionals because it is stable, livable and diverse. It is quite alarming that the author called these elite migrants “refugees”. Constrained as economic refugees, created by the uneven global recession, the new refugee is highly skilled. Whereas “old refugees” were imagined to be attracted to Canada’s democracy, stability and benevolent welfare-state (see Chapter 3), here “new refugees” are attracted to Toronto’s economic stability and livability as a competitive and prosperous urban city.

Toronto’s official motto, “Diversity Our Strength”, conveys how central diversity is to the branding of Toronto as a global city (Stasiulis et al. 2011:124). Elected in 2003, Mayer David Miller’s office, like TSCA, focused on progressive ideals of “sustainability, diversity, quality of life, local democracy” (Boudreau et al. 2009:205), using neoliberal tools such as private-public partnerships that by then were “common-sense” (Boudreau et al. 2009:198). This mix, which has been called neoreformism by Boudreau et al. (2009), incorporates many aspects of neoliberalism, but is not reducible to it. For instance, as part of the quality of life agenda, investment in public transit and affordable housing are viewed as important. However, the risks of social exclusion are framed as economic risks, ones that TCSA attempts to address in its support of redistributive programs.33 While the TCSA emphasize that they are a non-partisan group and that their initiatives are based on consensus, they do not discuss how a select number of “stakeholders” are forming the consensus: it is far from democratic. Consensus-building public-private partnerships such as TCSA are dominated by business needs and “consensus has the effect of delegitimizing more radical forms of critiques and politics” (Boudreau et al. 2009:208). Furthermore, entrepreneurialism reinforces “the processes of polarization and exclusion that disproportionately

33 For example, see Kelly (2013) for a rich discussion of the revitalization of Toronto’s Regent Park, Canada’s largest public housing project.
affect women, first-nation people, new immigrants, and people of colour” (Kipfer and Keil 2002:237). The competitive city thus creates the very problems it aims to ameliorate.

As Kipfer and Keil argue “competitive city governance must be seen as a new form of managing and regulating the longer process of restructuring by which the Toronto region was transformed from the core city of the Canadian political economy into a second-tier global city for transnational finance capital” (2002:230). In Toronto, jobs largely in manufacturing left the urban core in the 1990s for suburbs and exurban locations. Toronto shifted from an industrial mixed to a more service-based economy (Boudreau 2009:44). As manufacturing industries and (male, white, European immigrant) working-class populations declined in the city centre, the urban middle classes grew in the 1980s and 1990s (Boudreau 2009:47). The latter have come to dominate the “discourse on urbanity” and to occupy “the new and shiny spaces close to the downtown and the cultural spaces of the postmodern city” (Boudreau et al. 2009:47).34

To achieve the goals laid out in Enough Talk, the TCS Alliance helped establish the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) in 2003, which brings the for-profit and the non-profit sectors together with an Intergovernmental Relations Committee (Andrew 2011:63). I interviewed a few employees at the TRIEC office, which to my surprise was located at Bloor and University – a prestigious address bordering the affluent Yorkville neighbourhood and the University of Toronto. As I arrived at the office, I wondered how much the rent was and how corporate partnerships must warrant such a space. I had expected a more humble location for a new initiative, where rent would be more reasonable. It is significant that the glittery spaces of the entrepreneurial city are not where I primarily conducted fieldwork. Many of my informants lived in run-down or aging high-rises built in modernist style in the 1960s and 1970s. They do not live in the condos that have popped up exponentially along the downtown waterfront, many of which were bought by international investors. Rather in the suburbs, we meet in the strip malls marked by what sociologists call “ethnic entrepreneurialism”, small businesses that sell “ethnic” foods, products and services. But the TRIEC office across from the new post-modernist addition to the Royal Ontario Museum is situated in a space where the sidewalks nearby were redone in the revitalization of a wealthy shopping district that houses

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34 For instance, “the condominium and loft boom of the late 1990s and early 2000s…replaced 75,000 low-income residents with 60,000 professional middle-class residents between 1971 and 1991 alone” (Kipfer and Keil 2002:250, see also Kelly 2013).
Prada and Louis Vuitton. It is not surprising, then, that a settlement worker, in a crammed office tells me they find TRIEC to be out of touch with their client-base, which included migrants from a variety of class backgrounds. It is indicative of increasing income polarization in global cities – where skilled immigrants are supposed to occupy neighbourhoods such as Bloor and University as professionals, not working at a Tim Horton’s in the suburbs. Since doing fieldwork the city has continued to become more “world class”. Five star hotels have popped up one after the other to fill the void in the market that previously marred Toronto as not-quite-world-class. Donald Trump came to town along with other high-end real-estate developers. I did not conduct any of my interviews with new immigrants amongst such downtown developments. Rather, I met informants in the East and West ends of the city and in the suburbs, but never in the revitalized Liberty Village or Distillery District, or by the ROM or Art Galley, all built environments that embody the shift from a Fordist to a post-Fordist city, from a managerial to an entrepreneurial city.

Employment growth in global cities, however, exists not only for the middle-upper classes, but also in low wage service sectors (Boudreau et al. 2009:47). Global cities, like Toronto, “have become a strategic terrain for…the contradictions of the globalization of capital” (Sassen 2010:89). Whereas, the dominant narratives of globalization focus on the upper circuits of capital and its hypermobility, the lifestyles of professionals generates demand for low-paid service workers (often low-paid women and new immigrants) (Sassen 2010). The growing “serving class” and tendency for social polarization is integral to Toronto’s new economy. So while Canada actively recruited skilled professionals, many ended up underemployed in contingent and low-paying jobs in the tertiary sector. These workers can rarely afford to live downtown.

TRIEC: Hireimmigrants.ca

In a smart boardroom at TRIEC, my interviewee Paul, echoed Enough Talk, noting that “helping employers do a better job of integrating skilled immigrants into the workforce [was] identified as an issue that was effecting the economic and social well-being of people in the Toronto area.” TRIEC was formed in 2004 as “a means of taking action. TRIEC’s first initiative

35 Liberty Village and the Distillery District are loft, condominium and shopping districts in abandoned inner city warehouses and former industrial districts (Kipfer and Keil 2002:244).
was to set up Career Bridge, an internship program for skilled immigrants through a relationship with Career Edge (see Chapter 7). The program is housed in this latter organization and is not run by TRIEC. Secondly, they also used a consultant (IBM) to come up with 19 promising practices. Paul noted:

“that name is deliberately chosen because I think this is an evolving science. We are not at best practices yet and the approach they took was that based on statistics…6 out of 10 that are coming to the GTA are either unemployed or underemployed and are taking longer to get integrated at an appropriate level.36 On the other side of that since there are 4 out of 10 who are being effectively employed there must be some employers out there who have or are developing policies, procedures, and practices that allow them to identify, recruit, interview, hire skilled immigrants. So the approach they took was let’s find those employers…find out what they’re doing through case studies and create a body of knowledge that we can use to help other employers to learn how to address this issue.”

These promising practices constituted (with other materials) the content for the website hireimmigrants.ca which was launched in 2005, and which remains the core of what TRIEC does. The website defines skilled immigrants who “hold the key to Canada’s economic growth and prosperity…as individuals who have immigrated to Canada with post-secondary education and/or professional training and experience.” They received funding from the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (CIC) to disseminate this information to employer networks throughout the GTA. This “raising awareness” approach problematically assumes that the dissemination of knowledge will enable social change.

Nevertheless, the employer case studies that illustrate promising practices do challenge, to some extent, the need for “Canadian experience”, for they focus on recognizing the skills and credentials of immigrants. Some companies even provide language training (a promising practice), while other case studies suggest employers need not be so concerned with accent. The companies featured in the case studies, however, were generally large companies that were either started by immigrants and/or had a shortage of applicants. For instance, the case study on Deloitte [a large professional services firm] mentions that the company values global experience “especially in light of extreme shortages the firm faced two years ago.” And noted that “The firm searches for skills competencies and relevant experience – even if it’s international” (emphasis

International experience is clearly not prioritized above Canadian experience, despite selling diversity discourses, but it has become a business imperative for some companies. Hireimmigrants.ca also focuses on selling diversity by discussing how some ethnic markets in Canada are large enough for companies to target them (i.e. South Asian and Chinese). Canadian banks, in particular, have targeted “ethnic communities”, running ads in Cantonese, Mandarin, English, Punjabi and Hindi (Flavelle and Bhattacharya 2007). As I had observed, and as confirmed by many informants as well, the financial sector was the most invested in the selling diversity discourse. In Paul’s words, it: “has a lot to do with the kinds of products that they sell; I mean, it’s a business case issue for them…they recognize first of all that their customer base is changing and they need to…reflect their customer base in terms of servicing the customers.” The larger organizations that have large retail operations such as RBC, Manulife and TD bank “buy-in” to the business case for hiring immigrants. TRIEC’s target audience, however, was small and medium sized employers because that is where the economic growth was perceived to be coming from and where the majority of jobs are created.

Indeed, the greatest challenge for TRIEC was getting medium and small employers to “buy-in” to the business imperative of hiring skilled immigrants. TRIEC employees felt that employers have a short-term horizon and are not looking at the looming demographic issue - that customer and employee bases are changing - although it is the most important factor affecting businesses. Since many medium and small sized employers do not recognize this, TRIEC aims to help them learn to get ahead of the curve. Paul cites a study by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB), which reported that employers would run without people and turn down business growth because they do not have the staff, and do not want to look at different sources for employees. In Paul’s words, “they do not want to change since they have not hit the wall yet”. He noted that there is a different attitude in Alberta, because they are desperate for employees. However, policy analysts continually provide statistics to support the view that employers will ‘hit the wall’ in the future. For instance, then HRSDC Minister Joe Volpe, stated (in January 20, 2004): “Between 1991 and 1996, immigrants accounted for 71% of the labour force growth in Canada. Between 2011 and 2016, they will account for 100%” (hireimmigrants.ca). Numerous media accounts, reposted by hireimmigrants.ca, also promote this business-case for hiring immigrants. A Toronto Star article, titled “Bay St. faces ‘talent crisis,’ study warns. Crunch expected over next decade unless boomer exodus countered,”
reports that “Toronto’s financial-services sector could face a skills shortage in the next decade” and thus recommends “the industry target younger workers, new immigrants and retired and soon-to-be retired financial services workers” (Prashad 2007). Another article, “Immigrants Make up Large Part of Workforce,” reports that although employers do not welcome the extra costs of hiring immigrants, “and think the onus is on immigrants to adapt to Canadian business” it will become unavoidable in the future due to demographics (Belgrave 2007). Nevertheless, many businesses did not buy-in to the competitive creative city logic and competitive austerity still rules the low-income service and manufacturing sectors (Boudreau et al. 2009:194).

Another integration challenge organizations such as TRIEC and TCSA highlight, is the sheer volume of people immigrating to Toronto. Paul notes that if we do not integrate them more quickly there will be social implications; for instance, the recent reports of the growing poverty levels in Toronto are not coincidental. The media, TRIEC and TSCA worry that “if immigrants cannot find jobs suited to their educations and skills, social tension may increase.” Ensuring prosperity, then, is also about minimizing the potentially negative effects of “social exclusion”. TRIEC clearly recognizes that immigrants have skills and thus challenges the skills deficient model. They also importantly urge employers to modify their institutional practice. But

37 He is referring to the “Colour of Poverty Campaign” (see footnote 38).
38 For instance, while conducting fieldwork there was a growing concern over the concentration of racialized poverty in particular areas. The non-profit sector accordingly targeted priority neighbourhoods that were under-serviced. Strong Neighbourhoods: A Call to Action by the United Way (2005), outlines recommendations of a Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force, made up of municipal and provincial government officials and representatives from community groups, labour and business (Boudreau et al. 2009:136). This report builds on Poverty by Postal Code (United Way 2004), which addresses growing neighbourhood poverty and inadequate infrastructure. It identified nine neighbourhoods in need of investment. The reports argue: “Strong neighbourhoods mean safer streets, engaged, active residents, and ultimately, a more prosperous economy. This benefits everyone in Toronto…The neighbourhood strategy we are recommending addresses one of the most deeply troubling developments in Toronto: patterns of social exclusion based on geography that constitute a threat to the health, well being, and prosperity of everyone in our City” (United Way 2005:3, cited in Boudreau et al. 2009:136). This strategy constitutes an attempt to address deficits caused by uneven development. The reports characterization of “money to be spent as an “investment,” rather than viewing it as supporting social entitlements of citizens, underscores the entrepreneurial mode that characterizes urban governance in Toronto” (Boudreau et al. 2009:137). It is also based on a partnership model that includes private investment and it aims to eliminate “social threats” posed by underserved neighbourhoods. In these reports, it is geography and infrastructure that cause social exclusion rather than systemic problems of capitalist development (Boudreau et al. 2009:137). See Kelly (2013) for more on social mix urban development in Toronto.
TRIEC also simultaneously promoted immigrants adapting to unfair hiring standards (e.g. gain Canadian work experience through internships, see Chapter 7). Furthermore, TRIEC’s initiatives aimed to achieve social change by selling the economic value of diversity. Employer’s “buy-in” to hiring skilled immigrants will thus ebb and flow with the market. Finally, since these programs focus on individual immigrants and employers and avoid addressing systemic inequalities (e.g. racism or discrimination), they are unlikely to redress the un(der)employment of skilled immigrants as well as the high incidence of poverty among newcomers (Stasiulis et al. 2011:118).

When I asked Paul what he thought TRIEC did well, he noted that the best thing they had done was develop high-profile partnerships that allowed them to engage with the United Way and other large organizations directly to achieve more productive results. In addition to working on a series of awareness campaigns, TREIC was also part of monthly meetings with government officials. While TRIEC’s partnerships with for-profit organizations such as Manulife Financial enabled it to garner enough support to influence policy and to receive funding for internships, these same partnerships meant that what was emphasized was the “business case” for diversity in line with the ‘competitive city’ logic. It was the dominant discourse underlying City Hall’s practices as well as prominent public-private partnerships, which have informed provincial and federal policy (Boudreau et al. 2009:197). These public-private partnerships were thus more responsive than bureaucratic governments, but at the expense of democratic consultation with the public. Their civic action was based on their own alliances’ assessment of ‘the integration problem’ in Toronto. Some TRIEC employees were openly hostile to academic and activist critique, feeling that there had been “enough talk”: they were done consulting. Some immigrant settlement workers accordingly felt marginalized by TRIEC. Their agencies had been involved in settlement for decades and yet TRIEC seemed interested only in partnering with the largest and most established immigrant services agencies and other prominent civic leaders. Although these partnerships are concerned with other immigrant settlement issues, beyond employment, the economic competitiveness discourse tends to override “an enhanced quality of urban life” discourse (Stasiulis et al. 2011:128). Consequently, TRIEC “has relegated the concerns of lower skilled immigrants to the back burner” (Boudreau et al. 2009:95). In short, while TRIEC was instrumental in lobbying for support for services for skilled immigrants, the value of immigration is still tied to economic growth; therefore, fundamentally reproducing rather than challenging the
government’s perspective on immigration and its value that focuses on needing to compete for
talent and capital investment. The fundamental difference between the Toronto City Alliance’s
focus and that of the federal government’s was who should pay for integration services. While
TRIEC’s interventions challenged a deficit model of immigrant underemployment, they
nevertheless privileged a neoliberal ethical regime as the basis for inclusion, in which prosperity
is linked to the success of entrepreneurial individual immigrants, whose diversity is
commodified. ELT and TREIC both ultimately upheld an ideal skilled immigrant that
reproduced rather than challenged conditions that benefit the elite. The emergence of this ideal
immigrant must be understood in relation to the economic growth strategies of both the federal
government (see Chapter 3) and the City of Toronto, which aim to attract skilled workers in the
broader context of welfare state restructuring and in the regime of flexible accumulation (Harvey
1989).

Provincial and Federal Integration Programs

Since the signing of the Canada-Ontario Agreement, the province launched programs to
facilitate immigrant’s access into labour market, reflecting TRIEC’s priorities.39 The Ontario
Liberal leadership, starting in 2003, committed to investing in the labour market integration of
immigrants. Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) which is concerned with short-term
integration,40 during my fieldwork, offered immigrants who have been in Canada for less than
three years the following services: i) Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada Program
(LINC), ii) the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP), and iii) The HOST

39 It announced the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act (2006), which addresses 34
regulated profession in Ontario and established an internship program in Crown agencies and
ministries (Good 2009).
40 While the definition of integration in Canada is elusive, Will Kymlicka argues that: “We can
piece together some of the things which they see as crucial ingredients of integration: adapting a
Canadian identity rather than clinging exclusively to one’s ancestral identity; participating in
broader Canadian institutions rather than participating solely in ethnic-specific institutions;
learning an official language rather than relying solely on one’s mother-tongue; having inter-
ethnic friendships or even mixed-marriages rather than socializing entirely within one’s ethnic
the full and active participation in Canadian life and institutions and a commitment to the
broader society” (Tolley 2011:12). I explore what constitutes “integration” further in Chapter 2.
Program (now defunct) (Biles 2008:141). None of these programs specifically addressed the issues faced by professional immigrants. The Enhanced Language Training program (ELT), and the Foreign Credential Referral Office were thus created to address the skilled immigrant underemployment problem. CIC is not one of the large federal departments in terms of expenditures, and the majority are grants and contributions to third parties (Andrew 2011). Government funding, however, has increased in the 2000s as the integration of immigrants became viewed as an important issue (following the cutbacks of the 1990s). However, between 1996 and 2006 CIC’s “annual settlement program spending by CIC jumped from $235.4 million to $445.0 million” and continued to rise to $965.7 million by 2010 (Reitz et al. 2014:6).

ELT is the main service offered to skilled immigrants although they also rely on ISAP services. In addition to ELT, other initiatives specifically for foreign-trained professionals were introduced. Prior to arrival in Canada, skilled immigrants can access online resources and in select cities pre-arrival integration programs. For instance, in 2005 the Government of Canada launched the “Going to Canada Portal”, a “one-stop shop” for information on immigration to Canada (Tolley 2011:9). The Canadian Immigrant Integration Project for Federal Skilled Worker Applicants in India, China and the Philippines offers sessions on labour market integration. It identifies organizations that can assist new immigrants with credential recognition, licensing, language and skills training, and job search (Tolley 2011). The Foreign Credential Referral Office (FCRO) created in May 2007 aims to help newcomers get information on credentials.

Provincial credential assessment services, such as the World Education Services (WES) in Ontario were also created. In 2003, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) launched the Foreign Credential Recognition Program. Ontario’s Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, effective in 2007, required professional licensing bodies to have fair and transparent processes, timing for review and fees, and a written response explaining why one was not accepted, in addition to an appeal process. Additionally, they are audited by the fairness commissioner. In Ottawa, the Foreign Credentials Referral Office provides information to immigrants on credential procedures. Particular funding was given to improve the conditions of

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41 LINC offers basic language instruction. ISAP provides settlement services such as counseling on securing housing and how to use transportation, etc. The HOST program pairs newcomers with native-born Canadians to facilitate informal settlement assistance.
health and engineering professions in 2003 and 2004 respectively. By 2006 the government funded a number of bridge training programs. Chapters 4-6 examine the nature of these programs ethnographically.

Ethnographic Fieldwork in Toronto: Learning to Labour in the ‘Field’

This dissertation is based on approximately 16 months of full-time ethnographic fieldwork in 2008 and 2009, conducted in immigrant service agencies (ISAs) and in the immigrant settlement and integration sector more broadly. This fieldwork consisted of participant-observation and interviews with settlement workers, policy-makers and new immigrants. This research also included analysis of 10 individual employment trajectories over the span of at least a year following the above fieldwork period (several are over the course of three years) as well as follow-up research and interviews from 2009 to the present.

The multi-sited urban anthropological research I proposed to do required networking. I ordered 500 business cards from the University of Toronto: blue and white, conservative and professional, they legitimized my academic status. They proved to be a necessity, for business cards are exchanged promiscuously in Canadian “workplace culture”. I had to do what I would soon learn my informants were advised to do by employment counselors in order to find work in Canada. I practiced my 30-second introductory speech about my research to sound “natural” rather than rehearsed. I sent dozens of emails and made cold-calls that rarely received a response. Face-to-face networking was much more effective, but it took considerably more time. At the beginning of fieldwork, after my initial failures, it seemed difficult to know what to do, short of becoming a stalker. And when the response to my networking was deafening silence it became harder to continue. Out of desperation I found myself looking at the self-help section of my local bookstore. I picked up the old classic, Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway, by Dr. Susan Jeffers. After cynically reading it, I nonetheless scribbled the book’s title and other motivational quotes on paper, which I posted on my office bulletin board. I also made a checklist of daily fieldwork tasks.

The Internationally Educated Health Care Professional initiative launched in 2005 and the Canadian Council of Engineers introduced its own credential assessment service in 2003. Both of these initiatives aimed to improve licensing procedures for professional immigrants.

See Chapter 7 for more details on developments since I conducted fieldwork.
activities, set goals and continued to show up to events to network. In an environment in which the onus is on “you” to make it happen, it was easy to search out and internalize the expert advice that urged me to improve the self. After a few months the networking paid off and I made a number of important contacts in the non-profit sector. But some never panned out: big corporations and businesses whose diversity initiatives I was interested in were not keen on having me observe their daily practice. On some level, then, I understood the experiential frustration of new immigrants who had to build networks, but the difference was my business cards, my university degree and my embodied white Canadian professional self worked to my advantage – people gave me the benefit of the doubt. They assumed my degree proved my worthiness as a researcher, for my embodied self was familiar.

I conducted daily participant-observation at two different immigrant service agencies. This participant-observation focused on ELT as it was the primary program offered to skilled immigrants seeking employment. I examined a total of five ELT programs, observing and participating in three programs, from start to finish, at two different organizations. These classes offered training for people in the following sectors: engineering, health, financial, IT and customer service. I choose two organizations for comparative purposes, in order to be confident that the patterns I observed were indicative of the immigrant settlement sector, rather than particular to specific agencies. At one organization I was able to align myself with the students, while at the other, I was aligned more with the staff and teachers. At the first organization, guest speakers often mistook me for an immigrant (until I explained who I was for ethical reasons). At the second organization, I was clearly framed as an academic by the teacher. These differential alignments gave me a more holistic perspective of the sector.

The majority of my informants had come through the skilled worker stream, which privileges professional immigrants, although immigrants from the sponsored family class and refugee streams were eligible to take these classes (see Chapter 3). At both organizations the clients accessing the services were from a variety of countries, including: Albania, Bangladesh, Belarus, Brazil, China, Korea, Morocco, Pakistan, Syria, and Ukraine. A common small-talk question in Toronto, much to the annoyance of many racialized Canadians (see for example Thobani 2007), is “Where are you from?” I was asked this question by many of my informants. I began by saying, “Rural Ontario, near a small town of 6000, about an hour from Ottawa,” which of course led to the question: “No, where are you from originally?” I would reply, “I am
Canadian, my parents were born here.” After hearing this answer, one informant, Vivek, who emigrated from Bangladesh, told me ‘Oh you are lucky, you are Canadian-Canadian and you don’t have to worry about Canadian experience.’ The term Canadian-Canadian belies that in Toronto many are qualified or hyphenated Canadians. I thus occupied the subject position of a white Canadian-Canadian, particularly by virtue of my accent. If questioned further I gave more details, especially when I formed closer relationships with my informants. My family has lived in Canada for generations, but originally my mother’s side (Doerksen and Doerksen) emigrated here from Ukraine and were Dutch, Low German-speaking Mennonites. My maternal grandparents left the Mennonite community in Steinbach, Manitoba when they were married after WWII and after my grandmother’s mother moved with her younger children to Paraguay, fearing the draft and avoiding mandatory public schooling. My father’s family history (Scottish perhaps) is less clear, as my grandfather, from whom I inherited my surname Allan, was an orphan. My father’s mother (nee Schwerdfager) was from a German and French Canadian background. My paternal and maternal grandparents devoted their adult lives to a form of Evangelical Christianity that spurns the “outside world” by rejecting television, secular music, voting, and socializing with non-believers, among other things. Both my parents were raised in this religion, as was I until I stopped participating as a teenager. These aspects of my personal history led some people to see certain ethnic features in my comportment and view me as Christian. For instance, the conservative way in which I was raised was often used by some of my informants, particularly Muslim women, to explain why I did not conform to their stereotypes of Western women (e.g. as being immodest). I thus embodied a stereotypical White Christian Canadian-Canadian. Although my informants constantly “saw” things in my personal history that related to their lived experiences and this subject position unraveled in particular ways in close interpersonal relationships, it was always there as a specter – I embodied the ideal citizen that belonged to the nation and whose accent and English many aimed to emulate.

People who initially mistook me to be an immigrant were confused by my “good English” and Canadian accent and had a hard time reconciling these disjunctive social facts. I was often told my English was very good and as a result I became implicated in processes of governing immigrants who sought my advice on the proper way to speak. I also proof-read and edited resumes, cover-letters and assignments (for those who were taking courses at community colleges). Others wanted to merely meet with me to chat in English, for they believed talking
with me would improve their vocabulary. All of my informants, in order to be admitted into ELT classes, had to have had at least conversational English. However, I asked all of my informants if they would like to conduct formal interviews in a language other than English. Every single person denied this request as they saw practicing their English with me as a key opportunity. My informants generally related to my experience of being a university student – through my education, I was aspiring for the same middle-class life they were. Although my neighbourhood was nicer and my future more secure, for my husband had recently joined the labour market as a professional engineer.\footnote{44 My rapport with women outside the classroom was easier to sustain than with men, as I avoided being alone with men in their homes. However, I was lucky enough to be able to use my husband as a research assistant, particularly at parties where men and women were segregated. He is a professional engineer and was actively involved in discussing the field with many of my informants who were engineers, as a mentor formally and informally.}

In addition to capturing the nature of interactions in these agencies, I immersed myself in the life of my informants as much as possible, participating in events beyond the agencies and attending various kinds of social events, such as meals and celebrations. I traveled from familiar ground in the downtown core where most of the established immigrant service agencies are located (holdovers from post-war immigrant settlement patterns) to the far reaches of the GTA’s suburbs where the majority of new immigrants lived. The TTC (public transit) was my constant companion, as it was for the majority of my informants, both new immigrants and settlement workers. I had interviews downtown, on park benches, over picnic lunches and dinners, in coffee shops, but also in strip malls in the suburbs, over Chinese buffets or halal lunches and in people’s homes. Most lived in high rises, although I have helped new immigrants move out of cramped apartments to more spacious homes in the suburbs where I have had the pleasure of attending family and religious events.

I also attended workshops and events at other agencies as well as attended job fairs, recruiting sessions and other employment events recommended to internationally trained immigrants by immigrant service agencies. Additionally, I attended many conferences, workshops, and seminars in the immigrant integration field for academics, settlement workers, policy makers and immigrant advocates, which also enabled me to determine what data from my two key fieldsites was indicative of the sector as a whole. I also attended events held by social activist groups, and regional immigrant integration and employment initiatives. Before turning to
this ethnographic research, I will first outline how the highly skilled immigrant became prioritized as the ideal citizen by federal immigration policy.
Chapter 3
Attracting the Ideal Future Citizen: A Genealogy of the *Skilled Immigrant* in Canadian Immigration Policy

The Figure of the Skilled Immigrant

It was impossible not to like him. Naeem “Nick” Noorani’s enthusiasm was infectious, his spirit generous and his speech captivating. He had greeted me warmly at his office in a large commercial building in a suburb of Vancouver. It was a rainy day, grey and dismal, but luckily the office was located right next to a public transit stop. I walked down new clean white walled and carpeted hallways. Finding the right door, I enter a spacious room with a front desk and a few chairs that constituted the reception and waiting room. I was ushered into Naeem’s private office where he instantly tried to put me at ease. He wanted to make sure that I would get the information I needed from the interview, since he admitted he could go on and on forever. He was a talker. As an anthropologist who valued open-ended interviews that did not steer the conversation too forcefully from my own perspective, I let him talk. As our conversation wandered, he would often ask me questions and generously offered to send me further information about something we were talking about.

I had seen him speak several times before this meeting, for although he lived in Vancouver, he was at the forefront of the immigrant integration scene in Toronto as well. A charismatic public speaker and a successful entrepreneur he embodied the ideal (skilled) immigrant. He had actually capitalized on the struggles he and other immigrants experienced adjusting to life in Canada. His career entailed offering advice to new immigrants in the form of a magazine, a book and public speaking. When he first arrived in Canada in the 1990s, he, like so many other new (skilled) immigrants struggled to find work in his field. In 2008, he reported coming to Canada from Dubai ten years prior, although he grew up in India. When he came here he had years of experience in advertising, working for international brands like Coke-Cola. And yet he struggled: no one recognized his experience here, he had no “Canadian experience” and his first job was in telemarketing. He realized he was not alone. He was a resource for his friends “back home” on how things worked in Canada, which led to his writing of a book with his wife, *Arrival Survival*. Afterwards, he got emails from all over the world and welcomed strangers at airports. When he and his wife got laid off from their jobs, he pursued his dream of starting a
magazine for immigrants. Since no one recognized his experience, he ‘did what [he] needed to do’ and ‘transferred [his] skills to another career’ (in his own words). He similarly recommended immigrants make his or her Plan B Plan A, while also having a Plan C and D.

He was not only a successful entrepreneur, but he was dedicated to being a good and responsible Canadian citizen, by giving back to the nation. Prior to moving to Canada he had lived in Dubai, but he did not like how he could not be a citizen there. In one of his speeches he reported waiting to get his Canadian citizenship because he did not want to treat it as a right, but rather he wanted to earn it. Indeed, he was self-sufficient and he took responsibility not only for his own employment, but he also contributed to the privatization of integration. He addressed, through the private sector, the needs of other new immigrants. He entrepreneurially served a niche and growing market in the vacuum of government supports based on his unique experience as an underemployed internationally trained professional. He was also critical of “ethnic silos” and recommended new immigrants get to know their fellow Canadians. At the time of our interview in 2009, he was a supporter of immigration Minister Kenney whom he consulted with. He was thus a “good Canadian” economically and socially: responsible, entrepreneurial, civic-minded and willing to “integrate” into the mainstream. He made other Canadians feel at ease, for he embodied the right attitudes and behaviours. He had even provided an anglicized name for those who felt uncomfortable pronouncing his given name. He espoused what so many Canadians imagined to be emblematic of Canadian character - generosity and entrepreneurialism – and of what thus constituted a “good” immigrant. How is it that this figure, of which Naeem “Nick” Noorani is emblematic, came to be the ideal immigrant-citizen in Canada?

This chapter traces the emergence of the ideal immigrant, as a highly skilled, entrepreneurial and responsible citizen in Canada’s immigration policy in the 1990s. Historically, immigration has been influenced by two contending issues: social/cultural considerations (religion, race/ethnicity, values etc.) and economic considerations (labour needs, economies of scale, demographics etc.). While the need to balance these two, often contradictory biopolitical considerations was enduring, the nature of, and ideology behind, what was deemed an adequate balance changed, as did the ideal immigrant and the ideal model for service delivery in immigrant settlement (which I explore further in Chapters 2 and 4). In terms of social considerations, Canada’s early immigration policies were explicitly racist, based on the erasure of aboriginal peoples, and motivated by the desire to “Keep Canada White”. However, Canada
needed to balance the goal of “maintaining the whiteness of the nation” with providing an adequate supply of labour for economic development (Thobani 2007:83). When there was insufficient labour available from racially or ethnoculturally preferred countries, the government made exceptions (Abu-Laban 1998:71). Thobani eloquently argues that “White Canada” united European immigrants, despite differences, in comparison to racialized “Others” (2007). While this was certainly the case, difference was still constructed within “White Canada” along ethnic and class lines and was fraught by sliding notions of whiteness according to one’s perceived assimilability. However, when race and nationality were eliminated as a justifiable means of exclusion in 1967, race and ethnicity became culturalized, as they were under multiculturalism policy in the 1970s and 1980s. Through the latter, language and culture came to stand in for race and ethnicity.

I give a brief sketch of immigration policy (since Confederation) in order to show how what now gets constructed as characteristic of Canada’s historic compassion and benevolence, was always the result of necessity rather than mere good-will. In government reports from the 1980s onwards, the nation and Canadians are presented as more or less unified in valuing integrity and honesty. Canada as an honest nation is presented as susceptible to abuse rather than as a perpetrator of inequality. Immigrants and refugee claimants become the abusers of Canada’s generosity, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s. In the 1990s multiculturalism becomes problematized as divisive and as prioritizing “special interest” groups and immigration policy begins instead to focus on the economic benefits of individualized forms of “diversity”.

In terms of economic considerations the ideal immigrant aligned with the dominant view of the general nature of the economy as predominantly primary, secondary or tertiary. In the early 1900s the government’s ideal immigrant was an experienced farmer who would settle the West. After World War II, with the shift from a primary to a secondary economy, skilled technicians and professionals, who were deemed essential to building a modern industrial economy, were desirable. In the 1970s and 1980s, the focus is on filling increasingly skilled occupational shortages. “Skilled” labour steadily became more highly skilled as the tertiary economy became viewed as the key to economic growth and by the mid-1990s the ideal immigrant has the flexible and transferable skills, seen as required by Canada’s knowledge-based economy.
In this chapter, I focus in detail on the key shift in the 1990s when welfare state restructuring cast the ideal immigrant (and future-citizen) as entrepreneurial, self-sufficient and active. While the 1990s were characterized by roll-back neoliberalism with cut-backs to settlement services and a concern with reducing the costs of immigration, in the 2000s roll-out neoliberalism focused on providing programs that fostered self-sufficiency and facilitated the integration of desirable immigrants (see Chapter 2). I argue that in the 1990s diversity is valued when racially or ethnically marked bodies embody entrepreneurial values as well as characteristics historically associated with white (neo)liberal male subjects. The ideal immigrant is viewed as likely to assimilate due to their value(s) as possessors of human capital. An emphasis on skills shifts the focus from “culture” or “race”; that is, skills deficits stand in for seeming “cultural deficiencies” in discourses on integration. In short, I trace the shift from an explicitly racialized discourse of belonging to a skills based discourse of integration. The immigration system’s focus on human capital privileged an upper class, educated global elite that was as like middle-upper class Canadians as possible, if not white. I thus argue here, and throughout the dissertation, that the ideal immigrant is white-washed, assimilated with middle-class Anglo Western values by virtue of their skills.

This chapter is based on both secondary sources and archival research. I focus on select, key, policy documents to discuss in-depth. In particular, I examine discussion papers that precede major policy shifts, and new acts, for they offer insight into the key debates surrounding significant changes. The analysis of these policy documents follows a Foucauldian approach. Other critical scholars, such as Thobani (2007), have also conducted rich and thoughtful Foucauldian analyses of immigration policy in Canada. Her account importantly challenges official and mainstream narratives of immigration, which paint too rosy a picture of Canada’s “benevolence” and “generous” immigration policy. However, Thobani gives too much authority to the government and its policies in determining outcomes for immigrants: the state overdetermines both immigrant and white national subjectivities. Her analysis often loses sight of how history is the result of struggles between social actors and politically mobilized groups. In contrast, my account aims to show how immigration policy is the result of such struggles, a fact that is, at times, evident in the archives, but at other times requires one to research elsewhere (hence I rely on secondary sources as well). I accordingly aim to show how government and
mobilized political groups mutually shape each other; that is, how "contestation, resistances and social antagonisms shape rule" (O'Malley et al. 1997:510).

Immigration in a Settler Colony: From Confederation until WWII

Government and mainstream academic accounts of the history of Canadian immigration frequently begin, in a clichéd manner, with the assertion that all Canadians are immigrants. These accounts either erase or minimize the existence and colonization of Aboriginal peoples. In contrast, several critical scholars of immigration have emphasized Canada’s status as a settler colony (Thobani 2007, Abu-Laban 1998, Razak 2002). This framework demonstrates that “settler societies-cum-liberal democracies” like Canada – imagined as white – are founded through the violent exclusion of indigenous “others” and on the “legal negation of Aboriginal sovereignty” (Thobani 2007:73). For instance, following Confederation (1867), the Indian Act (1876) “organized the governance of Native peoples separately from that of nationals” (Thobani 2007:48). Furthermore, until the liberalization of immigration in 1967, immigration legislation prioritized the immigration of “preferred races”, characterizing “Europeans as the ‘true’ subjects of the nation” (Thobani 2007:75). As I will show below, citizenship was denied “to most people of colour or, if allowed, only erratically and as matters of exception” (Thobani 2007:74). The nation’s racial identity and legal citizenship were thereby solidified as white (Thobani 2007:75).

45 Here are just two examples from government reports: “Canada is a product of immigration. Originally settled by the French at the beginning of the 17th century it began to take on its British complexion after the Seven Years War which ended in 1763” (Kalbach, Manpower and Immigration, 1974:1). “All Canadians, unless they belong to the tiny minority descended from the country’s original inhabitants, are immigrants or descendants of immigrants” (Immigration Policy Perspectives 1974:13).

46 Drawing on Mbembe, Thobani locates three forms of violence perpetuated against aboriginal peoples in Canada. First, founding violence was justified by Europeans who “as Christians, claimed the sanction of a divine sovereign in their conquest of the peoples they designated heathens” (Thobani 2007:42). Secondly, the violence of conquest was turned into authorizing authority, or rather, entrenched in and sustained through law by the imposition of European legal regimes that secularized Christian divine law (Thobani 2007:44). Finally, maintaining sovereignty was achieved through European control over land and its resources, particularly through the reserve system.
Prior to confederation, in 1763, Britain formally took control of New France. Its plan to settle the territory with English-speaking settlers proved overly optimistic and the Quebec Act of 1774 retained some vestiges of French rule, such as “French civil law in matters related to landholding and marriage, as well as the maintenance of the Roman Catholic Church in the colony” (Tolley 2011:19). Nevertheless, after confederation the federal government prioritized English Canada in immigration policy and attempted to “manage” Quebec only when it had to (when there was significant protest), which culminated in the 1960s Quiet Revolution and the subsequent introduction of Official Bilingualism. The British Anglo majority thus also dominated the European whiteness of the Canadian nation.

The “Stalwart Peasant”: The Key to Canada’s Primary Economy (1867-1945)

The government attempted to encourage immigration to the prairies in the late 19th century. In particular, Clifford Sifton, who was appointed Minister of the Interior (responsible for immigration) in 1896, championed aggressive expansion. He believed the key to general Canadian prosperity was large-scale agricultural immigration, for “if the primary resources were developed, then industry and commerce would follow” (Knowles 2007:84). He thus aimed to attract farmers, stating: “I think that a stalwart peasant in a sheepskin coat, born to the soil, whose forefather have been farmers for ten generations, with a stout wife and a half-dozen children, is good quality” (cited in Knowles 2007:91-92). The phrase “stalwart peasant in a sheepskin coat” is often quoted by historians and has come to symbolize the ideal immigrant of this era. However, female domestic workers were also heavily recruited, primarily from Britain and Europe (Vosko 2000). Additionally, the government had a list of “preferred” immigrants, according to nationality: “at the top were experienced British and American farmers, followed by those from Northern Europe. Immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe were less desirable, and “coloureds” were not desirable at all” (Ploeg 2000:10). Additionally, in response to concerns in British Columbia about the large numbers of Chinese migrants who had worked on the railway, in 1885 the government passed an act to restrict and regulate Chinese immigration by levying a head-tax (Knowles 2007:72-3). In 1883 the Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald stated that a Chinese was “a sojourner in a strange land...and he has no common interest with
us…gives us his labor and is paid for it, and is valuable, the same as a threshing machine or any other agricultural implement which we may borrow…and return to its owner” (cited in Knowles 2007:72). While Chinese workers had provided valuable labour, they were denied citizenship, by virtue of their racial “undesirability”.

Economic necessity, however, led to the government’s courting of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, including from Ukraine, Poland, Romania, Hungary, and Russia (Knowles 2007:102). Although Sifton’s policies attracted substantial numbers of agricultural settlers from Europe “approximately 70 percent of the newcomers obtained work in industry and transportation” despite the fact that Sifton sought to discourage urban dwellers who might crowd urban centres and increase unemployment (Knowles 2007:103). Capitalists, who wanted industrial workers, however, viewed Southern and Eastern European immigrants as ideal labourers, for they were “perceived to be willing to commit themselves to menial forms of railway work” (Vosko 2000:49). Although these desires “conflicted with the Canadian government’s nation-building objectives, which involved treating the white British agricultural settler as the only ‘desirable’ type of immigrant, in reality they complemented its expansionary project” (Vosko 2000:253). However, these newcomers from Central and Southeastern Europe were met with hostility, as many Canadians viewed them as “undesirable settlers”, who did not assimilate into the dominant Anglo society (Knowles 2007:104). Concern about inassimilable ethnic groups led to calls for Canadianization and more selective immigration policy (Knowles 2007:104).

While for Sifton economic considerations were more important than ethnic origins (to a point), his successor, Frank Oliver disagreed:

> It is not merely a question of filling that country with people who will produce wheat and buy manufactured goods. It is a question of the ultimate results of the efforts being put forward for the building up of a Canadian nationality so that our children may form one of the great civilized nations of the world…This can never be accomplished if the preponderance of the population should be of such class and character as will deteriorate rather than elevate the conditions of our people and our country at large (Knowles 2007:107).

He accordingly preferred urban British immigrants over agriculturalists from Central and Southeastern Europe (Knowles 2007:106-7). Furthermore, without explicitly excluding “undesirable” and racialized immigrants, Orders in Council such as the “continuous journey
regulation in 1908 made it very difficult for certain immigrants (from India) to land in Canada (Ploeg 2000:10). Other means of excluding immigrants based on race continued. For example, the cabinet had the authority to prohibit the entry of “immigrants belonging to any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada” (Knowles 2007:111). Although Oliver’s government aspired to have a more selective immigration policy and succeeded in reducing immigration from Asia, immigrants continued to come from Central and Southeastern Europe (Knowles 2007:123).

Between 1915 and 1945 war, a recession, uneven prosperity, a depression, and another war essentially halted immigration. Immigrants who were admitted were from the Commonwealth countries (Knowles 2007:135). Following the outbreak of the war, the government passed the War Measure Act, that granted the government unprecedented authority (Knowles 2007:128) and which was invoked in the internment of “enemy aliens”. For instance, foreign-born Canadians of German, Italian, Ukrainian and Japanese descent were dispossessed and interned during the Second World War (Tolley 2011:23). From 1933-45 Canada also generally refused to grant asylum to Jewish refugees who were fleeing Nazi persecution (Tolley 2011:23).

In short, from Confederation until the end of WWII, immigration agents would “target farmers with capital, agricultural labourers, and female domestics, preferably from Great Britain, the United States, and Northern Europe, in that order” (Knowles 2007:69). As Thobani argues “their exaltation as preferred races, including the women and working classes among them, juxtaposed their gendered and classed inequalities within a shared racial/national interest” (Thobani 2007:83). Exceptions were made to meet labour and economic needs, but even these exceptions had limits. While Southern and Eastern Europeans were at times admitted, Black and Asian immigrants were excluded from citizenship, viewed as inassimilable (Thobani 2007:90).

Nation-building in Canada’s Industrial Economy: Post-WWII (1946-1966)

Persons were restricted from immigrating to Canada if they did not come from their country of birth or citizenship by a continuous journey through a ticket purchased in that country. This effectively bared immigrants coming from India by boat.
Canadian immigration policy was opened up during the post-war economic boom that lasted, with minor fluctuations, until the early 1970s. During this period more occupationally diverse groups of immigrants were admitted (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:316). However, policy still clearly prioritized traditional “preferred nationalities”, as demonstrated by Prime Minister Mackenzie King’s statement on immigration policy in 1947:

The government will seek…to ensure the careful selection and permanent settlement of such numbers of immigrants as can advantageously be absorbed in our national economy…I wish to make it quite clear that Canada is perfectly within her rights in selecting the persons whom we regard as desirable future citizens. It is not a ‘fundamental human right’ of any alien to enter Canada. It is a privilege…The people of Canada do not wish, as a result of mass immigration, to make a fundamental alteration in the character of our population…Any considerable Oriental immigration would…be certain to give rise to social and economic problems (cited in Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:317).

King advocated restricting immigration from the Orient (outside Europe) to preserve the character of Canada’s population. However, although the King government had begun to repatriate Japanese Canadians after the war, they stopped its efforts in 1947 under pressure from the media and civil liberties organizations (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:339). Due to strong objections to the Chinese Immigration Act, it was also repealed at this time (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:326). Also under pressure, in the fall of 1948, French citizens were given the same preferred status as British subjects (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:327).

In June 1950, while the government maintained the preference for British, Irish, French, and American immigrants, the admissible classes of European immigrants was “to include any healthy applicant of a good character who had skills needed in Canada and who could readily integrate into Canadian society” (Knowles 2007:168-169). In the 1950s there were also provisions for greater family sponsorship (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:328). However, when prosperity returned to Northern and Western Europe, traditional source countries for Canadian immigration aimed to retain their skilled labour. Since labour shortages persisted, business lobbied for the relaxation of immigration restrictions (Ploeg 2000:11). Advocates of immigration argued that a larger population contributed to the growth of the Canadian economy by providing a larger domestic consumer market, economies of scale and increased productivity (Knowles 2007:156). The government also received mounting pressure from the international community and from a number of domestic ethnic organizations, calling for “a more humane immigration...
policy” in response “to the plight of the displaced persons [DPs]” (Knowles 2007:158). In response to this pressure and because it was “convinced that the economic boom was dependent on securing adequate labour” the government began to accept applications from Europe’s DP camps (Ploeg 2000:11). The main motivation for admitting DPs was not humanitarian, but rather to meet Canada’s expanding labour market shortages. Indeed, displaced persons were selected on the basis of their “potential value to the Canadian economy” (Knowles 2007:165). Ethnic origin and political/ideological views (e.g. communist) were also evaluated in the selection process to ensure they would likely be “good Canadians”. As per the federal government’s instructions, Canadian officials routinely rejected Jewish applicants (for being of undesirable ethnic origins) despite being the most persecuted (Knowles 2007:165).

After WWII, Canada was actively involved in establishing the United Nations and with the granting of independence to India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Burma, and Israel in 1947-8 it became increasingly difficult for Canada to discriminate against certain nationalities and races and maintain good international and trade relations (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:317). Canada thus signed agreements with the governments of India, Pakistan, and Ceylon in 1951 to accept limited numbers of their citizens as immigrants (Knowles 2007:170). Similarly, in the early 1950s when Canada’s discriminatory immigration policies threatened to affect Canadian-Caribbean trade (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:341), and when European and French Canadian domestics could not meet the demand for domestic workers, the Department of Citizenship and Immigration implemented a contract labour scheme for a small number of domestics ‘of exceptional merit’ from Jamaica and Barbados. During this period, then, explicit racism in immigration policy began to become problematic, due to pressure from the international community and domestic ethnic organizations.

Despite efforts to recruit British, American and French citizens, by 1958, British immigration had dropped and Central and Southeastern European immigration was steadily increasing (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:336). Also, many of the increasing numbers of sponsored immigrants were viewed as unskilled and nearly illiterate, and “ill equipped to enter the Canadian work force” (Knowles 2007:178). In the 1960s the perceived demand for higher

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48 The government thus attempted to restrict sponsored immigration (particularly of southern Italians), in order to curtail the immigration of unskilled immigrants and to “check the too rapid growth of ethnic neighbourhoods” (Knowles 2007:181). However, church, community, and
skilled and technical professionals in the emerging modern economy in addition to continued international pressure, led to an immigrant’s country of origin becoming less important. Rather than recruit agricultural workers who (ideally) settled in rural areas, skilled trades people and professionals who settled in urban centres were sought. Through new immigration regulations in 1962, the government aimed to increase the number of skilled workers immigrating to Canada and to decrease the number of unskilled workers, while also eliminating discrimination “based on colour, race, and creed” (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:338). For the first time in Canadian history, race and nationality were not used as means to exclude non-sponsored immigrants and there were no longer provisions for preferred countries (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:338). The 1962 regulations admitted unsponsored immigrants “who by reason of his education, training, skills, or other special qualifications is likely to be able to establish himself successfully in Canada…and has either sufficient means to support himself or has secured employment” (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:338). However, family sponsorship still had racial restrictions, and immigration officers had discretionary power to determine how these criteria were interpreted (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:338, 361).

In 1963 when the liberal government of Leaster B. Pearson came into power, although the economy was strong, unemployment was still high and unskilled labour was high among the unemployed (Knowles 2007:191). The government thus continued to emphasize prospective immigrants’ skills and “to integrate immigration policy more closely with labour-market conditions” by creating the Department of Manpower and Immigration in 1966, amalgamating National Employment Services, elements of Department of Labour and The Department of Citizenship/Immigration service (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:355). The Department of Manpower and Immigration commissioned the White Paper to review immigration, which it issued in 1966.

Ethnic groups had become politically salient in a number of urban electorates. The government’s perceived attempt to curb Italian immigration by restricting family sponsorship rights was abandoned in the face of protests from ethnic and community groups.

49 Immigration “accounted for two-thirds of the labour force’s increase between 1950 and 1955 and for almost half of the total increase between 1950 and 1960. In fact, many of the new professional and new skilled jobs were filled by immigrants – at an enormous saving in national outlay on professional and educational training in Canada” (Knowles 2007:178).

50 A citizen or permanent resident of Canada may sponsor certain relatives under Canada’s family class immigration stream.
The White Paper (1966)

The White Paper supports immigration as contributing to the economic growth of Canada, while determining the right kind of immigrants that should be sought. From the outset, the paper notes that in answering the question of who “should be permanently admissible to Canada…that the answers must involve no discrimination by reason of race, colour or religion” (White Paper 1966:6). Interestingly, this commitment to anti-discrimination is explicitly placed within the framework of international pressure: “Any discrimination, in the selection of immigrants, creates strong resentments in international relations” (White Paper 1966:17).

Immigration’s economic contributions to Canada are viewed not just as filling labour shortages, but rather as providing a larger consumer market, allowing for economies of scale, which “yields lower per capita costs of government” (White Paper 1966:8). Immigrants’ contribution to economic prosperity is further situated in nationalistic terms, for it credits immigration with the “high rate of economic growth and the associated cultural development which are essential to the maintenance and development of our national identity beside the economic and cultural pulls of our neighbour to the South” (White Paper 1966:7). These nationalist concerns were emblematic of the post-war period in which Canada went from a British colony to independent nation. The need for certain kinds of labour, however, was perceived as changing due to shifting economic conditions. Canada was no longer agricultural, rather:

Today, Canada’s expanding industrial economy offers most of its employment opportunities to those with education, training, skill. The so-called white collar workers are now the dominant manpower group. They are over 40% of the total…Within the manual group, a variety of skilled trades are expanding but the need for unskilled workers is declining…The modern economy thus requires large investments in adult education, up-grading the basic skills and technical training of the existing work force. Governments in Canada have developed extensive programs for this purpose (White Paper 1966:8-9).

The paper notes, that although unskilled workers contribute to demand, they will be unemployed in the future, due to technological change.

The paper also discusses ways to limit the “potential explosive growth” of the sponsored movement, perceived to “primarily come from underdeveloped rural parts of southern Europe and are without qualifications of education or skill” (White Paper 1966:13). While the paper concedes that these immigrants often find useful employment,
“It is certain as any economic prediction can be that, with accelerating technological change, proportionately fewer and fewer jobs will be open to people with little education” (White Paper 1966:13). The paper further notes that to attract high quality immigrants the government cannot have a tap on and off approach, but rather need a long-term consideration of economic growth (White Paper 1966:12). If Canada admits immigrants to fill semi-skilled job shortages to meet short-term labour market needs it will be creating a long-term problem since technological change and economic readjustment will make these workers redundant and they will not be economic assets. Rather, the Canadian economy will benefit from workers who can adapt to accelerating technological change (White Paper 1966:41). New immigrants thus need to have the ability to upgrade skills, which is primarily indicated by one’s education (White Paper 1966:19).

The Liberalization of Immigration: The Points System (1967)

What has come to be known as the “points system”, then called “the Norms of Assessment points scheme” was introduced in 1967, to achieve the objectives set out in the White Paper (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:361). Un-sponsored immigrants, renamed independent applicants, were deemed admissible if they received a minimum of 50 out of 100 points. The nine categories and maximum number of points awarded for each category were as follows: arranged employment or designated occupation (10), knowledge of English and/or French (10), relative in Canada (5), area of destination (5), education and training (20), personal qualities (15), occupational demand (15), occupational skill (10), and age (10). While the points system reduced immigration officers’ discretion, it was still exercised by the awarding of points under the category “Personal Qualities” (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:362). The points system included both short-term and long-term criteria for selecting independent immigrants. The five long-term criteria were education and training, personal qualities, occupational demand, occupational skill, and age. As previously noted, “education and training” was viewed as predicting adaptability to a technological economy, for it indicated one was more likely “to be able to go on improving his qualifications, productivity and personal achievement” (The Immigration Program 1974:43).
Personal qualities measured one’s adaptability, motivation, initiative, and resourcefulness. Occupational demand was based on a continuing study of the Canadian labour market, updated every three months. The optimal age of a desirable applicant was between 18 and 35, since it was believed they had “the easiest time finding employment” (*The Immigration Program* 1974:46).

An occupational skill rating was assigned for every occupation. Skill was defined “as the job-related knowledge a person has acquired through a combination of formal education, training and experience on the job” (*The Immigration Program* 1974:215). More specifically,

> “Performance in most occupations depends on a combination of reasoning power, ability to understand and follow instructions, and a degree of language, mathematical or other technical skill. These abilities are usually acquired by means of academic courses in a system of formal education…To function satisfactorily in a job, a person also requires information, techniques and manual skills that are specific to a particular occupation. This kind of skill, though it may also be taught in the formal education system, is usually acquired in special vocational, or in-plant training courses, apprenticeship or simply experience on the job” (*The Immigration Program* 1974:215).

The four short-term factors were arranged employment or designated occupation, knowledge of English or French, presence of relatives in Canada and general employment opportunities in area of destination (*The Immigration Program* 1974:46-47). Five units were awarded for “full Fluency” in either English or French. The government stated: “Although there are a few occupations in which a worker may be able to get along without either for a while, and although language instruction may be provided, as a general rule the immigrant who has some capability in one of Canada’s official languages on arrival has a head start in getting settled” (*The Immigration Program* 1974:48).

Ratings are based on average performance. There is some flexibility to award more or less points, for “the applicant’s skill in the performance of his occupation is taken into account in the selection system” (*The Immigration Program* 1974:216). Ratings are based on average performance. There is some flexibility to award more or less points, for “the applicant’s skill in the performance of his occupation is taken into account in the selection system” (*The Immigration Program* 1974:216). Ratings are based on average performance. There is some flexibility to award more or less points, for “the applicant’s skill in the performance of his occupation is taken into account in the selection system” (*The Immigration Program* 1974:216).

51 Work history “might reveal…obvious efforts at self-improvement, ingenuity in overcoming difficulties, or a capacity for successful adaptation to change – all positive qualities in potential immigrants” (*The Immigration Program* 1974:44). Characteristics that could hinder successful settlement included “bigotry” or “sense of grievance” (*The Immigration Program* 1974:44).

52 Ratings are based on average performance. There is some flexibility to award more or less points, for “the applicant’s skill in the performance of his occupation is taken into account in the selection system” (*The Immigration Program* 1974:216).

53 There were no formal tests, rather these points were based on an interview (*The Immigration Program* 1974:48).

54 In addition to these nine selection criteria, independent applicants were required to have “the means to maintain himself and his immediate family…until he is established” (*The Immigration Program* 1974:49). This amount depended on the number of dependents, relatives in Canada, cost of living at their destination, and their likelihood of employment (*The Immigration Program* 1974:49).
The sponsored class was not subject to any selection criteria, but was reduced to dependent relatives. A new nominated class of relatives was introduced which was a compromise between the sponsored and unsponsored classes. It was designed for relatives who would most likely be setting up their own self-sustaining family units (i.e. brothers and sisters) They were assessed by the five factors of the points system aimed at assessing their long-term suitability (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:362). The nominator’s assistance replaced the short-term factors. Nominators needed to make a 5-year commitment and they had to have adequate resources (The Immigration Program 1974:58).

In line with the White Paper, the 1967 regulations “removed all explicit traces of racial discrimination from Canada’s immigration laws” ending “Keep Canada White” policies (Thobani 2007:97). However, the government’s “decision as to where to locate its overseas visa offices also meant that it was practically very difficult for even skilled immigrants in most developing countries to apply for admission to Canada” (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:357). For instance, “In 1965 there were only three Canadian immigration offices in all of Asia, compared to fifteen in northern Europe, five in southern Europe, and seven in the United Kingdom” (Haque 2012:38). Furthermore, scholars have shown that although the points system does not contain overt racism, “immigration policy still works to produce differential outcomes relating to class, gender, and race/ethnicity” (Abu-Laban 1998:73). The points system is not a universal, but rather a “potentially prejudicial…instrument for selection” (Abu-Laban 1998:78). More specifically, the construction of the model citizen favours male applicants with extensive educational and training opportunities (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002:96).

Multiculturalism within a Bilingual Framework (1960s)

After the Second World War, Canadian nationalism also involved “the state management of many forms of difference: a concern with defining Canada’s difference from the United States, and attempts to define the role of differences within Canada in terms of Quebec” (Mackey 2002:54-55). In the 1960s Québec nationalism, referred to as the Quiet Revolution, fuelled by

1974:51). It must be noted, however, that in the 1970s the government stated it “is prepared to assist immigrants who get into financial difficulty through no fault of their own during the initial adjustment period” although “it does not wish to subsidize all comers” (The Immigration Program 1974:49).
economic disparities between the English and the French (Haque 2012:45), was viewed as a “problem” by the federal government that needed to be addressed. In particular, the inequality between English and French languages in government, which systematically disadvantaged Francophones, was a central concern of the revolution. Lester B. Pearson, the Liberal leader from 1963-8, thus established the Bilingualism and Biculturalism (B & B) Commission “[to] inquire into and report upon the existing state of bilingualism and biculturalism in Canada and to recommend what steps should be taken to develop the Canadian Confederation on the basis of an equal partnership between the two founding races, taking into account the contributions made by other ethnic groups to the cultural enrichment of Canada” (cited in Mackey 2002:63). During extensive consultations and preliminary hearings Indigenous and other ethnic groups, such as Ukrainian-Canadians, resisted the hierarchy that placed the founding races at the top (Mackey 2002:64, Haque 2012:71). Haque demonstrates that in the hearings there was a shift away from discussing the issues in terms of race and ethnicity (particularly since race had become a problematic term post-WWII) and towards language and culture, which “in no way refuted the racialized hierarchy of the terms of reference; rather, racial differentiation was shifted onto the terrain of language and culture” (2012:137-138). The two founding races became defined as nations and cultures distinctive because of the languages they spoke (Haque 2012). Other ethnic groups, however, were given a “narrower definition of culture…without the requirement of language maintenance” (Haque 2012:184). Collective language rights were seen as necessary only for the English and French; thereby constructing other ethnic groups as partial societies. The B & B Commission thereby employed a contradictory or “inconsistent definition of culture” (Haque 2012:184). French and English language groups were porous and could assimilate everyone whereas other ethnic groups’ cultures were emphasized over language (Haque 2012:194).

In the discussions surrounding the B & B Commission, integration “came to be defined as linguistic assimilation; a way to ameliorate the ‘problem’ of racial and cultural differences” (Haque 2012:137). The commissions report, proposed an acculturation model of integration “which advocated the adjustment of immigrant behaviour to the norms of the two official-language communities” (Haque 2012:187). In this model of integration, the ‘other ethnic groups’ contribution to the nation was merely “enrichment to the founding society” (Haque 2012:192). Newcomers thus “did not necessarily have to cast off or hide their culture; it could remain a
‘heterogeneous’ element in the homogeneity of the two founding cultures as ‘unity within diversity’” (Haque 2012:198). But they only achieved full rights if they integrated into a linguistically defined society and adjusted to Canadian norms.

The B and B Commission lead to the Official Languages Act of 1969 and the official Multiculturalism within a Bilingual Framework policy was announced by Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau October 8, 1971. The policy also uses different definitions of culture for minority ethnic groups and for national culture. Whereas the core unmarked dominant Canadian national culture is constructed as a whole way of life, “the ‘multicultures’ exist as fragments of culture” (Mackey 2002:67), reified and divorced from politics and economics. Official Multiculturalism also did not simply manage difference but rather constituted (limited) difference in cultural terms (Bannerji 1996, Thobani 2007:145). As Mackey points out, “Although ‘multiculturalism’ could be seen as vastly different from the more overtly racist and assimilationist policies of earlier governments, the institutionalization of difference and ‘tolerance’ drew on previously existing patterns which had emerged in colonial and earlier national projects” (2002:70).

Ethnic or cultural groups could apply for funding programs for “developing and maintaining cultural and linguistic identity…to ‘help minority groups preserve and share their language and culture, and to remove the cultural barriers they face’” (Mackey 2002:64). This support was limited to helping “cultural groups to participate in and contribute to Canadian society and Canadian unity” (Mackey 2002:66). The dominant group determines what constitute “tolerable differences” as “defined by the ever-changing needs of the project of nation-building” (Mackey 2002:70). For instance, although it promoted the maintenance of ethnic languages, it also promoted acquisition of one of two official languages for immigrants (Mackey 2002:64). It identified ‘cultural barriers’ as hindering full participation in Canadian society, while the acquisition of French- and English-language skills was viewed as enabling it (Thobani 2007:156). The British and French are constructed as the nation’s real subjects (Thobani 2007:145) and national unity thus still rested on a “white-settler bilingual and bicultural hegemony, which entrenched a racialized, hierarchical framework of difference and belonging – articulated on the terrain of language and culture – as multiculturalism within a bilingual framework” (Haque 2012:236). As Haque points out, “at the federal level, bilingualism has come to almost exclusively signify questions about Québec nationalism and anxieties about separation. And multiculturalism has become, at least in English-dominant Canada, a discourse about the
inclusion and exclusion of racialized Others” (2012:242-243). White Canadians are “culturally unmarked and assimilated Canadian-Canadians” (Mackey 2002:106) and are not considered ethnic, whereas other groups are. Race is culturalized and the core of the nation remains white. Racial hierarchies thus “became organized through the discourse of cultural and national difference, not of biological inferiority” (Thobani 2007:158). Gilroy (2000) has called this “new racism” where race is equated with nation and culture, whereas Razack has called this the culturalization of race in Canada. She argues that “Black inferiority is attributed to ‘cultural deficiency, social inadequacy, and technological underdevelopment’” (1998:60). Since “official multiculturalism diverted attention from the power relations that reproduce racial hierarchies…the socio-economic problems experienced by immigrants became defined in the national imagination as evidence of their innate cultural deficiencies which became a threat to the liberal values of the nation” (Thobani 2007:162). I will show that in the 1990s this cultural difference shifts to becoming constructed as skills deficits facilitated by the liberalization of immigration. Here the link between language and culture, language and integration gets reproduced, but language becomes cast as a skill.


In 1974, the government released the Green Paper to prepare for a new immigration act.\(^55\) I want to highlight two major issues evident in this paper: the ways in which the liberalization of the points system created anxiety over immigration from ‘undesirable countries’ and how the majority of immigrants at this time were “integrated” into the labour market quite well. In regards to the former, the impact of the 1967 changes to immigration policy is emphasized:

The rapid increase during the past few years in the number of sources of significant immigrant movements to this country-with those from certain Asian and Caribbean nations now larger than some traditional European flows-has coincided with the latest and most dynamic phase of post-war urban expansion in Canada. In the circumstances it would be astonishing if there was no concern about the capacity of our society to adjust to a pace of population change that entails…novel and distinctive features (Immigration Policy Perspectives 1974:12).

\(^{55}\)The entire review of immigration policy is called the Canadian Immigration and Population Study and the Green Paper consists of four volumes: Immigration Policy Perspectives, The Immigration Program, Immigration and Population Statistics, and Three Years in Canada.
In regards to the second issue, the fourth booklet in the Green Paper series, *Three Years in Canada*, is based on a study undertaken by the Department of Manpower and Immigration on the economic and social adaptation of immigrants from 1969-1971. This study interestingly reveals, and indeed concludes that at this time, “To a large extent, immigrants were able to realize the occupational intentions they held prior to arrival in Canada” (*Three Years in Canada* 1974:6). The study, which is based on a representative sample of all immigrants entering the labour force, followed three groups arriving in each of above years over a period of three years. The report is based on those who arrived in 1969. Although only a quarter of these independent and nominated immigrants had pre-arranged jobs, within a week and a half of arrival, 50% of all immigrants who eventually entered the labour force had started working. The other 50% took longer, so that the overall average time from arriving to starting work for all immigrants was four weeks (*Three Years in Canada* 1974:6). Furthermore, immigrants in these studies had stable employment: “A substantial proportion, some 47 per cent, did not change jobs during the first three years after arrival, and an additional 25% changed jobs only once” (*Three Years in Canada* 1974:6). “By occupation, the largest proportion of all the new workers [39%] entered managerial, professional or technical fields, followed by craftsmen and clerical and sales occupations” (*Three Years in Canada* 1974:6). Furthermore, the percentage of immigrants living below the poverty line dropped from 22% in the first 6 months to 4% after three years (in comparison to 21% of Canadians who lived under the poverty line). It must be noted that all of the informants were male, although cursory treatment is given to their wives. The study notes that although the majority did not take jobs, the proportion of immigrant wives working exceeded that of Canadian wives (*Three Years in Canada* 1974:8).

Thirdly, this report demonstrates that those who were destined for the labour force had access to labour market training, the majority of which was financed by the Canada Manpower Training Program. Almost 50% of all immigrants, during their first three years in Canada, took part-time or short-term educational courses or training. Although occupation or skill courses were the most popular, about 20 per cent took formal language training (*Three Years in Canada* 1974:10-11). Interestingly, language is not perceived to be a large barrier at this time. The report

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56 Although successful at finding employment, new immigrants did not necessarily get work in their intended occupation. After one year 61% were working in intended occupation, 69% after 3 years (*Three Years in Canada* 1974).
notes that 64% of immigrants were fluent in English. For those who took English language courses, “the proportion with a fair to fluent command of English increased from about 61% to 90% after three years in Canada” (Three Years in Canada 1974:72). After three years in Canada, the Green Paper notes that “the differences between [the immigrant] and his Canadian counterpart on a variety of economic measures had become rather small” (Three Years in Canada 1974:11). At the time of this study the majority of immigrants would still be from “traditional source countries”.

Immigrants’ access to training in the 1960s and 1970s is the result of a Keynesian rationality of governance, which after WWII, “involved state support for industries on a large scale, the formation of crown corporations, the formation of an extensive welfare state, the public support of scientific research and development, and state support of arts and culture” (Mackey 2002:54). Indeed, “state intervention was itself to become one of the chief characteristics of Canada as a nation” (Mackey 2002:53). Immigrant settlement programs have never been a large area of government expenditure and the brunt of assistance for immigrants has rested on family and community social networks (Stasiulis et al. 2011:80). Nevertheless, after WWII, there was “a shift from the delivery of settlement services by churches, voluntary organizations, the private sector and ordinary citizens to a model characterized by government involvement” (Tolley 2011:19). In 1948, the federal government established settlement services across the country to provide reception, placement and guidance to new arrivals. Such services also continued to be provided by religious (Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant) and ethnic organizations (Iacovetta 1992:267), and in 1951, the federal government provided funding to voluntary agencies that provided services to immigrants (Not Just Numbers 1997:34).

Although there was a prevailing belief that immigrants should not receive services that were unavailable to Canadians, and special programs were limited, unlike their predecessors, unsponsored immigrants who came after WWII “potentially had access to a fairly wide network of services associated with the postwar welfare state”, such as the “national system of unemployment insurance, mothers’ allowances, and improvements in health, welfare, and workers’ compensation schemes” (Iacovetta 1992:267). Before they were eligible to access regular benefits (after one year), families received allowances, interim health coverage, emergency financial assistance, mobility grants and access to training (The Immigration Program 1974:127). The amount of assistance usually corresponded to local welfare levels. The
Department of Manpower and Immigration was also seen as responsible for finding immigrants permanent employment. Although the points system focused on self-initiative, the government was viewed as having a responsibility to monitor the labour market. Like Canadian residents, immigrant workers, were eligible for occupational training courses and allowances, should upgrading or acquisition of new skills be required to compete in the labour market. The Department of Manpower and immigration pays for 100 per cent of the cost of training and allowances….In-plant training is also available to immigrants, the federal portion of the costs being designed as an incentive to employers to hire and train the unemployed (The Immigration Program 1974:130).

Moreover, “Under the Canada Manpower Training Program (CMTP), the Department of Manpower and Immigration also purchases specialized technical, occupational or language courses for immigrants who require such help to pass qualifying examinations or to practice their trades or professions” (The Immigration Program 1974:130). Under CMPT, “immigrants whose lack of one of the official languages is a barrier to successful placement in employment are eligible for full-time language training and allowances” (The Immigration Program 1974:131). The Canada Manpower Mobility Program for Canadian citizens and landed immigrants (after 1 year), offered services to those who were unemployed or underemployed in community to move to another area (The Immigration Program 1974:130), but only if upgrading his skill level or language training would not improve his employment locally.57

As Thobani notes, “The welfare state has never been quite as compassionate or as universal as has generally been presumed” (2007:110). In particular, social reproduction costs, while socialized by the state through a national welfare system, remained privatized for sponsored and dependent immigrants (Thobani 2007:115). These policies supported the reproduction of the patriarchal nuclear family and the economic contribution of women was invisible (Thobani 2007:135). Immigrant women were primarily constituted as the dependents of immigrant men, and were seen to be the financial responsibility of their sponsors (Thobani 2007:109). However, whereas immigrants constructed as “dependent” were explicitly excluded from social welfare, ideal immigrants (i.e. independent, unsponsored) were treated as worthy of the welfare afforded to citizens, which included men who were seen as making an economic contribution.

57 Yes “his” is used in the report. I will discuss the gendering of the welfare-state below.
In the 1970s, settlement and integration programs also expanded (Not Just Numbers 1997:34). The federal government absorbed the costs of a major part of provincial and private agencies’ services to immigrants (The Immigration Program 1974:139). The federal government paid for teaching materials and 50 per cent of the provincial governments’ teaching costs. The Green Paper noted that since the federal government is responsible for immigration policy “it recognizes that it must take on operational and financial responsibility for the delivery of those essential immigrant services that provincial governments or private agencies may be unwilling or unable to undertake” (The Immigration Program 1974:141). For example, in 1974 Manpower and Immigration created ISAP, which provided funding to third-party organizations for reception, orientation, translation, interpretation, and employment programs (Tolley 2011:26).

For the first time in Canadian history, in the Immigration Act of 1976, the fundamental objectives of immigration law and policy were in statute. These objectives included facilitating the reunion of families (of Canadian residents); honouring its humanitarian tradition and legal obligations with respect to refugees; and fostering a strong and viable economy while attempting to achieve demographic goals (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:382, Ploeg 2000:14). The Immigration Act of 1976 had 3 categories of immigrants to meet the above obligations: family, refugee and independent class. The first priority was family reunification. Following this Act, immigration policy was significantly more expansionary, particularly from a due-process perspective, demonstrating that immigration was seen as more than a privilege (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:382, 379). With the elimination of racial discrimination and the points system, changes began to be felt in the 1970s. In 1962, 78% of all immigrants were from Europe: in 1976 38% were. In the 1970s the types or classes of immigrants admitted to Canada also shifted. Before 1968, almost two-thirds of immigrants were admitted in the independent class. Between 1968 and 1977, however, family class immigrants increased and after 1978, the family class would become the largest category (Knowles 2007:211). In 1971, 27% of immigrants were admitted through the family class, while 55% were in 1983. The independent-class immigrants continued to decline in numbers, from 72.6% in 1971 to less than 30% in 1983 (Knowles 2007). Reunification of families remained a key factor in immigrant arrivals in 1980s.

After the oil crisis of the mid-1970s, Canada’s economic growth decreased rapidly, while inflation, unemployment, and government deficits increased (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:380). At the same time, the arrival of refugees seeking protection from within Canada rose
dramatically (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:381). The 1980s were dominated by the “refugee question” (Knowles 2007:220) and Canada’s relatively open immigration policy embodied in the 1976 Act gradually shifted to become more exclusionary in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:382). In the 1980s Canada’s humanitarian (refugee) program was reformed by Bill C-55 in 1989 and Bill C-86 in 1992 which tightened up enforcement and control with reduced powers of appeal and more power for immigration officers to refuse prospective refugees (Ploeg 2000:15). I am not providing a detailed discussion of policies affecting refugees, for although they are related to the immigration policies I analyze, they have a political specificity that is separate from economic streams. Neoliberalism started to become apparent in the 1980s, but more comprehensive changes did not occur until the 1990s. I thus do not discuss the 1980s in detail, where immigration debates focused on refugee concerns.

In the 1980s demographic concerns fueled the governments continued support for immigration, for “the rate of growth of Canada’s labour force began to slow in the 1980s because of dramatically declining birth rates in the 1960s and 1970s and low immigration levels in the early 1980s (Knowles 2007:233-234). In 1985, the Immigration Minister provided a report to Parliament, which argued that policy needed to address the longer term issues of Canada’s aging population and declining fertility rate rather than short-term labour market needs (Ploeg 2000:14). This view “represented a sharp departure from the Department of Labour’s view in the 1950s and 1960s that immigration levels should be adjusted frequently to reflect the current state of the economy” (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:385). There was also a consensus that immigrants do not take jobs, but rather created employment.58 The Five Year Immigration Plan, presented by the federal government to Parliament in 1990, expressed the aim to increase immigration levels to almost 1% of Canada’s population, committing itself to a longer-term view of immigration (Knowles 2007:236).

Welfare-State Restructuring: Privileging the Self-Sufficient and Highly Skilled Immigrant (in the 1990s)

58 In 1991 the Economic Council (ECC) published The Economic and Social Impact of Immigration, which concluded that immigration did not lead to higher levels of unemployment and that “immigration has small but positive economic benefits” for Canada (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:384).
In the 1990s there was a key shift from the priority placed on family reunification in the 1970s and 1980s, facilitated by sponsorships, to privileging independent/economic immigrants. Although neoliberalism started in the 1980s (with the creation of business class immigration and the restriction of refugee claims), significant changes did not occur until 1990s. Although, as I have shown, “the prioritizing of economic over social or humanitarian goals has historically been a mainstay of Canada’s immigration policies…the rise of neoliberalism has intensified this ordering of priorities” (Stasiulis et al. 2011:76). Furthermore, the proper role of government was re-imagined in a series of reports that emerged in the 1990s, which advocated for a more limited role for the state and which emphasized individual self-sufficiency (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002:21). Both liberalism and neoliberalism assign individuals “the freedom, responsibility, and rationale to collectively choose an optimal form of social management in pursuit of the common good and economic prosperity” (Song 2009:10). However, security against risk was, in part, socialized with the rise of the Keynesian welfare state, which was based on the idea that “states could use their taxing and spending powers to actively intervene in the economy to promote full employment and economic growth” (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002:20), and to “maximize stability and the collective welfare of all citizens” (Brodie 2002:92). Risk against the insecurities of the capitalist market was socialized with redistributive programs such as unemployment insurance and welfare that were provided “as a right of citizenship” (Brodie 2002:92). The state thereby accepted more responsibility for social reproduction, acknowledging shortcomings of the economic system. However, these rights based on participation in the labor force were premised largely on full-time employment, which “combined with the postwar construction of the appropriate gender order as male breadwinner and dependent wife and children, meant that men gained the entitlements of social citizenship” (Brodie 2002:93).

As noted above, immigrants have always had unequal access to social citizenship and indigenous and immigrant families were characterized “as threatening the nation’s welfare” (Thobani 2007:108). Sponsorship regulations for the family class stipulated that sponsors had to assume financial responsibility for ‘dependents’, which privatized costs of reproducing immigrant families and regulated access to social citizenship (Thobani 2007:135-136). Nevertheless, rationalities of the appropriate role of government under the post-war welfare state influenced immigration policy and settlement programs. While the government had restrictive unsponsored immigration, it was still the government’s responsibility to intervene in the labour
market – to determine from extensive consulting and calculation – labour market shortages and to use immigration to meet them. Furthermore, immigrant breadwinners had access to employment programs that ensured they receive full employment. It is evident in the *White Paper* and *Green Papers*, for example, that although immigration policy was exclusive, unsponsored immigrants (male breadwinners) had access to social programs to help them become fully employed (i.e. through Canada Manpower Services). These state supports as well as multiculturalism introduced in the 1970s were problematized in the 1990s, as I will demonstrate below. In the 1990s, through welfare-state restructuring, the responsibility for risk that was previously “constructed as a shared responsibility under the terms of the welfare state’s social programs….shifted to the volunteer sector, individuals and families” (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002:26). As discussed in Chapter 1, in neoliberal critiques of the welfare state and in new workfare regimes, socialized security was thus seen as stifling responsibility and risk-taking as well as inducing dependency.

In 1994, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) launched a national public consultation to review the immigration program, while the Minister of Human Resource Development launched a review of social security policy (Thobani 2007:179). These consultations revealed rampant anti-immigrant and anti-multiculturalism sentiment. The latter was seen as undermining national cohesion and increasing the clout of “special interest groups” and the refugee program was viewed as allowing bogus claimants and overburdening social services (Thobani 2007:180). A large national deficit and shrinking state funds for social programs made immigrants scapegoats for cutbacks to social services (Thobani 2007:181, Mackey 2002). Evaluating these consultations, at the end of 1994, CIC released the *Immigration Consultation’s Report and Into the 21st Century: A Strategy for Immigration and Citizenship* (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:419). The government subsequently appointed an independent three-member advisory panel in November 1996 to review the Immigration Act. The aim of the review was to streamline and improve the system significantly for the first time since 1976 (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:419, Knowles 2007:257). The panel’s controversial report, *Not Just Numbers: A Canadian Framework for Future Immigration*, was released to the public in January 1998 (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:420). Collectively these reports illustrate a shift to neoliberal rationalities of governance in which the ideal immigrant emerges as a neoliberal entrepreneur.
In *The Immigration Consultations Report*’s summary of “the main currents of opinion,” Canada is conveyed as a tolerant and compassionate society, which is merely concerned about the nation becoming fragmented by the wrong kinds of immigrants. It notes that while some Canadians recognize the importance of immigration to Canada’s diversity and to its global economy, others hold the view that ethnic diversity or “special interest” groups create tension and fragment society (*Immigration Consultations Report*, CIC, 1994:19). Furthermore, “Canadians have expressed concern that their Canada is disappearing; that “…its values and lifestyle are being eroded and degraded” (*Immigration Consultations Report*, CIC, 1994:22).

There are also concerns over “Canadian taxpayers” paying for cultural heritage and over the use of social programs. In regards to the former, they cite the following participants’ quote: “*No other country in the world expects its taxpayers to finance the practice of ethnic diversity. Whatever behaviour immigrants wish to adopt should be left to the choice of the individual. State support of ethnic diversity sows the seeds of conflict and should be avoided*” (*Immigration Consultations Report*, CIC, 1994:20). In this quote and throughout these consultations, Canadians were constituted as responsible citizen-taxpayers, whereas immigrants were constructed as abusers of Canada’s generosity and as economically costly (Thobani 2007:186).

In regards to social programs, the report claims: “The general sentiment is that Canada cannot afford the growing burden that current immigration practices are placing upon its social welfare systems” (*Immigration Consultations Report*, CIC, 1994:61).

The report constructs Canada and Canadians as generous but legitimately concerned about maintaining the nation’s integrity by always preceding Canada’s “concerns” with a statement of Canada’s generosity, which is presented as a fact. For instance, while Canadians “express pride in their country’s international reputation as a compassionate and caring nation” (*Immigration Consultations Report*, CIC, 1994:80), they are reported to be concerned about abuse of the refugee system and troubled by threats to the integrity of health care and social assistance. The exclusionary and racist tone of the majority of the comments are presented as Canadians merely wanting “reassurance that immigration will remain a means of making Canada better” (*Immigration Consultations Report*, CIC, 1994:79). This trope of precluding exclusionary measures with a statement of Canada’s generosity is also prevalent in *Into the 21st Century and Not Just Numbers*. By the 1980s Canada’s humanitarian and benevolent nature was firmly entrenched in the national narrative, despite the nation’s history of exclusions. Once
Canada’s immigration system is established as generous, fair etc., it can then become the object of abuse and fraud. In protecting the integrity of Canada’s immigration and refugee system, Canadians and the government are constructed as morally superior to those it wishes to exclude (Thobani 2007). This mechanism for legitimizing exclusion and unequal citizenship gets reproduced in the discourse of Canada’s tolerance, as evident in the following quotation: “A number of Canadians expressed concern about the impact which immigration and citizenship policies are having upon the values and traditions that form the foundation of Canadian society. This is not to say that Canadians are becoming intolerant. In fact, when describing the most cherished characteristics of their society, Canadians usually mentioned tolerance among the first” (Into the 21st Century, CIC, 1994:10). These statements are similar to disavowals of racism or “racism denial” as described by van Dijk (1993). Denials and disclaimers, such as “I’m not racist, but…” aim to avoid giving a negative impression of oneself, for “norms and values of tolerance and democratic humanitarianism…may be felt to be inconsistent with biased attitudes and negative text and talk about minorities. To manage such contradictions, white speakers engage in strategies of positive self-presentation in order to be able credibly to present the ‘others’ in a negative light” (van Dijk 1993:15). Similarly, statements about (white) Canada’s compassion and tolerance aim to enable and justify exclusions while preserving a positive self-image – as a nation and as nationals. As Mackey puts it, “liberal universal principles...are the very language and conceptual framework through which intolerance and exclusion are enabled, reinforced, defined and defended” (2002:161). Indeed, proclamations of tolerance and humanity “stood in marked contrast to the actual recommendations made by many of the participants” (Thobani 2007:194). The welfare state’s constitution as ‘compassionate’ and ‘caring’ “exalted national subjects as possessive of the same qualities”, which nationals possessed in contrast to Others (Thobani 2007:107, 108). In the 1990s, then, the feminized caring nature of the welfare-state gets constructed as “weak” and as being vulnerable to those that abuse it, which in turn valorizes the ideal immigrant as self-sufficient.

With the restructuring of the welfare state, then, immigration gets constructed as overburdening health care, welfare and other social benefit systems (Into the 21st Century, CIC, 1994:11), and the means for selecting ideal future citizens gets constructed in terms of what is good for the economy. Within an environment of fiscal constraint the ideal immigrant “benefits” rather than “costs” the nation: they “are able and willing to integrate into Canadian society and
contribute to its well-being”, reducing demand on welfare services (Into the 21st Century, CIC, 1994:11, x). As mentioned in Chapter 1, the debate is not so much about the quantity of immigrants being admitted to Canada, but rather about their quality as future citizens, since Canada needs immigrants for demographic reasons. For example, the authors of Not Just Numbers explain the title: “Beyond the numbers are people, who choose our country and will eventually become our fellow citizens, perhaps our neighbours” (1997:2). They point out that in the current Act’s objectives “There is virtually no mention of integration” (Not Just Numbers 1997:3). This is problematic, according to the authors, for “there needs to be a direct link between the selection of immigrants and their ability to integrate” (Not Just Numbers 1997:3).

Immigrants who are constructed as drawing on Canada’s social welfare are refugees and family class immigrants who “fail to honour their financial obligations” (Into the 21st Century, CIC, 1994:11). Not Just Numbers views the rationale behind refugee and immigrant selection to be different. While humanitarianism is at the root of refugee agreements, self-supporting immigrants “are selected on the basis of their ability to contribute to Canada’s economic social and cultural vitality” (Not Just Numbers 1997:13). Refugees are thereby presented as not contributing to Canada, and Canada – through its compassion – tolerates and provides for them. The family class is also constructed as a burden and as not making an economic contribution to Canada (Thobani 2007:185). The reports discuss perceived problems of sponsor breakdown, when “the sponsored individual is often forced to seek public assistance” (Into the 21st Century, CIC, 1994:38) and cite studies that support their concerns.59 A box insert not elaborated upon in the main text of the document also says, however, that “Family class immigrants are less likely to be on welfare than other Canadians (14% vs. 16%)” (Into the 21st Century, CIC, 1994:38). The reports explicitly highlight the alarming studies and only implicitly and passively include statistics that show immigration is not the “burden” perceived by many. Yet, as Thobani points

59 “Preliminary results obtained from a department study of sponsorship breakdown indicate that about 14% of family sponsorships undertaken over the past ten years have broken down at a cost of approximately $700 million annually for social assistance alone” (Into the 21st Century, CIC, 1994:38). Additionally, it is argued that “Many older family immigrants depend on welfare” (Into the 21st Century, CIC, 1994:39). Not Just Numbers states that: “An examination of all 1994 income tax records indicates that only three years after arrival, sponsored parents and grandparents are using welfare at a rate of 20%, more than double the usage rate of all tax filers. This offends Canadians who insist on fairness and accountability, and thus threatens public support for these essential programs” (Not Just Numbers 1997:45). These studies are used to recommend limitations on sponsoring grandparents.
out “Whether immigrants actually made undue and excessive claims to social programs…was beside the point. The point was that the state legitimized and normalized unequal rights and entitlements for all immigrants” (2007:212). Not Just Numbers thereby validates focusing on independent immigrants who are viewed as less likely to require public assistance and more likely to contribute quickly to Canada’s economic development (Into the 21st Century, CIC, 1994). Below, I will summarize the key themes that emerge from the 1994 consultations in more detail, which illustrate how the ideal immigrant in the 1990s emerges from a neoliberal rationality of governance, which focuses on more cost-effective government, and on attracting active future-citizens.

“Affordable Government”: Facilitating Partnership and Accountability

Into the 21st Century and Not Just Numbers’ discussions of immigration policy are framed by the need for fiscal restraint and affordable government within “the new reality” – a global “environment of change”: “Nations are becoming increasingly interdependent as new trade, economic, transportation and information links are forged. As a result, countries are finding they have less control over factors directly affecting their sovereignty, their economy and their society” (Into the 21st Century, CIC, 1994:2). Furthermore, “Part of this change is Canada’s own fiscal reality…In this context, our citizenship and immigration program must be more than fair and compassionate, it must be affordable and sustainable” (Into the 21st Century, CIC, 1994:viii). The Canadian nation is hereby conveyed as having no control over global changes and is thus obliged to make policy affordable. “Partnership”, or rather, the decentralization of federal government responsibilities is presented as a key means of exhibiting “fiscal restraint”. Not Just Numbers states: “There is a growing loss of confidence in the ability of governments to effect change, acting alone, and a view that the government should move from “doer” to “facilitator”. There is an increased demand for new forms of partnership (government to government, government to private sector, government to non-governmental organizations (NGOs)).” (1997:9). Here the states role is to help facilitate cost-sharing and cost-effective partnerships rather than solely provide for immigrant settlement. The notion that the state should play a facilitating rather than an interventionist role is clearly demonstrated in the notion that
immigrants must pay for their own integration costs since government “cannot provide all needs”.

Maximizing the Benefits of Immigration: Selecting the Ideal Immigrant/Future Citizen

In the 1990s, government documents report immigration has a positive effect on the economy. Not Just Numbers mentions that in regards to immigration several myths are held by the public, including that immigrants take jobs from Canadians (1997:10). (It is telling that the report highlights these myths here, but not in regards to other negative assumptions about refugees and family class immigrants.) Selection criteria for self-supporting immigrants are constructed as the “key to successful integration” (Immigration Consultations Report, CIC, 1994:44) and to meeting Canada’s economic needs. It is argued that “Research shows that immigrants selected for their skills and abilities are more likely to earn higher incomes than other immigrants, and more likely to contribute to the economy without resorting to welfare or making use of publicly-funded settlement programs” (Into the 21st Century, CIC, 1994:28). The economic immigration program is concerned with maximizing the long-term benefits to the economy, while at the same time, with “minimizing any short-term costs associated with their establishment in Canada. To achieve this, we believe that the selection criteria for economic immigrants should stress attributes which evidence a high degree of self-sufficiency” and “who will be able and willing to make a beneficial economic contribution to Canada” (Not Just Numbers 1997:55).

In the 1960s and 1970s it is acknowledged that Canada benefits from developing countries’ “Brain Drain”. The Green Paper, for instance, notes that the “Brain Drain” issue has been subject to intensive debate, acknowledging that “the majority of developing countries…regard the outflow of highly qualified persons as harmful” (Immigration Policy Perspectives 1974:48). At that time The Green Paper claimed that Canada thus does not actively recruit immigrants in developing countries, but they need to uphold the non-discrimination clause (Immigration Policy Perspectives 1974:48). While these seemingly progressive views may have been motivated by a desire to avoid recruitment of immigrants from “the third world”, it was recognized that Canada benefits from the immigration of professionals since the nation
does not need to pay for their education and training. In the 1990s these cost-savings are not acknowledged and only the potential “integration” costs are discussed. Rather, a good future-citizen is “the atomized market player who recognizes the limits and liabilities of state provisions and embraces his/her obligation to work longer and harder to become self-reliant” (Brodie 2002:98).

These reports argue that Canada’s economic immigration program aims to increase Canada’s prosperity, its economic stability and its competitiveness by “Raising the level of skills and resources of our pool of human capital to ensure our ability to sell goods and services internationally” (Not Just Numbers 1997:56). The right kind of self-sufficient immigrant needs to contribute to Canada’s economy, which is constructed as moving “from a resource-based to an information-based economy. The immigration and citizenship program will be managed to provide enhanced and direct support to creating the skill base and the environment necessary to use change as an opportunity for growth and advancement” (Into the 21st Century, CIC, 1994:x). The “new economy” is characterized by “increased demand for skilled workers, especially for the “knowledge industries”” and “a rapid decline in the number of unskilled jobs; acute demand for highly developed individual skills has broken down the traditional belief that labour is homogeneous” (Not Just Numbers 1997:8). In response to these changes, Into the 21st Century, also states: “Low wage jobs, including the kinds of jobs immigrants have traditionally taken upon arrival in Canada, are becoming increasingly scarce” (Into the 21st Century, CIC, 1994:18). Economic immigration is thus characterized as contributing to the nation’s supply-side focus of economic growth, more specifically it will enable the recruitment of skilled workers who can address Canada’s skills shortage in a competitive global economy in which “Countries (and even large multinational corporations) are competing globally to attract…highly skilled workers, crucial to the expansion of vital economic sectors” (Not Just Numbers 1997:54). The government is no longer seen as capable of conducting detailed labour market analysis for,

“the speed of change in the labour market has made it difficult to perform meaningful labour market analysis. By the time studies are completed, conditions have changed and opportunities have vanished. Education systems, essentially designed for the long term, cannot produce sufficient numbers of highly skilled workers to meet the needs of information technology and other high-skill industries….Attracting suitable economic immigrants can play a major part in filling specific skill shortages, encouraging investment in Canadian companies, creating new jobs, and increasing our international competitiveness” (Not Just Numbers 1997:54).
The focus is thus on attracting skilled individuals who conduct their own labour market analysis. Here, “the ideal of the ‘social state’ gives way to that of the ‘enabling state’” (Rose 1999:142), transforming the passive citizen of the social state into an “active citizen”.

The reports criticize the points system’s current selection criteria for its emphasis on an applicant’s intended occupation, often at the expense of language competency and education, which are viewed as the “criteria which permit individuals to adjust rapidly to the Canadian labour market” (Into the 21st Century, CIC, 1994:28), given “the fluidity of the current labour market…The labour market environment requires immigrants to have the flexibility to work in several different occupations during their working life” (Not Just Numbers 1997:56). This view harkens back to the government’s perception in the 1960s that the increasingly technological economy required more training and skill. However, in the 1990s a higher level of education is viewed as required and also labour market analysis is not seen as the responsibility of the government. Additionally, there is a shift in the notion of labour – as not being homogeneous and of workers’ human capital as being individualized. Mark Davidson, Director of Economic Policy and Programs for Citizenship and Immigration Canada’s Selection Branch, stated: “Human capital is much more than just the educational and language skills of an applicant. It is the whole collection of an individual’s abilities that allows them to function in a society” (cited in Knowles 2007:259). Recall that skill in the 1966 White Paper was defined as achieved through training and education, but in the 1990s it is expanded to include the whole collection of an individual’s abilities. As discussed in Chapter 1, there is a denotational shift of the noun skill: it “once denoted a specific manual or machine operation and now denotes any practice, form or knowledge, or way of being constituting productive labor” (Urciuoli 2008:212). Here the government is more concerned with the individual character of immigrants, their personality rather than their nationality. This personality, however, is as entrepreneurial as possible, a form of personhood that has been historically gendered and racialized as male and white (Kingfisher 2002).

Another problem with the occupation-based selection system was raised: “it presupposes that the skills and qualifications of successful applicants will be recognized once they immigrate to Canada” (Not Just Numbers 1997:57). The reports explicitly acknowledge problems with credential recognition, which it claims are due to political reasons. Regulatory bodies have made it virtually impossible for foreign-trained professionals to meet licensing requirements and have
lobbied governments to restrict immigration opportunities for people in those occupations (*Not Just Numbers* 1997:61). However, one solution to this problem is proposed in policy documents to revisit the selection criteria to emphasize a person’s potential for long-term success based on “education, experience, language skills, age, employability and adaptability to the changing labour market” (*Into the 21st Century*, CIC, 1994:29). The proposed changes thus seek to attract a more “flexible” and self-sufficient Canadian workforce that can respond “to Canada’s new, emerging economy” (*Into the 21st Century*, CIC, 1994:28). *Not Just Numbers* recommends there be no excluded occupations, noting that many occupations that do not appear on the list are highly skilled occupations for which there are shortages, such as “shortages of doctors, dentists and, on occasion, teachers, in some regions. Some of these occupations have restrictive licensing and/or registration practices for foreign-qualified individuals which limit employment opportunities” (1997:61). The authors do not see why these people should be excluded. Here, individualized skills and flexibility are emphasized: it is the individual’s choice in regards to whether or not they immigrate, regardless of systemic barriers. However, it is also their responsibility to integrate without drawing on Canada’s welfare.

*Not Just Numbers* recommends changing the name of the Independent class to Self-supporting class, as “This term encapsulates what Canadians expect of this stream of immigration – characteristics such as self-reliance and resourcefulness, an ability to contribute, and an appreciation that entitlements such as social welfare should be used as a last resort” (*Not Just Numbers* 1997:58). In regards to settlement funds they “recommend that minimum levels of settlement funds be established for economic immigrants to ensure that they are able to support themselves and their families during their first six months in Canada without recourse to social welfare” (*Not Just Numbers* 1997:59). Like family class, immigrant families of independent immigrants are construed as needing to pay for any of their integration costs (e.g. charged a fee for language training should they need it) (*Not Just Numbers* 1997:67).

**Minimizing the “Costs” of Immigration: Language**

In addition to having the right kind of skill or flexibility, language was viewed as key to immigrant integration. *Not Just Numbers* proposes that greater importance be attached to official language ability as it “is a key determinant of success, in terms of both employment and successful integration”, and enables immigrants to “to participate fully in Canadian society” (*Not
Just Numbers 1997:58). The core standard they recommend is proficiency in at least one of the two official languages, so they can “enter the labour market upon arrival with minimal upgrading” (59). Into the 21st Century reports that “Almost without exception, language was seen by those who participated in the consultations as key to an immigrant’s success in Canada. Language is seen as either the greatest barrier to or the chief means of full participation in Canadian society” (1994:19). However, Not Just Numbers also reported that in the current points system an independent immigrant could be admitted “with a relatively low level of competence in either official language” (Not Just Numbers 1997:56-57). Furthermore, the reports note that while the government funds language training, it is inadequate: “Because resources are limited… One way of addressing this is to select people who already have the necessary language skills” (Into the 21st Century, CIC, 1994:19). Not Just Numbers suggests that obtaining English or French proficiency before immigrating: “… given the links between language and culture, would enhance the initial settlement prospects of their families as well” (1997:67). Here the link between language and culture that emerged out of the B & B Commission is reproduced: language is the key to integrating into Canada’s mainstream way of life economically and culturally. They recommend that if immigrants cannot function in English or French prior to coming to Canada, they “expect them to make a financial contribution to their own language upgrading” (Not Just Numbers 1997:36). They also recommend an internationally accepted standardized language test be used to measure official language ability.

Selling Diversity

The arguments in favour of immigration through the business class and of skilled immigrants, found in these reports also amount to what Abu-Laban and Gabriel call “selling diversity” (2002) (as discussed in Chapter 2). Into the 21st Century includes the following quotation from the consultations: “Because of the diversity of the work force, Canada is able to penetrate international markets and participate effectively and efficiently in a foreign economy” (x). These reports also express the opinion that Canada needs to compete for immigrants: “in today’s global, competitive markets. Canada must compete with the United States, with the European Economic Community and with a rapidly-developing Asia. A more active recruitment and promotional strategy is needed in order to attract highly-skilled, well-educated independent immigrants and business people” (Into the 21st Century, CIC, 1994:35). Furthermore, they note
that recruiting for economic immigration, in cooperation with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, “will be integrated with the government’s economic agenda and with foreign relations plans for particular countries, regions and emerging export markets” (Into the 21st Century, CIC, 1994:xii). This discourse is also reproduced in the discussion of foreign students who “once established in their own careers abroad, use the Canadian market and their Canadian connections to promote and pursue their commercial interest – opening new opportunities to Canada for business and trade, and for exchanges of information, technology and talent” (Into the 21st Century, CIC, 1994:34). Diversity is hereby skill-washed, commodifiable and whitened by immigrants’ status as global bourgeoisie.

**Active Citizenship and Integration**

As noted above, the reports explicitly acknowledge that “Immigration is about selecting new citizens” (Into the 21st Century, CIC, 1994:16), since 80% of landed immigrants become citizens. Consequently, “The criteria for determining landed immigrant status should reflect the values we desire in our citizens” (Not Just Numbers 1997:13). Citizenship is defined as “an expression of what Canadians hold in common. It embodies Canadian values, symbols and beliefs” (Into the 21st Century, CIC, 1994:17). To integrate “successfully into Canadian society” newcomers thus “need to understand the values and principles that this society is based on” (Into the 21st Century, CIC, 1994:17). The onus of the 1994 consultation-based reports is on immigrant responsibilities rather than rights. Not Just Numbers argues that in addition to a general concern about the devaluation of Canadian citizenship, “the requirements for citizenship are perceived to no longer reflect any obligations to the country or to promote integration into Canadian society” (1997:39). As a result the authors think it is necessary for immigration criteria to include the following obligations, which reflect Canadian core values and principles: “respect for and compliance with Canadian law, and knowledge of at least one official language, reflecting a person’s ability to be an informed participant in a democracy. We have also added a requirement for active participation to demonstrate that an individual has achieved a degree of integration into the Canadian community” (Not Just Numbers 1997:39). Another aspect is fiscal responsibility or rather filing tax returns and “paying one’s fair share of the cost of public services” (Not Just Numbers 1997:39). They argue that in regards to demonstrating active participation in Canadian society, they propose the applicants for citizenship demonstrate they
are engaged in employment, study, (volunteer) community service or full-time family care (Not Just Numbers 1997:40). Volunteerism, in particular, is viewed as “a powerful vehicle for integration” (Immigration Consultations Report 1994:91), and it should be “built-in” our expectations of newcomers “to return something to Canada in the form of service, voluntarism, etc., beyond their contribution to the Canadian economy through employment and business development” (Immigration Consultations Report 1994:44). Integration is here defined as active – as contributing to the nation if not through employment than through unpaid work (e.g. volunteering, family care), which subsidizes the states social programs. Additionally, one can be active through skills upgrading and in investing in one’s future economic potential (through education).

Discrimination and Accreditation

As noted above the focus is on immigrants’ willingness to integrate. However, a consultation working group “asserts that everyone having a right to work in Canada should have equal opportunity to participate fully in the labour market. As one means of achieving this, they suggest a national strategy to deal with racism and discrimination in the labour market” (Immigration Consultations Report 1994:48). This focus, however, is diluted in Into the 21st Century and Not Just Numbers, for the only issue of discrimination that was retained was the importance of credential recognition (Thobani 2007). The lack of recognition of skills and education acquired outside of Canada, Not Just Numbers acknowledges, are systemic barriers which “in effect transform what should be transitional underemployment into chronic underemployment. This wasted potential results in a personal loss to the individual and to the country as a whole” (Not Just Numbers 1997:36). Not Just Numbers recommends the government “develop national standards and a shared database with the longer-term objective of providing a Canada-wide equivalency assessment of professional qualifications which would be accepted in each province and territory” (1997:38).

This credential concern is not new, rather, it was mentioned in the Green Paper, which noted: “Immigrants are also troubled by non-recognition of their professional or trade qualifications. A substantial number are unable to obtain jobs which meet their expectations on arrival in Canada” (The Immigration Program 1974:132). In the proceedings of a conference, called Immigration 1975-2001 - National Conference on Immigration Policy, held at the
University of Toronto May 22/24, 1975, with financial support from the Department of Manpower and Immigration and which discussed the Green Paper, an academic, Anthony Richmond “noted that “in addition to the obstacles to recognition of immigrants’ qualifications by various professional associations and licensing bodies, Canadian employers tend to insist upon “Canadian experience”. Immigrants from some countries experience more difficulty in this area than those from other countries. We must remove these institutional barriers” (21). He was, no doubt, commenting on the study, *Three Years in Canada*, which comprised part of the 1974 Green Paper, which noted that, “Although successful at finding employment, new immigrants did not necessarily get work in their intended occupation. One-fifth of their survey respondents could not get the kind of job they wanted because they lacked “Canadian experience”” (33).

Goldlust and Richmond further noted that: “In view of the previous evidence concerning self-reported discrimination by Black and Asian immigrants, it is reasonable to suppose that their lower than expected earnings, given a very high average education, was due to discrimination and possibly an assumed lack of “Canadian experience” (Goldlust and Richmond 1973a)” (18).

Another study in the 1970s noted that:

> “Irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, recently arrived immigrants are particularly likely to experience some discrimination with regard to the recognition of their professional and technical qualifications…Qualifications obtained in some countries, particularly the United States and Great Britain, are generally more acceptable than those obtained elsewhere” (13).

A study commissioned for the Green Paper, *Canadian Views on immigration and population: An Analysis of post-war Gallup polls* by Nancy Tienhaara, found that “the November 1973 Gallup Poll showed a strong negative reaction to the idea of bringing in unskilled immigrant labourers” (4). Rather:

> “The overall conclusion reached by the authors from the study was that immigrants in higher prestige occupations are regarded as more acceptable for admission to Canada than those in lower prestige occupations. (However, with the exception of immigrant social workers, respondents were less willing to use the services of immigrants employed in higher prestige occupations than of those employed in lower prestige occupations, even through they regarded immigrants employed in higher prestige occupations as more desirable for admission to Canada!)” (42).

This contradiction lays bare the implicit belief that skilled immigrants share more values with Canadians than unskilled workers. However, Canadians are still distrustful of their competencies.
The skill/white-washing of immigrants is thus deeply rooted in recruiting immigrants that will likely integrate because they share “Canadian” values like economic self-sufficiency and democracy, but nevertheless face discrimination and racism in the labour market because of distrust of their non-Western training and competency.

The need for Canadian experience thus seems to have become a widespread issue following the liberalization of immigration in 1967 with the introduction of the points system and the subsequent influx of non-European immigrants. In the early 1970s, its racialized component is explicitly pointed out in government documents, a point that is largely implicit in contemporary discussions. A key difference between current conditions and those of the 1970s is that new immigrants on average still had relatively high earnings in comparison to Canadian-born workers in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It is only in the past decade, when the economic performance of immigrants has fallen significantly, that this barrier has warranted public attention.

In addition to credential recognition one report *Into the 21st Century* notes that some labour market training may be needed: “In the recently released discussion document entitled “Improving Social Security in Canada”, the Department of Human Resources Development … discusses the increasing demand for retraining. Access to labour market bridging training may be an essential element to providing some newcomers with the opportunity to integrate into the Canadian work force and become fully contributing citizens” (*Into the 21st Century*, CIC, 1994:20). They explicitly acknowledge that “Some professions already have more qualified candidates than job openings. In these cases, recognition of credentials alone would do little to improve a newcomer’s employment prospects. However, training which would allow newcomers to work in fields related to their skills would, in the long term, benefit both newcomers and Canadian society” (*Into the 21st Century*, CIC, 1994:21). The issue, then, is not as simple as making no investment, but rather it is about making an efficient investment in the right kind of immigrant, for immigration is “a long-term investment in new citizens…It is critical that a considered and precise investment be made at the outset” (*Into the 21st Century*, CIC, 1994:22). However, they acknowledge that it is difficult to talk of investment in times of fiscal restraint and that people disagreed with whether or not we should invest in newcomers or whether or not they should shoulder expenses. Indeed, “Shifting a greater proportion of costs from governments and taxpayers to those who benefit directly is consistent with Canada’s fiscal reality” (*Into the
21st Century, CIC, 1994:25), by charging them a fee for the services they use. Not Just Numbers, which was more restrictive in regards to immigration costs, did not retain this attention to training found in Into the 21st Century. This focus on training (and indicative of rollout neoliberalism) would not occur for immigrants until a decade later in the 2000s (as discussed in Chapter 2).

Not Just Numbers’ recommendation that “standardized admission tests” should be required to prove fluency in English and French sparked the most controversy in public debates of the report (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:420). The opposition was so strong that “within a month of the publication of the report…Minister Lucienne Robillard said that she too questioned the wisdom of the language requirement, noting that it could be an unreasonable bar to entry” (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:421). The importance of language is still stressed although the requirements are less stringent than those recommended by Not Just Numbers. Applicants were thus still able, despite recommendations, to be interviewed by a visa officer to verify language ability for points assessment, rather than being required to submit a standardized language test as proposed. However, in 1995 a landing tax ($975) that needed to be paid by immigrants was introduced in line with the above reports’ focus on privatizing short-term integration costs. In line with the 1990s discussion, the point system shifted towards being more “flexible” and away from the occupation-based selection model. For instance, the point system in 2001 awarded points for the following: education (25); language (24); work experience (21); age (10); arranged employment (10); and adaptability (10), with a pass mark of 75 (dropped to 67 in 2003) (Poy 2013).

Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (2002)

In the 1990s and 2000s, prior to 9/11, but most urgently and aggressively since then, Canada’s concern with security intensified. Bill C-11 ‘The Immigrant and Refugee Protection Act’ which came into force in 2002 replaced the 1976 Immigration Act.60 The provisions of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act of 2002, gave “considerable discretion to the executive to determine and implement immigration admission, exclusion, and removal policies through

60 See Thobani (2007) for a rich account of citizenship after 9/11. I focus on this less because I am interested in the “ideal immigrant” rather than on those seen as most needing policing (i.e. refugees and illegal immigrants).
regulations” (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:457). In this respect, it was considered by many immigration and legal advocates to be a dangerous reversal from the legislative accountability enshrined in the 1976 act” (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:425). The Act expanded the range of those eligible for family sponsorship, but sponsor’s financial requirements were tightened. In regards to the independent class, it reinforced the move away from preferred occupations, “in favour of a point system weighted more towards experience in managerial, professional, or technical and skilled occupations” (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:429). The majority of the points could be awarded for education, knowledge of English or French, and for previous work experience and the transferability of skilled immigrants skills continued to be emphasized. The economic class (including spouses and dependents) accordingly increased from 29% in 1992 to 55% in 2001, to 60% in 2006 (Stasiulis et al. 2011:86).

In the early 2000s, however, there was a consensus “that the immigration system did not efficiently secure those with the skills Canada needed to ensure that the value of the skills and experience of immigrants was maximized after their arrival” (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:456). Many barriers were intensified, such as employers’ reluctance to recognize foreign educational credentials and skills. The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration in 2005, Joe Volpe, even lamented that skilled immigrants were being underutilized in the Canadian economy because companies undervalued foreign experience and education. He stated: ‘we probably have the best-educated taxi and limo trade in the world’” (Kelly and Trebilcock 2010:456). The ‘underemployment problem’, which I discussed in Chapter 2 became a hot topic not only in Toronto, but in Canada more broadly. Chapter 2 showed how the City of Toronto also aimed to attract the highly skilled immigrant in line with supply-side strategies for economic growth. However, it traced how the City of Toronto, in the early-mid 2000s, a decade after welfare state restructuring in the 1990s, focused on providing rather than cutting integration programs.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to understand the key shift in immigration policy that occurred in the 1990s, with the restructuring of the welfare-state. Whereas immigration policy, under liberalism valued self-sufficiency as did neoliberal restructuring in the 1990s, the role of the welfare state was envisioned differently than in neoliberal critiques of it, with implications for immigration. Similarly, the social solidarity of citizens under the welfare-state as
compassionate allowed exclusions of the less than ideal immigrants. Although citizens’ social solidary under the welfare-state was always differentiated from that of immigrants, ideal immigrants as future-citizens benefited from supports provided by the welfare-state. In the 1990s the ideal immigrant was self-sufficient and did not rely on the government for employment supports as Canadian citizens were also seen as needing to be responsible for their own employment futures.

Immigration policy which claimed to support multiculturalism and “tolerance” expressed intolerance through the skillification of immigration. By this I mean to argue that skilled immigrants come to embody the values that were desirable and immigrants who possessed them were white/skill-washed. (Im)migrants who do not possess them were undesirable and racialized through family reunification and refugee streams of migration. Central to having the right skills and human capital was language. Learning the language of business and of the nation – English outside of Québec – is about being “Canadian” in terms of the values that count. Language emerged with multiculturalism and the liberalization of the points system as the key means to measuring integration, and increasingly so – as a skill - in the knowledge-based economy.

As it will be demonstrated in the chapters that follow, the racism evident throughout the history of immigration policy continues in the present. As I will show in Chapter 4, ‘ideal immigrants’ are skill/white-washed only to be problematically ethnicized and racialized in everyday practice when they are perceived as having ‘cultural’ deficits coded as skill- and language- deficits. As Thobani argues, “Racial identity (white, officially British and French) is repeatedly reinscribed as the authentic and trustworthy marker of citizenship in daily life” (2007:100). As I discussed in Chapter 2, while the ideal skilled immigrant’s success is white-washed, their potential for poverty and social unrest lurk in the background as a racialized problem of social exclusion. There are always limits placed on racialized persons “whiteness”. I will show in the chapters that follow how discourses of language as a skill, of a neoliberal citizen, and of “Canadian experience”, in immigrant integration programs, reproduced exclusions that are racialized, gendered and classed. I show how these discourses operate in everyday practice in Chapter 4, 5 and 6. First, in the following Chapter, I will discuss how welfare-state restructuring impacted the delivery of integration programs in Toronto, Canada.
Chapter 4
Governed-by-Contract: Working in the Immigrant Service Sector

Ula, an employment counselor, was trying to explain herself to the Enhanced Language Training (ELT) students. It was clear she was in hot water. She stood in the middle of the small and intimate classroom between rows of desks, as the students and I awkwardly listened to her perspective. The ELT program had become increasingly tense and the students had recently (for the second time) reviewed the program. Their feedback had not been good. The students were unhappy because they felt they were not being taught the material the program advertised, and because they did not have internships or jobs lined up, although the English instruction portion of the program was almost over. The program coordinator was trying to hold the ESL teacher and the employment counselor accountable. The latter, in turn, were trying to blame the program coordinator for lack of direction. The ELT students and I were caught in the middle, listening to various webs of accusations. I felt particularly uncomfortable, for the managers had also solicited my feedback, since I sat in and observed the class everyday. I had been evasive, but I still said too much, for I heard some of what I said being amplified, back at me. ‘They said you were unhappy with…’ I cringed. We were in the midst of the fallout that occurred when this ELT program could not deliver what it had promised.

Ula tells us she is very stressed because she heard they were not happy with the program, for they did not have job placements yet. To try to make sense of who should be accountable, one ELT student, Vik, asks her: ‘What are your responsibilities in the program, in terms of the brochure?’ Ula explains that she is supposed to help them find a job, but that it is up to them to be proactive. She says, ‘I can get information for you, to meet your needs. Think of it as a partnership, but you need to come to me and tell me what you want. Remember the first day, I said you are all individuals so you have different needs?’ She continues to explain her job description as laid out in “the contract” their organization has with the government, saying, ‘in the contract, 30% need to be placed somewhere.’ Later, in the midst of her justifications, she says, ‘I am not superwoman,’ implying that they need to work with her to achieve their goals. An ELT student, Ana, insists, ‘but you are. [Ula: Thank-you.] We are hoping you can be superwoman for us.’
Ula interprets her job description differently than her clients. She, as part of the “enabling state”, aims to help facilitate, rather than guarantee, employment (refer to Chapter 3). Students on the other hand generally felt that the programs should do more concretely to help them find work. I examine this neoliberal rationality of government – that of facilitating entrepreneurial self-governance – in the chapters that follow. What I am interested in here is not on how Ula describes her job, but rather on how she references ‘the contract’. In formal interviews about the program, other settlement workers at Newcomer Services, to my surprise, constantly referred to “the contract”, unsolicited. I was shown a physical manifestation of the contract (a photocopy), again unsolicited, and observed how their everyday practice was oriented towards meeting and/or of performing compliance with its accountability targets. Here, “centre stage is given to an agent of a non-human kind: we can think of audit as an actant to which all kind of power are attributed” (Strathern 2000:5). Indeed, “the contract” haunted settlement workers and program administrators, as they were oriented towards meeting its goals in order to ensure funding would be renewed in the future.

In this chapter, I focus on how immigrant service organizations’ contracts with the government and the precarious conditions they engendered, constrained ELT workers, thereby showing how accomplishing contract mandates really would require superhuman power. The above vignette highlights the individualization of accountability that is produced by what anthropologists have called “audit culture” (Strathern 2000, Shore 2008). At this particular organization, Newcomer Services, front-line workers largely shifted blame from one individual to the other, holding each other accountable. This vignette also demonstrates how settlement workers in non-profit organizations were governed at a distance (Rose 1999). This chapter thus examines the transformative effects of a form of audit as a central mechanism for enacting governmental “control of control” (Rose 1999:154). The agencies’ contracts with the state enacted a hierarchical rather than horizontal partnership. Moreover, as techniques of control they have performative effects, for they orient action towards certain quantifiable ends. Such audits also render invisible integration outcomes that cannot be measured or counted according to the contract. Orienting government towards success rates that are quantifiable, or rather governing by numbers, attempts to replace settlement staffs’ qualitative judgments and government trust in immigrant service agencies (ISAs) (Shore and Wright 2000). However, this control is never total. Although the ISAs were precarious and their staff’s labour constrained to some degree by the
contract, settlement workers nevertheless still exercised their own discretion, often flouting the contract’s criteria. Furthermore, there was some flexibility of interpretation when meeting its quantitative goals. Settlement staff had to manage the tensions between meeting short-term funding criteria as laid out in their government contracts and long-term processes of integration, such as language learning as well as alternative definitions of program “success”. ELT programmers and clients often found the program to be “successful” from a long-term perspective, if not in the short-term, for they believed the impact of the programs were harder to define than government accountability criteria (Evans et al. 2005:86). Although certain aspects of the contract were ignored in everyday practice, I argue that it still ultimately produced a series of contradictions, in addition to a precarious service sector, that undermined the efficacy of employment services in the context of welfare-state restructuring.

Contract Work in the Non-Profit Settlement Sector

The immigrant settlement sector, which has been called a “shadow state” (Stasiulis et al. 2011:74), consists of more than 108 Immigrant Settlement Agencies (ISAs) in Toronto. Government partnerships with immigrant service agencies are not new; rather they have existed since shortly after the Second World War with the rise of the welfare state (see Chapter 3). Under the welfare state, non-profit social service providers did not fade away, but rather were reconfigured. They moved from being charities to community-centred public service providers. State-nonprofit cooperation formed and grew together, and the latter was the main deliverer of immigrant settlement services. Since the mid-1970s many ISAs have relied on federal funding through the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP). Since 1992 they have also received Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) funding, prior to receiving funding for ELT and other bridging programs for skilled immigrants in the 2000s (see Chapter 2 for more details). Because of restrictions on federal funding (i.e. immigrants are only eligible for services for their first three years in Canada), these organizations have supplemented government funding by fund-raising (e.g. from the Maytree Organization and the United Way). Many organizations that were initially ethnospecific have since expanded to become multi-ethnic as mandated by funding that encourages multiculturalism. For example, COSTI, which began in the 1960s to serve Italian newcomers, has since become the largest immigrant-service organization with a multi-ethnic clientele (Stasiulis et al. 2011:106).
The non-profit immigrant settlement sector’s relationship with the federal government changed with “settlement renewal” which restructured government funding for settlement services in the 1990s, in line with “New Public Management” (NPM). *Settlement Renewal: A New Direction for Newcomer Integration* (June 1995) outlined Citizenship and Immigration Canada’s (CIC) intention to withdraw from the direct administration and delivery of federal settlement programs over the next two to three years, in order to improve “the efficiency” and “cost-effectiveness” of language training and other settlement services. The goals of the settlement renewal initiative were:

- to enhance the ability of communities to set funding priorities that meet local integration needs; to streamline the funding process and eliminate the potential for duplication and overlap in the administration of integration programs. The intention is to pool federal, provincial and municipal resources, freeing up money and resources now used to administer programs; and to increase the accountability of public funds by focusing on results (3).

Of particular significance, is the government’s shift to emphasizing results and outcomes. The report notes: “Performance measures can be developed to provide data on results that address the question of whether we are getting what we expect at an acceptable cost” (10). Settlement Renewal, like New Public Management’s “focus on accountability, explicit standards and measures of performance, emphasis on outputs, not inputs, with rewards linked to performance…contracts and competition, and insistence on parsimony maintained by budget discipline…required a shift from an ethic of public service to one of private management” (Rose 1999:150). Systems of audit and accountability use “modern techniques and principles of financial audit, but in contexts far removed from the world of financial accountancy” (Shore 2008:279). Through disciplinary practices, audits “seek to instill new norms of conduct and behaviour into the populations over which they rule” (Shore 2008:279-80). In line with NPM, in the 1990s, the government reduced block grants or core funding and increased purchase-of-service contracts; that is, short-term funding for the delivery of specific projects or services (Stasiulis et al. 2011, Creese 2006). Through the “focus on the delivery of services” nonprofit organizations would “be judged according to its capacity to produce results. It would be governed indirectly, through contracts, targets, performance measures monitoring and audit” (Rose 1999:151). With this restructuring actors “are expected to be efficient, responsible, flexible, and cost-effective and deliver measurable outcomes in order to win further funding on a
free and open market” (Woolford and Curran 2012:49). More specifically, in the administration of settlement funding, agencies were required to use computerized tracking and statistical accounting to demonstrate program outcomes (Stasiulis et al. 2011).

The move to purchase-of-service contracts has, in general, reduced ISAs to service delivery and decreased or eliminated their advocacy function. However, the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) has emerged as a strong lobby group. Although it receives government funding, it is still critical of government policy and has played a consultative partner to government, as well as shared its information with member agencies. However, in general, funded organizations steer clear of advocacy and there are punitive consequences for some who disagree with government policy (Stasiulis et al. 2011:111). For instance, in March 2009, Minister Kenney withdrew almost half a million dollars in funding for settlement from the Canadian Arab Federation, which was highly critical of Harper’s foreign policy (Stasiulis et al. 2011:111). Indeed, the organizations I conducted ethnographic research with were very careful to avoid being political and did not engage in advocacy. For example, when I inquired about whether they invited certain organizations or activists to speak about migrant rights at the agencies, I was told they needed to be careful about interacting with political groups. In contrast, the advocacy function of non-profits was important and feasible under Keynesian welfare-state funding arrangements. Core funding also allowed long-term stable latitude in spending and was based on bonds of trust. With service-based contracts, ISAs tended to be oriented towards “an ethics of accountability that is responsive largely to technical criteria and state-defined targets rather than an ethic of care concerned with very specific service user needs” (Woolford and Curran 2012:55). Nevertheless, several settlement workers were simultaneously oriented towards an ethic of care when they flouted contract criteria to help their clients. It is also important not to romanticize the welfare era of service delivery, for it “did not always meet its cooperative and care-based ideals” and many have argued that it was “marred by paternalism and disciplinary controls” (Woolford and Curran 2012:46). However, although in the past funds were also not always spent wisely (Evans et al. 2005:76), such funding criteria created a sector that was relatively secure. In contrast, competitive contract-based financing that purchases defined services allows little flexibility in service delivery and is based on distrust of professional competence (Evans et al. 2005:81, Rose 1999:155). Furthermore, since funding is insecure, organizations need to spend more time maintaining income levels and relationships
with government funding agencies have deteriorated (Evans et al. 2005:81). Although proponents of NPM claims that it devolves “more decisional power to those actually involved in devising and delivering services in local sites, it renders those activities governable in new ways” (Rose 1999:153). For instance, I found that the immigration service agencies spend much more time and activity on being accountable, on trying to make clients accountable, so that they can be accountable to the government. I show that the unintended effect is reduced flexibility and quality of services.

Audit technologies also re-orient professional relationships to clients and between colleagues. They change the way people perceive themselves: it encourages them to measure themselves and their personal qualities against the external ‘benchmarks’, ‘performance indicators’ and ‘ratings’ used by the auditing process. An audit society is one where people are interpolated as **auditees**, where accountability is conflated with elaborate policing mechanisms for subjecting individual performance to the gaze of external experts (Shore 2008:281).

Indeed, when Ula references the contract, her interpellation as an auditee is evident. She thereby is rendered under surveillance or the gaze of the state/government, as enacted through the “contract”. The service-based contracts in ISA constitute disciplinary technologies, or techniques of self “aimed at instilling new norms of conduct into the workforce” (Shore 2008:283, Rose 1999). This chapter thus examines the ways in which ELT workers were governed by the funder’s accountability standards.

In this regime, larger agencies have more success securing grants and contracts, for they have more resources and “access to information from government, accounting and legal services, information technology for client and program management, and considerable skill in drafting proposals” (Young 2011:304). Smaller organizations, however, have less control over the parameters of their funding. In this chapter, I show how funding stipulations put limitations on program development and how accountability criteria can actually decrease ISAs ability to cater to clients’ individual needs, despite NPM rhetoric that claims downloading increases the flexibility of government to meet individuals’ needs, particularly with funding scarcity. To do so, I focus primarily on one ELT program but rely heavily on participant observation at another ISA and interviews from several others. The basic components of the programs at the two organizations were the same, although they were organized slightly differently, as they had
different capacities and funding constraints (or opportunities). At one organization, Multicultural Immigrant Services, explicit reference to “the contract” and the stress it produced was not as evident to the students. However, it was nevertheless also plagued by largely divergent expectations held by the majority of the settlement workers and their clients, as well as between the workers and the state (as embodied by the contract). I will first outline the precarious nature of the sector, by examining the nature of government contracts’ funding as well as the conditions of work for ISA employees. I then examine who the target client of ELT was, and the ways in which this ideal client may or may not be admitted to and served by ELT programs.

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The first time I attended an ELT class at Newcomer Services, I entered the organization’s doors in a nondescript building off a major street, near a subway station. I walked into a small colourless waiting room with a door, marked by a sign that clearly displayed the organization’s name and CIC’s logo. It was locked and after my knocking received no response, I sat down on one of the waiting room chairs. It was 8:50 a.m. on a Saturday: I was 10 minutes early. Shortly thereafter a young man in his late twenties arrives. I said good morning, as he sits across from me. We sit awkwardly for a few minutes as he reads a form, until he looks up and asks if I am also looking for a job. I respond, ‘no,’ and explain who I am and why I’m interested in the program. I ask him what field he is in. He is a mechanical engineer, but he specializes in nuclear engineering. I tell him that my husband is a civil engineer. He asks me for more details on the kind of work my husband does. I describe his work, and also mention that he was part of a university club that made an off-road vehicle, which involved mechanical engineering, so he knows two mechanical engineers who are working on the reactor in Mississauga, which had recently been in the news. He asks if the club is open. I said, ‘maybe, but I don’t think so, because it is affiliated with a university.’ He replies, ‘of course, it is not open to foreigners.’ He has been here for eight months and he tells me that he is really anxious about not having a job yet. The ELT teacher walks in and although we are the only ones who have arrived, he suggests we go downstairs, since it is time to start.

We descend to the basement. The classroom was small, with desks and chairs facing a blackboard. The ceiling consisted of particle-board squares, the floor linoleum, and the walls were lined with posters and assignments from ESL classes. It looked like an elementary or high school room, but smaller and windowless. Vik and I sat down and continued our conversation.
He knows some people in his type of engineering, but they do not seem to be hiring. Since he
cannot find a job he is now trying programs. After some other students trickled in, the teacher
wrote on the blackboard and handed out photocopies of exercises on ‘Effective Listening’, which
he tells us is required as a critical skill when one works in a team. We did a combination of
group and individual work, taking up our answers. It was dry and the time moved slowly. Later,
the Director of the program came downstairs to hand out an evaluation form. She tells the
students that they want to hear what they want to get out of the program because it is a bit
different from LINC. She was also careful to say that the program might lead to potential
employment, but that they could not promise ‘you will get employment...We will do what we
can to respond to individual needs as much as possible…You need to communicate with each
teacher what your needs are. As of Monday we will have another teacher…you need to see
yourself as a partner in this process.’

On my first day, a week after the program had started, it was thereby announced that the
class would get a new teacher. The first class with the new teacher took place in the computer lab
next door. It was set up similarly, except each desk had a computer. The new teacher, Tony, felt
it was important to incorporate communicative technology into teaching. Tony could not be
further from dry. He was animated and talkative and spoke with confidence and authority. He
seemed to be an expert on most subjects and he spoke as if he knew and understood you. He
actively tried to build rapport and he frequently spoke about his previous students telling
colourful and illustrative stories. Language learning oriented handouts with exercises were
replaced with printouts from www.monster.com. We listened to a local talk radio station’s traffic
report, which Tony called a “structured listening” exercise, through which students were required
to recall what they had heard. Such pedagogic techniques were based on the philosophy that
teaching with “real” materials, that people use in everyday life, was more effective than de-
contextualized lessons. These activities quickly digressed into tangents as we discussed various
topics, such as how to buy a used car in Canada, or where to camp locally. Often, during the
teacher’s long-winded digressions, I could see students surfing the internet or playing solitaire on
their computers.

In the weeks that followed I was always early, but usually Vik was already there. We
were both the punctual attendees, and others would trickle in chatting informally until the teacher
arrived to start the course. We always sat in the same seats. I sat in the far right corner at the
back with a view of the entire room, while Vik, who emigrated from Ukraine, was directly in front of me. I sat beside Maria, who emigrated from Albania and whose personality was infectious: she was likeable, positive, and kind. On my first day of class, during the break, Maria had come over and talked to me when everyone else had quickly dispersed. I asked about her family. She told me she has three children, an 18 year old, a 16 year old and a 10 year old. They are doing well and speak English well. I ask her how long they have been here. She says, ‘three years.’ She and her husband ‘need to get jobs’. She previously worked for an electric company, but it was just a three-month contract that got extended once, but it was just data entry. She tells me she needs to improve her English, although I insist it’s good. She says, ‘no it isn’t and you won’t correct me if I’m wrong because you don’t want to hurt me, but I don’t know if I’m wrong if you don’t.’ I tell her I will correct her if she would like me to, although I never ended up doing so in the course of informal conversation. It always seemed rude to correct minor errors, like mixed up tenses, when one was having meaningful conversation.

Her husband sat across from us, across the pathway between the desks in the middle of the classroom. He was older than Maria and was always making jokes. He loved to make puns with English words, demonstrating both his humour and growing knowledge of English. He was always interested in the exact denotational meaning of a word and often offered synonyms for words in class. He was a keen and thoughtful student. An engineer by training he had worked in his field for 26 years prior to coming to Canada. He worked for the government constructing commercial buildings for the city. He also worked as a survey engineer for railway construction. He worked with the government until 1996 when in Maria’s words “democracy entered and they decided to privatize everything”. He consequently lost his job with the government, but he found another one in the private sector in urban planning or land development, approving building permits. He worked there until they moved to Canada.

In front of him sat Seo-Yun from South Korea, Aneesa from Pakistan and Yasmine from Morocco, all women in their twenties. Seo-Yun and Aneesa were both married and mothers of young children. They were hoping to get (better) work in the future, as I will describe further below. Yasmine was young and single and we often rode home together on the subway. We talked a lot about her dissatisfaction with the program and her struggle to keep going after looking unsuccessfully for (skilled) work first in Montreal and then in Toronto. Yasmine had moved to Toronto after living in Montreal for a few years, because she felt that the latter was
more racist. Like Yasmine another informant, Charles, who was born in Paris, but whose parents immigrated there from the Ivory Coast, had moved to Toronto, despite being fluent in French and less comfortable speaking English, because he also felt and had heard that Toronto was not as racist as Montreal. In Toronto, however, they both remained un(der)employed and continued to face systemic discrimination. But Yasmine’s attendance was sporadic, like several others in the class. Victoria from China and Besnik from Albania also attended irregularly. Across from this group in front of Vik, sat Ana and Mikhail, a couple from Belarus. I brought a lunch on my first day and while most went to eat elsewhere, I sat in the classroom with Ana and Mikhail, who had also packed a lunch. Mikhail asked me if I needed them to fill out a survey. I explained my methodology and inquired about their work. He is an electrical engineer, and he says, proudly, ‘my wife is a doctor, she has Phd in education from [a university] in New York.’ I say, ‘Toronto must feel small to you then.’ They say, ‘yes.’ I ask, ‘what was your research on?’ ‘Education.’ ‘I mean, what in particular did you study, child or adult education?’ She explained her research to me, based on surveys, which involved a huge sample of 700. I was embarrassed, for my discussion of methods had given short shrift to the survey in favour of participant-observation. Ana, told me, ‘it’s hard to find a job.’ I ask, ‘why did you move here from New York?’ Ana’s visa had expired and Canada accepted them, but they did not want to move. Ana said, ‘the U.S. likes to get different perspectives and you can get a job in the U.S.’ When I asked her what type of job she is looking for, she notes that she would like to research for companies, but they want a business degree, so she was thinking of getting one. Her husband notes that one of them needs to work, and if she wants to go back to school he needs to find a better job. ‘It seems that here both have to work if you want to be okay,’ he says. He works as an electrician in Canada, as he did in the United States, for when he arrived in New York he did not speak English. However, a major airline hired him regardless because he passed a technical exam and he quickly moved up the ranks. Ana tells me that in Canada she is working at a big-box retail store and ‘the wage is pathetic’. She said, ‘they pay minimum wage and they only raised it when they had too’. I said yeah, ‘some people are fighting to get the minimum wage up even higher to $10/hour.’ ‘Yeah but even then you can’t live off that,’ she retorts. I nodded in agreement. When I asked about their children, they told me they had two, one American and one Belarusian.

Many had dropped out since the first week, such as a newly arrived couple from Mexico who had both worked in the food industry. They told the ELT staff it was too far to commute.
The students, then, included those who had just arrived and those who had been in Canada for a few years. With Tony at the helm, we were a very social group. We enjoyed each other’s company and found opportunities to socialize outside of the classroom, over picnics, dinners and visits. Despite the fun and merriment, when the days and weeks of sociability did not result in concrete employment supports, tension and stress mounted which added to many people’s already high anxiety about being un(der)employed. Students were upset that they did not yet have work placements or internships. Individuals, such as Ula, were held accountable by the program managers for their critiques – as opposed to the entire precarious system of integration.

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Precarious Work in the Settlement Sector: Funding and Job (In)Security

As the above description reveals, the ELT program staff were oriented towards meeting the ‘individual needs of their clients’. The program was also designed around “‘personalized’ forms of case management” that focused on “customer choice in public services” (Clarke 2012:214). For instance, as evident in the opening vignette, student feedback was elicited throughout the program and customer-clients were urged to express their individual needs. This individualization usually entailed encouraging self-responsibility. Yet, the students were unhappy with the curriculum and employment supports (or lack thereof) that the program provided. In this section, I will show how the non-profit immigrant service sector is characterized by precarious working conditions that affect immigrant service agencies’ (ISAs) ability to deliver programs, including catering to individual needs. New Public Management has led to deteriorating working conditions for staff, as laying off core staff is one area that can create flexibility in budgets (Evans et al. 2005:82). Jobs themselves have thus become more insecure in the sector: the number of part-time and limited-term contracts have increased (Creese 2006:200), and staff turnover is high.

While Jeanine, the recruiter of the above ELT program at Newcomer Services thought that “a little bit of competition is a good thing,” citing critiques of a pure core-funding approach, which “cultures a sort of entitlement”, she felt that the current contracts do not allow long-term development or security, in ways that were unproductive. Jeanine was new to the sector, having
just finished a master’s degree in the field of immigration studies. The biggest surprise to her about working in the sector was the micro-management she experienced because of all the funding stipulations. It was “ridiculously chaotic” when she started at the fiscal year-end: ‘there was always stress and pressure’, she said. Prior to working in the non-profit sector, Jeanine did not think it would be as bad as it was. She characterized the sector as an environment of working with people in precarious work situations, who were on contracts and who were themselves trained in different fields. They were not trained to be settlement workers; rather, they were trained psychologists, doctors, lawyers etc., ‘which makes for a very odd working environment’. Alejandra’s current and new job as an ELT coordinator was also her first job in the non-profit sector and in settlement. She previously had worked in education in the private sector. She also found it “shocking” that people had no training in social work at her particular organization, which in her opinion hindered their ability to provide services adequately. Many people who work in the settlement sector were once new immigrants and thus have a range of educational and work experience unrelated to the field. In contrast, the fact that the settlement sector provides newcomers with possible job opportunities could be viewed positively (and which I explore further in Chapter 7). Furthermore, with the recent professionalization of the sector, people with degrees in social work or immigration, like Jeanine, were increasingly being hired. There were also many other immigrants who worked in the sector only after going back to school for social work or settlement. Moreover, ESL teachers, of course, first had to obtain the appropriate certification. Nevertheless, while attending a Teachers of English as a Second Language (TESL) conference, Miro, the ELT teacher at Multicultural Immigrant Services joked that all the people who cannot get jobs go into ESL. As a contingent, relatively low paying sector it is often a ‘plan b’ career choice.

While there was a core staff that worked full-time (albeit often on contract), ESL teachers for LINC or ELT are often hired on a part-time basis or on short-term contracts, as it is more cost-effective to hire part-time employees, who do not receive full benefits. I once walked into a staff lunchroom to witness a group of ESL teachers huddled together, complaining about their part-time hours and speaking in hushed tones about their ineffective union. As a result of job insecurity there was high staff turnover in the immigrant service sector. For instance, the above example illustrates how the ELT program at Newcomer Services had two different teachers during one session, and a third for the second session. Such precarious work conditions, along
with contract and service based funding, affected long-term program development. Indeed, the second teacher, Tony, abruptly left dissatisfied with management just before the end of the course, which left the coordinator and recruiter scrambling to find guest speakers and substitute teachers (including myself) for the last few classes.

The conflict between the contingent and short-term nature of the funding and the need for long-term development in order to increase program quality was particularly salient in the delivery of ELT, since it was a new program. Jeanine told me that since the funding was only for one year, it “makes the entire program seem really temporary and I think - I can see now - that it’s really changed…how all the staff works and the relationship between students and staff and executive director and staff. Everything’s contingent on what happens in this one year, instead of giving a little bit of time to grow and time to do long-term planning, research…curriculum development.”

Because I studied ELT in its infancy, curriculum development was still ongoing and many instructors were teaching the program for the first time. Since teachers were not paid for curriculum development, several were constructing their lesson plans in an ad-hoc fashion. For example, teachers at Newcomer Services got around 15 hours for training (a stipend), but other than that they were only paid for the time they taught. Alejandra, the ELT coordinator noted that it is common practice that teachers were not paid for prep, but they were nevertheless expected to do it. For the first session of the course at Newcomer Services they had eight weeks to set up the whole program. The teacher was hired two weeks before the program started. Jeanine noted that much of their curriculum was used from other organizations, but developing something specific for their students would have been beneficial. However, they did not receive the funding to do so. Even getting curriculum resources developed by other agencies was difficult. Although they were supposed to share resources that were government funded, several immigrant service agencies (ISAs) were reluctant to do so, given the competitive nature of contract-based funding. Jeanine noted, that since ‘they only had two months of recruitment and curriculum development before classes started (and they started two weeks late); in reality the contract makes it that you do not have time for curriculum development’.

An ELT teacher at Multicultural Immigrant Services felt that the program’s curriculum was inadequate. Alisha had never heard of ELT, when she was asked to teach the financial ELT class. She was teaching LINC at that time and agreed because her hours would remain the same.
She did not want less hours. She had assumed it would be like LINC with curriculum and guidelines: ‘I kept asking around, and I never got anything’. She did not get any curriculum until the second session. ‘They essentially didn’t have one’, she noted and they expected her to come up with something. When she did get the curriculum, she was disappointed with its content. Consequently, she continued to create her own lesson plans and put in a lot of unpaid prep time to teach the class, particularly since she had no previous knowledge of the financial sector. Indeed, ELT teachers were supposed to teach sector-specific terminology. However, trained ESL teachers did not necessarily have the educational or work experience to teach specialized vocabulary.

Non-profits “have long delivered social services “economically” by expecting staff will perform unpaid or “volunteer” labour” (Evans et al. 2005:90-1). Like Alisha, Jeanine also went beyond her job description to help a client, Charles, find an apartment, because he was fluent in French, as was she, and services for skilled immigrants in French were limited in Toronto. In such cases, devotion to caring work facilitates unpaid labour or more intensive workloads. Alisha, a former “new immigrant” who empathized with her students, wanted to provide curriculum she felt they deserved, and Jeanine did not want to leave Charles, who knew absolutely no one in the city, to navigate the competitive rental market in English on his own. With unstable work conditions, however, staff often moved from organization to organization or onto another career which also hindered long-term development in particular organizations. Indeed, Jeanine quickly left this job to work for Citizenship and Immigration Canada as a civil servant and Alisha would leave if she had better options, but as an immigrant from Jamaica she faced discrimination in the labour market (in her field of Human Relations). Of all the teachers I met, her retention rate was the highest, but so was the amount of unpaid work she put into preparing her lessons. On one ELT session’s last day of classes, I witnessed her presenting each of her students with a personalized, hand-written card. It was clear to me that her students appreciated and respected her care and detailed lesson plans.

Larger organizations with more sources of funding to draw upon, like Multicultural Immigrant Services could be more flexible in the kinds of services they offered, while smaller organizations like Newcomer Services felt the funding criteria was particularly constraining. Prior to receiving ELT funding, Newcomer Services primarily provided LINC and settlement services and the organization’s employment supports were thus limited. Their contract with the
government stipulated that students must complete 172.5-175 hours of language training. The latter was to consist of lessons on: professional vocabulary, information technology, workplace communication, job search, and workplace culture. They were also contractually obligated to provide employment supports, such as job search techniques and individualized help with resumes and cover letters. A job coach [or employment counselor] was also mandated to support clients. At the end of language training the program was required to offer a Bridge-to-Work component that consisted of either work placements or mentoring opportunities. Work placements included “suitable employment” or an unpaid work experience for two to six weeks. One-on-one mentoring with professionals in their field was to consist of 20-40 hours over four to six weeks and was meant to be an alternative for those unable to obtain a work placement. They were also supposed to provide training for mentors. The original contract promised a large number of work placements (approximately 50% and approximately 30% mentorships). Finally, they were obligated to track their clients for another six months after they completed the program. However, the program coordinator told me that to renew their funding, it was her understanding that they only needed to ensure that from their pool of students a minimum of 30% had been placed in jobs within the fiscal year, which she thought was reasonable. Others were required to be given mentors or could be categorized as going back to school.

Although the contract says that clients needed to be placed in ‘jobs commensurate with their skills’, workplace coordinators could interpret this statement in different ways. When I asked, Alejandra noted that the job placement guidelines were vague: ‘it really just has to be a job placement in a similar field’. Meeting that 30% minimum, given the wide manner in which it could be interpreted, seemed achievable, particularly since they could still be technically underemployed working in their field (see Chapter 7). There is thus flexibility in interpreting the contract’s targets and settlement staff could thus produce numbers that technically met the contract criteria, but which did not necessarily reflect the goal of placing immigrants in jobs commensurate with their skills and training. Moreover, ISAs often performed rather than enacted compliance with the contract. For instance, at Multicultural Immigrant Services where they did not closely monitor their clients’ attendance, students were asked to be present the day the auditor/funder was scheduled to visit. I remember sitting nervously in an ELT classroom, as the auditor looked in the windowed door with the program director – they looked onto a classroom
scene (with a higher than regular attendance). I too must have appeared to be yet another student body in the seemingly productive class.

*Multicultural Immigrant Services* did not have the same pressures *Newcomer Services* did, for their job coaches which serviced ELT clients were paid by multiple sources of funding and they thus had more, albeit still limited, contacts with recruiters (*Newcomer Services* had none). The unevenness of service delivery is endemic in this precarious sector. In some ways *Newcomer Services* embodies several exceptions that prove the rule. Since the program coordinator and recruiter were both new to the sector, and it was this organization’s first time offering ELT, the insecurity of the sector was amplified and the contradictions were very evident to them and to me. Over time some long term curriculum development and security that funding will be renewed places less pressure on individual staff to try to conform themselves or their clients to ‘the contract’. At *Multicultural Immigrant Services*, for example, the case counselors were more respectful of individual timelines (e.g. they did not pressure their students to meet contract goals as much). But the terms of the contract and tensions it engenders were still evident. One source of employment program funding at *Multicultural Immigrant Services* was cut as I finished fieldwork. This funding allowed them to help new immigrants in any field, whereas ELT funding only included immigrants from the fields of engineering, information technology, healthcare and finance. With the loss of this funding they would need to be more stringent about what categories of people they could offer services to. Indeed, a major source of tension within the sector was recruiting the right client. Furthermore, workers’ orientation towards contract goals often conflicted with clients’ goals, resulting in dissatisfaction with services offered. As I will show, within this “contract regime” and with reduced expenditures, “service organizations [bear] the brunt of…dissatisfaction with deteriorating services” (Creese 2006:192).

**Recruiting Immigrant-clients**

ISAs had to advertise their ELT programs, recruit potential clients and screen them for eligibility. This process reveals the ways in which funding insecurity contributed to what Jeannine termed a ‘chaotic working environment’ in addition to a frustrating experience for new immigrants. Cash-strapped immigrant service agencies often relied on local newspapers, like the
Metro,\textsuperscript{61} to feature articles on ELT programs, as a form of free advertisement. These articles, however, were often hastily written on shoestring budgets and were usually not very accurate. Fairly early on in the course, students from the ELT class at Newcomer Services were asked to volunteer to be interviewed by a reporter from a small local community newspaper. Reading the final article, one ELT student expressed dismay after discovering that he was reportedly from two different countries at different points in the article! (The writer had confused two students.) The ELT students joked afterwards about the reporter’s mix-ups and direct quotes, although she did not seem to take notes. While I was attending an ELT class at Multicultural Immigrant Services several months later, the teacher read an article in a local newspaper with the students on an ELT program, which happened to be offered at the ISA where I had previously conducted participant-observation. I was surprised, since the article made it sound like Newcomer Services offered four separate ELT streams, although they only offered one program to my knowledge. I emailed the program coordinator to congratulate her on the article and to ask her if the program had expanded. She replied that it had not expanded, but rather, ‘the reporter made tons of errors, [she] couldn’t believe it!’ These examples of inaccurate advertising give a sense of the wealth of incomplete and shifting information new immigrants faced when trying to navigate settlement and employment programs. Several newcomers expressed the difficulty they had choosing between similar programs at different non-profit organizations. Many settlement workers, however, were also frustrated by the logistical problems that resulted from ELT programs’ sliding start dates\textsuperscript{62} at their own and other organizations, due to the short preparation and recruitment times contingent contracts allowed.

Jeanine recruited people at ESL schools in addition to other ISAs and public libraries. She noted that while she initially discussed language training, she quickly mentioned the work placement component because 80% of the people wanted the work placement. She told me that she feels that deep down people want to better their vocabulary, but it is not a priority for them; rather, they prioritize the placement and/or getting “Canadian experience” and Canadian references. The ELT manager at Multicultural Immigrant Services agreed that most people desire ‘the Canadian experience aspect’ of the program because language learning is a long-term thing.

\textsuperscript{61} This is the daily free newspaper available at public transit subway stations.
\textsuperscript{62} Start dates were sometimes pushed back because teachers were not hired yet or enough students had not yet been recruited. Furthermore, websites were often not updated frequently so one had to contact individual programs to inquire about start dates.
For many, ELT promised to be a means of “gaining Canadian experience”, while upgrading one’s language skills (for more on Canadian experience see Chapter 7). Another program manager felt that students were most interested in the placement portion of the program because ‘language is an ongoing issue; you can’t solve it in three months.’ Finding out about ELT through library outreach, Ana, for example, hoped she would achieve an employment opportunity (a work placement or a co-op) through ELT, while her husband, Mikhail, hoped to improve his professional language skills, as he was already working as an electrician (although not in his field of engineering).

Often ELT students were recruited from LINC classes. For example, Maria and Nik told me that the ELT program was referred to them by their LINC teacher, and they decided to take it because they could get a job placement and learn how to write resumes and so on. The job placement was the most attractive part of the program because they were already going to LINC school for English. Seo-Yun also heard about ELT while taking a LINC course and decided to take it because she was interested in obtaining a counseling job. Seo-Yun originally came to Canada from South Korea to study counseling, but ended up staying when she married a Canadian. Her husband and his family spoke English at home; so while she had a high level of conversational English, she still worried it was not professional enough. She was enrolled in a LINC class that was below her assessment level because it was the most advanced class the organization offered. The teacher told her it was too basic for her and recommended ELT. She recalled that the brochure looked amazing and since it was in the evening she could attend. She worked part-time during the day as an administrative assistant for a Korean professional association. She noted: “From the brochure I thought this was a ‘wonder program’.”

The brochure for Newcomer Services noted that ELT’s objective was to “help newcomers enter and remain in employment matched with their skills and qualifications”. It offers job-specific language training (CLB 7-10), work placements and mentoring opportunities. It is for those who have been foreign trained and wanted to “re-start their careers or enter employment matched with their skills and training.” Clients would also learn job search and resume writing strategies, apply transferable skills in order to develop a new career, enhance language skills, learn about licensure exams and regulations, gain a knowledge of workplace culture and

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63 I will discuss CLB’s further in the following chapter. Briefly, CLB Benchmarks range from 1-12. Levels 7-10 are considered representative of advanced language skills.
communication in their field. To be eligible one had to have a Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) of 6 in any one of 4 language skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening), be an internationally-trained professional or in a qualified trade. They also needed a keen interest and strong commitment to enter the job market. They had to be a permanent resident or have convention refugee status. Multicultural Immigrant Services’ program required clients have CLB Level 5 in English and were oriented towards Accounting/Financial services, IT, Engineering, or the Health Care professions. Their program advertised that it provided clients with an action plan (the purpose of which is to achieve a successful job search outcome), services individualized for each client, sector specific language and workplace oriented communication skills. It also provided clients with a job developer that would help connect them to jobs, volunteer placements and mentors. The program advertised that it was individualized (i.e. flexible), so clients could continue to work in a “survival job” if they needed to, and they offered support after clients obtained skilled employment.

Advertising and recruitment were important since the program was new and there is actually a low usage rate of integration programs, more generally. As Immigration Minister Kenny pointed out in his 2009 Internationally Educated Professionals (IEP) conference address, only 20% of newcomers use services, so there is a need to advertise them. Consequently, recruiters were often lenient with eligibility criteria. However, program administrators were also lenient, because of their desire to offer new immigrants services, even if they did not fit the government contracts’ criteria perfectly. Clients’ LINC levels were often lower than the classes were originally designed for, and people’s whose sector backgrounds did not fit perfectly with the programs’ foci were nevertheless often admitted. Jeanine noted that: “you can’t never really tell who is ever going to call and you don’t want to deny certain people a class, like, you sort of offer the class to them saying you’ll be with these people, we could refer you out to another class that is just for whatever, just for engineers, but you have the choice to enter into this class”. This statement could be read and framed as reflective of the customer-focused ethos of NPM. The subject of government, under NPM, is defined as a client, as a self-responsible autonomous market participant (Boudreau et al. 2009:29). Indeed, throughout this thesis I often refer to ELT students as clients since this is what they were called by non-profit workers. However, this flexibility also allows the agencies and programs to be more inclusive. It could also be read as a

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64 As I mentioned in Chapter 2, I did not meet any refugees in the program.
way of flouting contract criteria and of being oriented towards caring for all immigrants regardless of whether or not they fit the ideal client. Settlement workers were often critical of contract stipulations. For instance, the majority of settlement counselors felt that services should not be restricted to an immigrant’s first three years in Canada. There was thus a contradiction between needing to follow the contract (or state policies) and meeting the needs of users/clients of the services (cf. Clarke 2012). At Newcomer Services they clearly took into account the individual needs/desires of clients with changing teachers, reviews, and with the flouting of contract rules to be more inclusive. Here, “competing and contradictory logics attempt to rule a site of practice, such that frontline actors have to work out the balance between different guidelines or injunctions” (Clarke 2012:218).

It becomes more difficult, however, for the teachers to deliver an effective program when their students required vastly different lessons. There was a wide range of students even when staff technically followed their government contracts. For instance, recall the Newcomer Services contract stipulated potential ELT clients must be permanent residents and have at least one Benchmark of 6 in one of 4 areas (reading, writing, listening, speaking), assessed at the YMCA. The ELT coordinator at Newcomer Services, Alejandra, noted that she ‘had one student 2, 2, 2, and 6 in writing, who dropped out because couldn’t cope.’ She noted that speaking requirements should be higher, as most do well in reading, yet struggle in the course. She noted that admitting students who are below Level 6 is a problem. One ELT teacher who worked for Multicultural Immigrant Services noted: ‘students are supposed to be at a certain level and I would like to see them stick to that. Right now I have a mix, people that are 4 going up to people who are at 8 or even TOEFL level65 and I find that is too wide a gap. Honestly no way I’m going to do two lessons on mortgages one at a level 4 and one at a level 8.” Furthermore, even the sector-specific sections, such as engineering, include a wide range of specialties. The technical language of mechanical engineering is different from that of civil engineering. Sector specific vocabulary is thus cursory and general.

The retention rate of students for the programs I observed was low, a trend endemic across the sector for ELT. Furthermore, at a TESL conference, I talked informally with ELT teachers and they all discussed their classes’ low turnout, high attrition rates, and being

65 TOEFL, which stands for Test of English as a Foreign Language, is used by American and Canadian universities for admission purposes.
overwhelmed with the task at hand. The ELT recruiter at *Newcomer Services* told me they started with 22 registered students, but three or four never showed up to the first class, although they had completed the pre-assessment at the YMCA. They currently have seven remaining. At their other center the drop-out rate was even higher. There were only three to four students left in that class although it had 18 when it started. At *Multicultural Immigrant Services* I watched two classes that started with around 15 students each dwindle to about two and three regular-ish attending students. As one ELT teacher noted, it was difficult to track those who dropped out, so one had to make assumptions about why they did. For instance, she suggested ‘either they found a job and couldn’t manage to keep up with the course. Or they lacked competitiveness in comparison to their classmates, so they might have thought they would not be able to compete in the job market’. Indeed, some clients did get jobs midway through the language training. Obtaining these jobs would not necessarily be because of the program, but it would be recorded as a program success nevertheless. I did not meet any students, however, who dropped out because they felt ‘uncompetitive’ or could not keep up in the course.

A host of possible explanations for dropping out were given, related to the fact that the programs were free. ‘Newcomers can self-select out at no charge and no loss,’ one ELT worker noted. Jeanine agreed: ‘when a service is free, you can’t turn people away, so I am not sure that drop-out rates should be a reflection of how good or bad a program is, it really comes down to time and commitment’. Some settlement staff, such as Sharon, recognized that this was a positive thing for newcomers. While these explanations were certainly valid and did describe the situations of many newcomers, the unwillingness to find fault with the programs when explaining attrition rates often astounded me. Many settlement workers were good at criminalizing private colleges that capitalize on desperate new immigrants needing Canadian certifications to legitimize their skills and knowledge, but were less critical of their free programs or community college programs for potentially wasting newcomers’ time. The high drop out rates of these free programs were interpreted as the product of a complex set of reasons for students’ inability to commit, rather than, at least in part, due to the quality of their services. But, my informants’ experiences suggest that the two most common reasons for dropping out were that it was a ‘waste of their time’ or they found other courses, training, or work that they felt would be more valuable. (For more on the latter see Chapter 7.). There was also a small minority who attended because they were obligated to as welfare recipients. Maria and Nik, for
instance, were on welfare and in Maria’s words, “since the government is helping us we have to go to school.” She was thus very frustrated by the fact that although she attended LINC class during the day and ELT class during the night, she felt she was ‘wasting her time’ as she desperately wanted a (skilled) job. She complained to me that her LINC teacher liked to talk about seals all day long, rather than provide more focused and structured English lessons. Maria told me:

“I think they are losing a lot of time, because the teacher said go in computer and read…we spent all the day just sitting in computer. I am not going to school to sit in computer. I can sit at home. I can read a lot of information: I don’t need to go and sit on computer. I need to do grammar…But if I sit on computer to read until 12 o’clock, we have lunch, when we come back a little bit exercises from yesterday…so I think it’s not well organized. [It] should be better organized and everything will be better, and students don’t have to stay long time in the same level. If everything is well prepared…they will go in the next level. But because teachers need to have students in class, they need class to be full of students, maybe they don’t have big desire to help us to learn because if we learn English we will leave school.”

Here Maria not only feels that ELT is a waste of time but that the ESL teachers are not even motivated to help them improve. New immigrants often interpreted the “real materials” pedagogic approach to learning as ineffective and unorganized. They thus felt that the programs were only interested in their presence as numbers that ensured funding rather than on genuinely helping them improve their job prospects.

The students who tended to stay in the classes at Multicultural Immigrant Services, that I observed, were those who felt they needed help with their English. Those whose English skills were high often stopped attending class to pursue more promising programs. For example, Vivek, from Bangladesh, stopped attending ELT to take a bridging program at a local university, which included taking undergraduate engineering classes. However, at Newcomer Services they stayed because of the pressure placed on them to fulfill language training hours in order to qualify for a job placement. The staff would frequently remind the students that they would not get a work placement if they did not complete their class hours. Some students told me that they were just ‘waiting around for a placement.’ The other organization was less aggressive in this respect. They did not explicitly threaten to withhold placements if their clients did not attend class. This is why I suspect their retention rate was even lower than at Newcomer Services.
As I previously mentioned, the majority of professional immigrants joined ELT because they were looking for a job like Nik, Maria, Ana and Vik. However, there was a conflict between the goals of the clients who were desperately searching for a job and those who took the course for future career development or long-term English learning whom ironically tended to be those left at the end of the program. Vik for instance, was one of those desperately searching for a job, and he is a prominent informant throughout this dissertation, for his frustration was visible and he was not afraid to say openly what so many others only revealed to me behind closed doors. He was young, in his late twenties and eager to find a job as his unemployed wife was pregnant with their first child. Born in Russia, but raised in the Ukraine, he had obtained a bachelor’s in finance and a master’s in nuclear engineering, which were assessed as the equivalent of a bachelor’s degree in Canada. His priority was getting a job placement as soon as possible.

As noted above, many of the clients left at the end of the course were those either desperately wanting a placement or dedicated to long-term, rather than short-term development, which caused tension between ELT staff and students. For example, the employment counselor at Newcomer Services, Ula, was frustrated by some students’ perceived lack of initiative. For instance, Aneesa, did not follow up on Ula’s requests for her resume. However, when I spoke with Aneesa it was evident that she was taking the course with long-term career planning in mind and as something enjoyable to break up her routine, caring for her two children. She was pondering employment (in teaching) in the future, but she was ‘not desperate’ for work at that time, and was consequently not interested in applying for jobs immediately. However, the program funding structure had short-term goals that needed to be met and her lack of job searching (within the fiscal year) would be recorded as a failure for course administrators, which in turn puts pressure on Ula to push students like Aneesa in ways that are ultimately not in line with clients’ desires or immediate needs. And this in turn got interpreted as reflective of clients’ lack of motivation – of not being ‘active’ enough to be successful.

When I interviewed Aneesa in July 2008, she revealed that this was the first settlement program she had taken. She noted, “I was just outreached by this [Newcomer Services] immigration settlement counselor. I was visiting, you know, a parenting center in school. I was always taking my kids there to play and all that so I met her there” [a Pakistani worker from Newcomer Services]. The settlement worker took her contact information, and Aneesa recalls: “one day she called me and said that we have recently started a program called ELT…maybe
later for your future you want to be, you might be starting at some point [to look for work]”. She agreed because the time was convenient and because it provided child-care and it was so close to her home. “I enjoy classes so (might as well) yeah”. She was happy to explore career options for the future, once her children were older. She was thus particularly interested in ‘the setting career goals’ portion of the program, as stated in the brochure, but “it didn’t actually happen there…they didn’t actually counsel for that career. They were just explaining how to make resume or how to be interviewed so I was really not sure how to just get ready and go for work”. The employment counselor asked her for her resume, but she did not have one, as she did not have a career yet. She had a Master’s in English literature from Punjab University and taught high school briefly in Pakistan after she graduated, but she knew she did not have the credentials to teach in Canada. She was interested in figuring out which kind of teaching was most feasible for her – what the labour market was like – as well as on how to go about getting a job in that field. I asked her what she liked about the program. She enjoyed learning general information about Canada and learning about other people’s backgrounds and cultures. “It was interesting,” she said. But she did not like the urgency with which she was supposed to create a polished resume and be trained for an interview. From her perspective, about half of the class were not employment ready, while the other half were “desperately” searching. She was not interested in the internship or mentorship part, “but they are asking me again and again for workplace in some day camp or kindergarten or something…they are really pushing. I actually don’t want any placement right now because I really want to know about my career first.”

Like Anessa, Seo-Yun was ambivalent about getting another job. She took the course because she felt that her greatest barriers to getting a job were English and networking. However, like many other mothers, she faced a ‘balancing act with the cost of daycare’. She ‘has to balance career, money and family and doesn’t want [her daughter] in full-time daycare’. If the income she could get as a counselor would cover day care and she could make more after that than she currently does in her part-time job, she would be willing to work. I asked her why she would not just do part-time counseling to replace the work she is doing now (as an administrative assistant). She reveals that her ‘mother-in-law is pushing her to work full-time because then I could help pay the mortgage down quicker, but she doesn’t realize all these other factors. And if someone pushes me financially, I’m bad with that’. Sitting with Seo-Yun, as her daughter plays in her tiny bungalow in a suburb of Toronto, she tells me that is was
‘stressful every time a guest speaker would come and they would say network and be the best of the best. I would feel overwhelmed. It is not me, searching, searching. It was too much information and I feel stressed. There was so much urgency, which I didn’t like. Others are not ready too, like Anessa, but I am trying to improve prospects in the future, but they are like, ‘you need to get a good job right now and if you don’t then we don’t care about you because you are not fulfilling our government criteria’ (she makes a shoo away hand gesture)’

I was surprised that the government criteria were so evident to her. The pressure the Newcomer Services workers felt was clearly placed onto the ELT students, at this particular organization.

I must point out that Aneesa and Seo-Yun were not the norm, in terms of not wanting a job placement. But their stories demonstrate, in sharp relief, that the ELT programs’ operated to construct an “ideal client” and were fraught with the pressure to meet short-term measurable results. However, there are other more common cases in which people took the course with long-term development in mind. Like Aneesa, Sarkis was not ready for a job placement, although for different reasons – he was in the process of preparing to apply for engineering jobs by taking AutoCAD classes at a community college and LINC classes in addition to ELT. Lily also felt her English was not good enough yet to start looking for professional employment. She had been working in a factory before an injury hindered her ability to continue working in physically taxing jobs, which prompted her to explore the possibility of obtaining a professional job in her field of chemical engineering. She was aware that the type of chemical engineering she did in manufacturing in China was not a viable market in Canada. She would thus have to transfer her skills elsewhere. However, she had been recruited into ELT through LINC because she fit the programs’ target client – ‘a un(der)employed skilled professional immigrant’. Although, she did not feel job-ready yet, she still stopped and started her job search at counselors’ urgings. Employment counselors strongly encouraged her to attend job fairs often with long commutes, an exercise she found futile and discouraging (see Chapter 6).

ELT administers and counselors often recognized ELT’s limitations, particularly in the area of advanced language training. One case counselor, Sarah, told me that she thought more ‘time is needed to improve language, because it’s a very long-term thing.’ An ELT program coordinator, Alejandra, agreed noting that ‘the number of hours ELT offers is unrealistic: it would be more effective if it was spread out as a lot of these people are working, so it would be better if they did it over a year’. Miro also noted that it takes time to learn language and culture and many of his students “just didn’t get it [culturally]” and he feared they would be unable to
connect with employers. Teachers generally oriented towards helping clients get jobs because they were oriented towards the immigrant desperately seeking jobs, which constituted the majority of initial clients that also met contract stipulations, and because advanced language learning was a long-term process. But those desperately seeking employment tended to drop out because the program was seen as a waste of precious time, since it focused on “soft skills” and “selling the self” rather than offered concrete supports (see Chapter 5). Many counselors knew that the programs failed to meet goals prescribed by the funding. They thus often simultaneously oriented themselves towards long-term development as a way to give their jobs meaning. And yet, this focus on long-term goals often upset new immigrants who felt they were not addressing their immediate concerns. So while on the one hand they focused narrowly on job interviews (see Chapter 5), they also directed their students towards life-long learning (see Chapter 6) and retraining (see Chapter 7). Settlement workers with more experience in the sector than Alejandra and Jeanine, become more resigned to partial or long-term incomplete successes. They were better at weathering the contradictions. For instance, Sharon noted that she had learned to live with the contradictions: it was just how it worked in the non-profit sector. She does not try to resolve the contradictions because they are a product of being a free community service.

As a result of high attrition rates, there were lots of discussions about who the ideal client for ELT should be. Program administrators and recruiters were also concerned with improving their ability to target the ideal client. When I asked Jeanine what research she would like there to be done to improve the program, she noted that she would like research on which groups of people were in her agency’s area, and recruit people who were committed to the program and the language training and not just the work placement. ‘So I would like to figure out how to do a better needs analysis and assessment,’ she noted. Tony also felt that there needed to be ‘a better screening process’, because many who were admitted could not realistically get the work they desired. For example, one of his students wanted to be a teacher, but never taught in India, back home. ‘They were led to believe they could start a job in teaching even if they didn’t teach previously’. In his opinion, such students were not the proper target for the program. Tony noted that even if students meet the required benchmarks, they should screen for background, and he ‘hates to say this, but they need to have their foreign credentials evaluated and certified, because if don’t, there is no point in taking the course…If they don’t have credentials…once you get to the placement component, they will not take you.’ He thinks they need to tighten up that
component of pre-screening, for clients ‘need to be likely successful’. For Tony, the short-term funding criteria is used to define the ideal client. Rather than being flexible to meet individual clients’ needs, Tony constructs an ideal client according to the contract goals. How “skilled immigrant” gets defined is here dictated by program funding.

In the contract-for-service regime, the government is not concerned with how the agencies meet their targets, just that they do. When I have participated in discussions with policy developers at CIC, whenever I raised feasibility concerns or discussed how things actually work on the ground, I was quickly reminded that these issues were outside of their mandate. They set policies, but it was up to the agencies to figure out how to deliver them. NPM “enables the government to distance itself from feeling direct responsibility to those in need of services, and places this responsibility in the hands of more poorly resourced actors” (Woolford and Curran 2012:56, Miller and Rose 1990). For instance, as I pointed out in Chapters 1, 2, and 3, the government employment supports were dismantled with the restructuring of the welfare state. Employment Insurance and welfare now rely on the privatized temporary staffing industry to help clients get entry-level jobs (Vosko 2000). Immigrant service organizations cannot readily link up with an employment system for their professional clientele. In order to offer them placements they needed to develop that capacity themselves through networking. At Newcomer Services, which had never offered employment services before, this amounted to the networking of their individual employment counselors. Ula’s coworkers had criticized her because her employer “contacts” amounted to her “church friends”. But how was she in two months, supposed to build contacts with employers largely not interested in hiring immigrants and in fields she has never worked in? When I expressed such questions about feasibility, Alejandra noted that ‘my other employment counselor is more effective’ (placing the blame on Ula). ‘He started’, she tells me, ‘by making cold calls out of the yellow pages’. I was not convinced this approach would be more effective, although it demonstrated a more entrepreneurial work ethic. Really talented job developers, like Saba at Multicultural Immigrant Services, who I discuss more in Chapter 7, made connections with recruiters through her diligent networking. Multicultural Immigrant Services had more experience in employment, but largely for low-skilled jobs not professional ones. So Saba was slowly building her networks and contacts with employers and recruiters, but still faced difficult labour markets, hostile towards new immigrants, as I will show in the following chapters. The nature of this networking was
continent, variable and overall thus not very successful since it systematically did not change the way new employees were recruited, which privileged the Canadian-born.

Work Placements

At Newcomer Services, by the end of the language instruction portion of the course, no one had a job placement. At Multicultural Immigrant Services, Lily notes that in taking ELT, she had ‘hope[d] for a co-op through the program, and to find a job, ‘but’ she said, ‘I think it won’t happen.’ She noted that, ‘my husband has more experience. After year looking for job, he went to more Multicultural Immigrant Services, but no result. Many community service just get the money from government and do not really support the people to find the job.’ In the months that followed, however, placements began to unfold but they tended to be volunteer positions. Seo-Yun was unhappy with her placement. She had previously volunteered for a church. The employment counselor, Ula, asked for that contact information but Seo-Yun was under the impression that Ula would contact head office and that they would give her a different kind of position and get a new set of contacts and networks. The position that Ula got her was with her old contacts and very similar to the position she had done previously. ‘Now I had to sign a contract, complete a certain number of hours in a certain time, I’m not happy about that,’ Seo-Yun says. She was unhappy because she would not be learning new skills and yet has to put in a set amount of time, essentially volunteering, while working and caring for her daughter in her opinion to fulfill government criteria. Those who did get placements at Newcomer Services tended to be those willing to work in the non-profit sector, where employment counselors were connected. Anna, for instance, received a volunteering placement for six weeks. Others, like Vik, who were not in the social work field were less likely to get a placement. Vik was upset because Ula did not find him a work placement although she had been hopeful that she could get him one at the TTC. Others did get mentors. But mentoring rarely led to jobs (for more information see Chapter 7).

According to short-term criteria, the program was certainly a failure, and many ELT instructors and administrators, like Tony, would admit this to me. Tony felt that “if can’t follow through wasting resources of program and their time.” He had a short-term view of success, which would be shared by funders’ and their accountability criteria, rather than a long-term view of change that some other teachers subscribed to. Yet on the other hand, although he states too
many people were getting into ELT who shouldn’t even be there, wasting their time, he also states that success doesn’t necessarily mean numbers, it is the quality of the services that matter. He notes: “I’m willing to go on the record [Kori: you are on the record] that the vast majority of placements that are reported to ELT…to the funders is not only exaggerated it’s false”. The ‘job might be a survival job, found because wasting their time at ELT’, he notes. ‘It is a matter of numbers and funding, filling seats and making promises of employment counseling and employment jobs and actually in the end there wasn’t really any mechanism for it’. Saba, an employment counselor, also discussed with me how the competition between services agencies amounted to them aggressively advertising with the aim of recruiting as many bodies or numbers into programs that contracts-for-services require (in order to renew funding). Tony noted that, ‘the employment counselor and placement counselor had no background in this area’. In his opinion, his colleagues were not equipped with the necessarily skills to help the students with employment. If students found a job on their own, the organization would take credit for it.’ Furthermore, some students told me, as did Tony, that after completing a course the teachers raised their Benchmark level of English (and inputed it into the sector’s computerized system), even when it did not necessarily reflect an improvement in the student’s eyes. Numbers and statistical computing is here fabricated to both perform compliance and/or to facilitate students access to other programs (to serve and care for their clients). As Shore notes, “The problem is that quantification distorts the character of what it claims to measure. What these statistics demonstrate is merely the extent to which ‘targets’ have been met” (2008:287) and, I would add, appear to be met. Furthermore, while ISAs have found ways to be more flexible than contracts technically allow in everyday practice, often “official value is not attributed to service provider activities that go above or beyond the objectives set out for a particular accountability program – a problem that in part stems from the fact that funding is increasingly targeted toward specific programs and not offered for general nonprofit agency activities” (Woolford and Curran 2012:47).

Initially, at least for some recruiters this misrepresentation was not intentional. Jeanine admits that some ELT clients were mislead in her recruitment processes, regarding work placements, since they were promised but they never materialized. However, ‘it was not intentional’, she said and she is more careful now. She had been naively optimistic about the prospects of getting clients placements in the beginning, but now she is careful not to oversell the
work placement, noting that it is not guaranteed. This cautionary dose of experience could also be perceived by new immigrants as a ‘lack of faith’ in their abilities. For instance, Maria told me about attending a counseling session at an established program for internationally trained professionals. She had gone to their library to look up how to become an accountant, when a counselor came in and told off the other staff member for giving Maria this information, noting that she was not ready yet. Maria felt her manner was rude and not only undervalued her, but showed ‘lack of faith’ in her ability. Furthermore, another informant told me that some of the ‘realistic’ advice she received disheartened her, and she wished they had more faith in her prospects in the short-term. Some counselors approached immigrants through a long-term lens of skills-upgrading which upset many newcomers. These counselors’ experience indicated that their clients rarely got jobs commensurate with their training and were thus oriented towards what they felt worked in the long-term, whether or not they believed it to be fair or right.

While settlement workers were caught in the middle of a series of contradictions, clients, in turn, often did not get the support and assistance they desired and needed because of the precarious nature of the sector. The staff by and large were not equipped with the connections or the capacity to provide work placements. Touted as being able to meet clients’ individual needs through tailor-made curriculum, the nature of the sector’s ad-hoc curriculum development meant that what was delivered and the quality of teachers varied greatly. The teachers had varying styles of teaching and abilities. For instance, while some were very respectful and careful not to form cultural stereotypes, others explicitly made generalizations about cultures or made moralistic statements. This variability was recognized by managers and structurally built into the contingent nature of the contract regime. Sharon noted, for instance, that you cannot control for the ESL teachers’ variable teaching styles. The contract and performance measures in addition to the sector’s work conditions thus ultimately hindered ISAs ability to meet clients’ individual needs. Often, when they described wanting to meet students’ individual needs, they really referred to a standardized way of trying to facilitate self-improvement as was evident in the opening vignette (and as I will show in the following chapters).

In the anonymous reviews of the program and with me, an outsider, the clients were frank about their disappointment in ELT, but rarely would they express this to people who worked in the sector face-to-face. Sitting in a coffee shop over tea, Vivek and I were catching up after months of not meeting. He had since gone back to Bangladesh and brought me back some T-
shirts. When our conversation turned to ELT, he waved his hand, ‘oh those programs are garbage, garbage’. Even though the programs did not work, often students told me that the staff were really nice or really trying: they were nice but ineffective. However, the “benevolence” of Canada’s non-profit sector was experienced in disparate ways. As one new immigrant, told me as we were commuting, cramped in a public transit bus, ‘Canadians always say sorry, but they don’t help.’ To him the sorry was not excusable. While everyone was polite, they turned a blind eye to one’s plight, or were hopelessly ineffective. From many immigrants’ perspective, like Maria’s and Lily’s, NGOs were seen as taking government money and not producing results. And for some, like Seo-Yun, the government only cared for them if they met government criteria. Some viewed this cynically, others sympathetically. For the latter, the workers meant well but had an impossible mandate. For instance, later Ana would tell me, ‘Ula is a really good person – she tried. It is not her fault’. Overall, however, the ISAs bore the brunt of deteriorating services. As Shore notes, “Far from ‘promoting accountability’ to taxpayers and stakeholders, audits tend to obscure transparency and fuel mistrust” (2008:291). The clients thus often mistrusted the motives of integration staff. The workers often also mistrusted each other for not doing an adequate job with very little resources. As Shore points out, “audits often create the very mistrust they are supposed to alleviate” (2008:280).

Conclusion

Immigrant service agencies through ELT funding were mandated to help new (skilled) immigrants obtain employment commensurate with their skills and training within a few months. My ethnographic research revealed that this mandate was rarely achieved. In short, the contract as a form of ‘control of control’ orients settlement staff towards the short-term success of clients. However, this mandate is unrealistic given the precarious conditions of the sector. In federal government discourses, the ISAs and their program structure was touted as flexible and more efficient, but actually their results and quality were inconsistent. Through NPM, the contract with the state creates hierarchical, constraining relationships and precarious work conditions, which do not enable long-term development. Flexibility equaled insecurity for ELT workers and the quality of their work varied greatly, due to the amount of free labour they were willing to donate. The contract, however, also had performative effects, in that it interpolated worker-subjects to act in particular ways. Such contracts presupposed settlement workers had the capacity to enact
its criteria and failure to do so was interpreted as resulting from personal failings. Even when they resisted and flouted the contract’s criteria, settlement workers also undermined their ability to meet its requirements. Counselors flout contract mandates to be more inclusive and to orient clients towards long-term integration into the labour market. These latter orientations existed in tension with short-term goals, creating a series of contradictions that counselors had to continually manage. In the case of ELT, then, the control of control did not achieve the desired results, although it produced them officially in accountability reports.

As Ula suggested, at the opening of this chapter, an employment counselor would need to be superwoman to excel in these conditions of work. Even if the program worked more smoothly with more funding, however, it would not ameliorate underemployment, since it fails to address larger economic and political conditions which structure labour markets. Rather than critique such conditions of work, in the following chapters I show how workers, as part of the “enabling state”, often held clients accountable for their lack of success: they needed to empower themselves. Settlement workers had multiple perspectives, but in everyday practice tended to construct students as needing to do more to help themselves, while immigrants felt the settlement workers needed to do more to help them. The many once clients whom became settlement workers tended to be more sympathetic to what their clients were going through, but often nevertheless were resigned to how things worked (the status quo), which required immigrants conform and change rather than institutions. In particular, the following chapter examines how immigrants “cultural differences” were problematized as individualized “skills deficits”, which immigrants were responsible for obtaining.
Chapter 5
“Language Overload in Toronto”:
Communicating the Self in Canadian Labour Markets

The room, which technically seated 100, was packed. People stood at the sides and at the back of the classroom, bringing it over capacity. At the front of the room a series of expert panelists included managers of settlement services and representatives from the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, which supports national standards in English and French for describing and measuring official language proficiency of adult immigrants. I had co-organized the panel, held at the University of Toronto in June 2009, which encouraged these experts to reflect upon what they meant precisely by language in their programs and policy developments, which construed “language as a barrier” or “language as the key” to integration. One panelist, the manager of a settlement program, stated:

“When I think of language as a barrier, the word language is problematic […] when language as a barrier quote unquote is used I think it actually means a lot and sometimes people also lack the proper terminology to say, ‘I don’t get that person and that person doesn’t get me’ and by that we don’t mean the words […] for some employers it’s an easy way out. They don’t know how else to express it. I think sometimes there is almost a fear of being discriminatory in how we try to explain the lack of sufficient communication skills for that particular job…”

This panelist made explicit what was often implicit in everyday practice in the integration sector, that “lack of language skills” was often conflated with “lack of communication skills” and/or “lack of soft skills”. She describes “language as a barrier” as being a relatively safe way of denoting an employers’ lack of connection with or understanding of an immigrant interlocutor. This chapter examines these processes of conflation, moments when employers or settlement counselors label certain immigrants as being deficient in language skills, when in their view, these immigrants have not communicated an appropriate or intelligible self.

Although language is often cited as a key barrier to immigrants’ labour market integration, or rather as the key to success, what the buzz phrase “language barrier” constitutes is fuzzy and contested in integration circles, as the above example illustrates. In the ELT classes that I observed in Toronto, in 2008 and 2009, teachers did not focus primarily on advanced or sector-specific technical language (as advertised), but rather on “good” communication skills, to prepare job-seeking immigrants for interviewing, networking and meeting with recruiters. This
chapter argues that ELT problematically individualized the ‘skilled immigrant under-employment problem’; that is, it addressed individual skills deficits rather than the systemic and structural conditions that contribute to professional immigrants’ un(der)employment, in two ways. First, it examines how ideologies of language and the prescription of communicative norms within these ELT classes became “technologies of citizenship” (Cruikshank 1999); or rather, a means through which ELT instructors attempted to produce “good” future-citizen-workers, capable of self-governance and deemed appropriately “employable” in Canada’s knowledge-based economy. These technologies individualized the ‘skilled immigrant underemployment problem’ by encouraging newcomers to view the self as a project of improvement and to entrepreneurially sell themselves while accepting responsibility for their own un- and under- employment. Secondly, I argue that the seemingly neutral focus on soft skills, which includes communication skills, increases the potential for discrimination as one’s “fit” with corporate values becomes a legitimate grounds for evaluating potential employees. I refer to these processes as attitudinal profiling and as skill-washing in order to draw attention to how seemingly universal skills discourses and the discourse of ‘language as a barrier to integration’ obscure how language is often conflated with ‘Other’ culturalized/racialized/ethnicized attributes. The ‘language/skills’ discourse becomes a relatively neutral way of ascribing deficiencies and of disguising other forms of discrimination and systemic structural ‘barriers’ that regulate immigrants’ access to professional employment. Finally, this chapter highlights how, through this individualizing of systemic structural inequalities, ELT instructors and employment recruiters are complicit with and contribute to the (re)production of flexible labor forces, in which competencies like multilingualism are ‘de-skilled’ in precarious work.

Language and Communication in the “New Economy”

As discussed in Chapter 1, many scholars have examined the privileging of language and communication skills in the “new economy” - “when the exchange of information becomes a primary form of production,” which “have value independent of the “identity” of the speaker” (Budach et al. 2003, see also Cameron 2000, Duchêne 2009, Gee et al. 1996, Heller 2003, Urciuoli 2008). When language and communication are conceptualized as a set of measurable skills (Budach et al. 2003:606-7, Heller 2003:474, Urciuoli 2008), it “becomes legitimate to
regulate and assess the way employees talk” (Cameron 2000:18). The accompanying institutionalization of “some people’s preferred practices as norms...define large numbers of other people as inadequate or ‘substandard’ communicators” (Cameron 2002:80). Control over what constitutes legitimate linguistic and communicative practice thus “regulate(s) access to other resources,” such as employment (Heller and Martin-Jones 2001:2). ELT teachers thus attempted to teach such preferred norms to ELT students. The prescription of such norms, however, simultaneously involved the prescription of particular values and attributes (Cameron 1996). This chapter contributes to this research by considering the unique set of contradictions that occur when communication skills training for professional workers is taught to new immigrants, for whom English is simultaneously marketable as a skill and linked to national citizenship. As I will show, this national citizenship’s value in ELT classrooms, however, was marketized, while simultaneously being naturalized and reified as cultural.

Briggs (2005) and Inoue (2007) usefully combine a Foucauldian notion of productive power with studies of language ideology to demonstrate how the forms of communicative events or texts produce particular kinds of (neoliberal) subjectivities. Ideologies assign language value through processes in which different referents become associated with languages or styles of speaking (Woolard 1998, Briggs 1998, Gal 1998). Furthermore, with his concept of spheres of communicability, Charles Briggs “proposes a model of analyzing the power of ideologies of communication in producing subjectivities, organizing them hierarchically, and recruiting people to occupy them” (2005:269). By ideologies of communication he refers to social constructions of how knowledge and discourse are produced, circulated, and received (Briggs 2005:270). I loosely adopt Briggs’ term communicability to consider the productive capacity of ideologies of language to construct (citizen) subjectivities; that is, how ideologies of language and communication in ELT classrooms produce notions of the ideal citizen-worker. However, I do not use communicability to talk about how knowledge is distributed in publics (as Briggs does), but rather how spheres of communicability within the immigrant service sector construct how knowledge and expertise can be made intelligible through particular communicative practices and which simultaneously “play a crucial role in imagining states and citizens” (Briggs 2005:282). I ask: How is experience rendered valuable by certain communicative genres?

By simultaneously prescribing particular subjectivities and values, language and communication skills training constitute a governmental technology of citizenship. According to
Cruikshank, “individual subjects are transformed into citizens by…technologies of citizenship: discourses, programs, and other tactics aimed at making individuals … capable of self-government” (1999:1), by conducting people to conduct themselves (Foucault 1991, Dean 1999). Although the prescription of communicative norms may be well-intentioned, for mastering certain kinds of scripts and personhood they convey may be essential for obtaining professional employment (see Roberts 2013), such practices are nevertheless simultaneously attempts to “constitut(e) and regulat(e) citizens: that is, strategies for governing the very subjects whose problems they seek to redress” (Cruikshank 1999:2). Governmental integration programs are thus integral means of regulating labour (Harvey 2000, Bjornson 2007), that is, of (re)producing workers who accept responsibility for their own (un)employment futures. However, ELT students often challenged, even as they may have simultaneously reproduced, the norms and values such programs prescribed.

Selling and Skilling the Self

Before being placed in ELT, newcomers’ language proficiency is assessed by the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB), which is a national framework for regulating government funded ESL training in Canada. Established by CIC in 1998, this framework does not measure “‘absolute’ language ability,” but rather it measures communicative proficiency, defined as “the ability to use the English language to accomplish communication tasks” (Pawlikowska-Smith 2002:6), and “communicative competencies are not ‘grammar-driven’ but ‘meaning and function-driven’” (Pawlikowska-Smith 2002:26). Learning communicative competence requires background knowledge about communicative appropriateness, which “depends on a range of previous experiences, including cultural and educational experiences, and not necessarily on the learner's formal knowledge of the language” (Pawlikowska-Smith 2002:23). CLB therefore recommends that background knowledge be addressed in ESL training in “a systematic manner” in order to help learners achieve Benchmark competencies (Pawlikowska-Smith 2002:23). CLB’s evaluative system has 12 Benchmarks or reference points that “describe a clear hierarchy, or a progressive continuum of knowledge and skills that underlie language proficiency” (Pawlikowska-Smith 2000:viii). Competencies are tested according to “performance outcomes” of language use in “increasingly demanding communicative contexts” (Pawlikowska-Smith 2002:25-26). ELT offers training in Benchmarks (B) 7-10, which span
from the intermediate to the advanced ranges. Although CLB recognizes sociocultural knowledge in language use, it nevertheless tries to make it measurable through the use of benchmarks (Heller and Duchêne 2012). Benchmarks measure four skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking, which are, in turn, assessed according to four competency areas: social interaction, giving and receiving instructions, sausian (getting things done) and finally exchanging, presenting and talking about information (Pawlikowska-Smith 2000:66-67).

The CLB model thus importantly understands the significance of sociocultural knowledge in language use (cf. Gumperz 1982). However, it is problematically premised upon the ideology of communication as “aimed at cooperation and maintenance of social relations” (Pawlikowska-Smith, 2002:25). This view of communication as a cooperative transaction from which both parties benefit is a sanitized one which underplays the significance of power relations within communicative contexts. Communication is not necessarily approached cooperatively - rather misunderstanding can be used as a strategy to maintain social inequality. Furthermore, in practice, the codification and teaching of cultural background knowledge is over-essentialized (see critiques of Gumperz by Sarangi 1994, Singh et al. 1998, and Kandiah 1991). For example, under the competency measure social interaction at Benchmark level 10, one can “Convey a socio-culturally appropriate response to perceived hostility, blaming, putdowns, sarcasm, sabotage, condescension/patronizing, or lies in a variety of conversation tasks” (Pawlikowska-Smith 2000:120). Such benchmark requirements problematically suggest that people must learn to deal with conflict in a standard, calculated and accommodating manner, or rather use “language that is appropriate to the workplace,” which is cooperative and consensual rather than acknowledges inequality. For example, this focus on communicative competency led to CLB guidelines suggesting that one’s accent should not be considered a problem unless it hinders communication. But such assessments hinge on one’s communicative interlocutors. Indeed, there was a disconnect between the settlement sector’s language ideologies and those of employers. For instance, settlement counselors discussed how, unlike them, employers’ ears were not attuned to accents. One case counselor thus told me that she wished she had more of a capacity to educate employers. She noted that she has learned to listen to and understand accents, and is surprised sometimes when employers tell her they did not understand her clients. Indeed, many employers were not cooperative listeners and those with “accents” are systemically disadvantaged in the Canadian labour market. In line with this CLB model, within the ELT
program there was no strong consensus regarding what is “good” enough English for the workplace in terms of grammar and vocabulary. For instance, one ELT teacher recommended that his students listen to CBC radio, the national public radio station, while another teacher said CBC was for academics like Kori. Instead, he recommended CFRB, the local news talk radio station. The former teacher told ELT students: ‘you’re not coming here to get jobs as cashiers, no offense, but you want professional jobs, and for that you need complexity, you need to work in standard, academic English’. Conversely, the latter teacher - Tony - did not believe that academic language was necessarily needed in workplaces. Despite varying viewpoints, ELT instructors dedicated a lot of time to teaching idiomatic language, like “I put my foot in my mouth”, rather than grammar, since it was assumed that it was needed to communicate in Canadian workplaces. While teachers did not agree on what level of standard English was required to achieve communicative competence in the workplace, they did share ideas about what constitute “good” communication skills. Rather than focus on contextually based communicative competence, they focused on prescribing reified skills, disembedded from contexts of use.

Although ELT curriculum, in line with the CLB model, identifies communicative tasks needed in particular professional fields, such as customer-service interactions, writing memos, telephone conversations etc., this sector-specific curriculum was rarely followed in the ELT classrooms I observed. Rather, employment counselors and ELT teachers drew on widely available human resource materials to promote standardized ways of communicating through frequent lessons and workshops that taught job search skills, or rather how to “sell yourself” within a vague and monolithic ‘Canadian workplace culture’. Role-playing activities, presentations, self-promotional infomercials and mock interviews were evaluated by the teachers based on how speakers presented their arguments, used body language and conveyed appropriate attitudes. For example, many classes at both organizations consisted of eliciting responses to interview questions. To help ELT students answer interview questions, instructors tried to make explicit the implicit cultural background knowledge they needed to know to answer appropriately, for they importantly recognized that language practice is cultural. However, they constructed the knowledge-based economy as a social fact in ways that reified and homogenized workplace communicative contexts.
For instance, Ivana, a workshop facilitator, handed out an “Interview practice worksheet” that listed questions that were accompanied by explanations of the intent behind each question. She further explained the philosophy underlying “Behavioural Based Interviews”: ‘your resume is a marketing tool, but nowadays there are behavioural questions, which are based on the assumption that how you acted in the past predicts your future behaviour’. She explained that one needs to give specific examples from one’s professional history to illustrate one’s skills: ‘employers want examples in your near past, this is why it is crucial to think about the skills you have, the average person has 500 skills by the way. Sometimes it is hard to talk about skills: it’s a cultural thing, where I grew up you don’t talk about yourself, you let others say how good you are.’ Ivana, like other instructors, encouraged individuals to reflect upon their talents and work-related competences, including communicative competence, by conceptualizing them as skills, which workers could acquire to increase their value or human capital (Heller 2003, Urciuoli 2008). One settlement worker noted that new immigrants were not seen as needing skills upgrading in the ‘old sense’ (as a specific manual or technical operation), because they were professionals. Rather, skill “now denotes any practice, form or knowledge, or way of being constituting productive labor” (Urciuoli 2008:212). To have 500 skills - as Urciuoli points out - “one must imagine much of what one knows, does, says, and is as aspects of productive labor” (2008:211). Whereas Fordism treated humans like machines which “did not make it possible to place the most specific qualities of human beings – their emotions, their moral sense, their honour, and so on – directly in the service of the pursuit of profit” (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005:465), in the network society the operationalization of person’s abilities and characters as “skills” attribute persons with economic value or at least signal a conception of the self in terms of productivity (Urciuoli 2008).

To help ELT students answer behavioural-based interview questions, Ivana emphasized that ‘it is vital you give them an organized, articulate story’. Ivana recommended doing so by giving short, sweet and to the point examples using the STAR technique, which entails stating a Situation, a Task, an Action and a Result. She illustrated the STAR technique by drawing on her experience as a salsa teacher: ‘I am a salsa teacher. This is the situation: I have a difficult problem. The task is to lead a class of inexperienced dancers. The action is to design and deliver a series of workshops that would help participants improve their skills. The result is that the participants are able to perform basic salsa moves with confidence and enjoyment.’

Roberts and Cooke (2009) found that the UK business sector also uses the STAR technique. This commonality raises questions about the transnational standardization of human resource material that needs to be further explored.
client who has two left feet. My task is to deal with the client. My action is: I approached the client and said don’t worry it is normal at the beginning, how about you stand in front of the mirror and practice this basic step. The result is the client is not intimidated.’ Ivana demonstrates that useful examples draw on personal experience to highlight one’s skills and to demonstrate that the speaker could both problem-solve and self-reflexively evaluate past actions.

Students were not only asked to think of themselves in terms of skills that had economic value but also as projects of self-improvement. Students were further asked to convey that they identified with work, as integral to their construction of personal growth and self-worth. For example, the ELT teacher at Multicultural Immigrant Services, Miro, asked a student the following mock interview question: ‘What is your philosophy towards work?’ Lily succinctly replied: ‘I work, I get the money.’ Miro responded: ‘we wouldn’t talk about money, you work for more than money. How do you like work to be done?’ After further explanation Lily answered the question again: ‘if I work I create more value, then contribution for company, I increase my knowledge and experience, I feel I’m a useful person’. Like Lily, many quickly learned that selling yourself requires constructing a “therapeutic [notion] of the self as a reflexive project requiring work to perfect” (Cameron 2002:76). Indeed, another workshop facilitator claimed that: ‘in Canada no one is perfect: recognize your problem and say I can fix it’. One teacher, Tony, tells his students: ‘They [interviewers] will ask: “Tell me about your strengths”, “Tell me about your weaknesses”. In advance of the interview choose your weakness. Use the word BUT’ [he writes ‘but’ on the chalkboard]. He recommended that newcomers say their weakness is English, ‘BUT you are taking courses and you believe in life-long learning. Turn a negative into a positive with the use of but. We are doing things to improve the weaknesses. Choose a weakness that you can change’. An ideal answer to a behavioural based question thus demonstrated the interviewee’s skills, the lessons they had learned from previous experiences, and how the interviewee is dedicated to continually improving.

The STAR technique and the use of the conjunction BUT, to modify one’s weaknesses, both constructed answers around the reflexive recognition of a problem or task, and then one’s capacity and willingness to fix or address it. These communicative techniques thus encouraged ELT students to adopt a reflexive notion of the self as well as embody the ideal worker-citizen subject that is dedicated to life-long learning. The ideology of life-long learning constitutes workers as infinitely knowledgeable subjects (Olssen 2008: 39) who should continually acquire
new skills to improve themselves. The *communicability* (cf. Briggs 2005) of immigrants’ experience or knowledge in recruitment processes, then, depended upon whether or not it was framed by a capitalization of knowledge and of the self or rather the *ability* to communicate an appropriate relation to the self. The experiential narrative is an authoritative communicative genre within the immigrant service sector and in behavioural-based interviews precisely because of its self-reflective function, which encourages workers to accept responsibility for their personal and professional development, rather than locate responsibility in the state, the market or other institutions, such as professional accreditation bodies.

**Personality Profiling: Conflating Language and Communication with ‘Other’ Attributes**

While emulating appropriately effective styles of communicating to sell themselves, students were paradoxically asked to present an authentic self who had to nevertheless be relatable according to norms often glossed as Canadian. I argue that the focus on Canadian soft skills, such as being a team player, increases the invisibility of discrimination, as “fit” with a company’s values is a legitimate basis for evaluating potential employees and by extension ELT students in the knowledge-based economy. I refer to this process as *personality profiling*. ELT counselors consequently tried to foster the right attitudes in their clients as is evident in the following example. After each student presented using the STAR technique, Ivana gives what she termed ‘constructive feedback’. In addition to urging them to provide specific examples of how they want to advance their careers and to improve and enhance their skills, she told them that ‘no one maintained eye contact, it is important in Canadian workplace culture. Also you made everything about you. Check in with the person who is asking the question, touch base. We also didn’t see your character, you were all serious.’ Here she urges ELT students to conform to Canadian workplace culture, while also showing one’s character. At another point, Ivana also tells the class that there are ‘cultural differences that you need to know’. For example, she tells one student that ‘maybe you are perceived as aggressive in this culture…soften up.’ Yet ultimately she insists that ‘the bottom line is to be yourself, be aware of your skills, you need to remember you have skills otherwise your self-esteem will go down and you lose confidence.’

There are thus tensions between standardization and individualization that underlie job searching
processes: candidates must show they are uniquely valuable and relatable as well as ‘be themselves’ (that is, authentic), but within a narrow set of ‘culturally’ acceptable norms and fairly standardized communicative genres. However, the preoccupation with authenticity threatens to un-mask newcomers’ entrepreneurial performances of the self, as the following example illustrates.

Here, I return to analyze, in more detail, the ethnographic event I described at the beginning of this thesis. Recall the recruiter for a mining company, who visited an engineering ELT class, started his presentation by espousing the value of diversity and the value of international workers’ foreign language skills. After his opening speech everyone in the room introduced themselves, according to the scripts they had learned in class, straightforwardly stating their name and professional background. For instance, Felix introduced himself, stating that he has a PhD and training in HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning) engineering. He then asks the recruiter if they have work for his kind of engineering at his company. After they exchange a few more words on the job positions available and on his resume, the recruiter makes it clear that he is disappointed with their level of language proficiency, commenting: ‘language is a barrier, you need to be able to read and write or you are off the job because if there is a sign and they say read it and you can’t you are off the job because of safety. It is not like in the old days.’ This response was perplexing for several reasons. First, we had assumed that he was hiring engineers, but he seemed to downgrade the types of work ELT students could be hired for after he heard them introduce themselves. Also, he made it clear that despite his “selling of diversity” discourse in which multilingualism was an “added value”, foreign language skills were clearly only valuable once one has mastery of what he considered to be “good” English. Finally, it seemed evident, that his phrase “language as a barrier” referred to more than just English competency, but rather an ability to communicate an appropriate self. After talking with the students, he seemed to feel that he did not connect with them, stating:

You know I would like a ½ paragraph on who they are…Just so I get to see them as a person. … If I have a stack of resumes up to here (he places his hand above his head), and I get a resume with a name I can’t pronounce, you know…. I would like to know about your character, social clubs etc. People from the Philippines often have a picture attached; it’s personalized. I think this person looks nice, or maybe they look like Jack the ripper, but usually they don’t. And you need to talk about continuous education. You have to be a good employee, a
good Canadian. What church work do you do, scouts, I want to see your hobbies. If I have two people with equal skills, both top of their class xxx I’ll look at their sports hobbies, if one plays tennis and the other football and hockey I’ll choose the one who plays team sports because I know he can be a team player. Well I wish you well. You need to change your resume, spiff it up a bit or get Asma [employment counselor] to spiff it up. You need to sell a product, smile, win them over with a smile.

Here, he highlights the applicants’ foreignness as a barrier, for he implies that he does not know what to do with a resume with a name he cannot pronounce. He needs to see if such foreigners are okay and not like “Jack the Ripper”. He thus demonstrates that it is particularly important for new immigrants to communicate a relatable and acceptable self. In particular, the recruiter requests entrepreneurial values such as selling a product and ‘good Canadian’ characteristics, like volunteerism and being a team player. Here Canadian and workplace values and culture are conflated. While the recruiter may be seen as uncharacteristically unprofessional, as the employment counselors viewed him, he made explicit what behavioural-based interviews are premised upon. It was clear that he wanted to understand people readily and to be able to get a sense of their “authentic” personality and the kinds of workers they would be through their introductions. There is thus a contradictory relationship between language and identity in professional interviews. On the one hand, language is a seemingly neutral skill that can be evaluated independent of the speaker and their identity (Heller 2003). Yet talk is also evaluated in job interviews as inseparable from the candidate’s personality and “fit” with corporate values.

As Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) have outlined, the ability to relate and a capacity to communicate have played a role in job selection, for in a “network society”:

“transverse modes of co-ordination (teams, projects, etc.) place greater weight not only on specifically linguistic mastery, but also on qualities that might be called more ‘personal’, more clearly bound up with the ‘character’ of the person – for example, openness, self-control, availability, good humour, composure – which were by no means so highly prized in the old work culture. The techniques of enterprise psychology (interviews, graphology, etc.) are used to pinpoint these propensities in candidates for a job” (241).

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67 When the employment counselors and I discussed this recruitment event afterwards, they all expressed their shock at his requests, since asking for personal information is illegal in Canada. Because the recruiter was from outside of Toronto, they characterized him as not cosmopolitan or politically correct.
The desire to trust and relate to the candidate “authentically”, through common-sense cultural modes of relate-ability, reveals anxiety about the commodification of authenticity. Being authentic is valued in the post-Fordist era, as a critique of the standardization of Fordism (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005:441). However, the commodification of the authentic “creates new forms of anxiety about the authenticity of things or persons; one no longer knows if they are ‘authentic’ or ‘inauthentic’, spontaneous or re-engineered for commercial ends” (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005:447). The blurring of work and self, of friendly and business relations, of common and professional interests intensifies this confusion. In the network society being adaptable to others is valorized as being flexible and mobile, but there is “a basic contradiction between the requirement of adaptability and mobility on the one hand, and the requirement of authenticity (which assumes making connections in person, inspiring trust)” (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005:456-7). To be trustworthy and reliable one needs to be authentic, and establishing trust and relate-ability is thus imperative to succeeding in many interviews, as demonstrated by the recruiter above. Yet, as I have shown, “authenticity” must be recognizable and established through standardized narrative forms, which are understood in the context of immigrant integration as “Canadian”. Here communication skills are meant to demonstrate that one genuinely has the right attitude and values needed (i.e. for teamwork). “Being yourself”, then, is a self-effacing discourse that encourages one to accept a conception of the self as both entrepreneurial and cooperative. Such “fit” candidates are valued because they can monitor themselves in line with the organization’s interests and thus decrease training and management costs (Urciuoli 2008).

The inability to convey the right personality to interviewers can therefore restrict one’s access to employment. Campbell and Roberts (2007) have similarly demonstrated that interviews require interviewees to synthesize work and personal identities and “resolve in their interview performance the unstated internal contradictions of a new work order that simultaneously calls up discourses of individual empowerment while circumscribing and standardizing the attitudes and competences which (potential) employees should have” (244). However, such interview techniques that attempt to test personal capacities tend to marginalize technical skills and privilege soft skills (Grugulis and Vincent 2009:597). Whether or not soft skills are evaluated above technical skills, they nevertheless “structure the conditions under which workers are recruited into the labor market” (Urciuoli 2008:224), and can act as gatekeeping devices. This is
particularly difficult for immigrant job-seekers, as Campbell and Roberts (2007) show. However, whereas Campbell and Roberts (2007) view discriminatory outcomes as the result of unintentional miscommunication, based on different background knowledge in interviews, I argue that interviewers are not always well meaning. Rather, I would add that such post-Fordist modes of selection open up a space for covert discrimination as, “Personal attributes, attitudes to work and individual qualities are extremely difficult to evaluate and, in practice, proxies are used” (Grugulis and Vincent 2009:599), such as evaluations based on gender, race, and ethnicity even though such grounds for discrimination are illegal. The treating of personal attributes as skills that can be accumulated in the individual downplays their reciprocal and relational elements (Grugulis and Vincent 2009:599), such as, how one is perceived by an interviewer. For example, the recruiter in the above example, wanted to gauge (from interviews and resumes) whether people looked like ‘Jack the Ripper’ and what kind of personal characteristics and attitudes they had, more than what their technical skills were. Within the regime of immigrant integration such personality profiling, which can amount to cultural-cum-racial profiling, largely gets sanitized by the discourse of communication and soft skills. When language is cited as a barrier to integration, as the recruiter did, it is often a gloss for many other things, as language, communication, culture and identity are conflated. As the ELT language assessor, I started this chapter with noted: “when language as a barrier quote unquote is used I think it actually means a lot and sometimes people also lack the proper terminology to say I don’t get that person and that person doesn’t get me and by that we don’t mean the words.”

Integration policy and well-meaning ELT instructors try to make the unknown expectations of job interviews known to newcomers as employers try to gauge the personal. They attempt to codify immigrants’ value into seemingly universal, neutral skills that merely need to be translated through a strong grasp of a national language, effective communicative genres, and the background knowledge needed to successfully deploy them. However, such language training and the “language as a barrier to integration” discourse not only glossed over complex processes of personality profiling, but also a set of systemic and structural constraints that new immigrants face, which I will outline in the following section.
Miscommunicating Soft Skills: The Lack of “Authentic” (Canadian) Experience

ELT teachers tried to teach their clients how to portray their value and knowledge of “Canadian workplace culture” through communicative practice and particular genres such as the STAR technique. In doing so teacher’s and counselors reproduced the ideology that the value of work experience is, in part, conveyed through self-reflexive talk. As I have shown, it is imperative to demonstrate one’s skills through narratives of personal experience that demonstrate self-reflexivity. However, newcomers’ personal experience was often a priori devalued, for the Other contexts in which it was gained were assumed to operate on different sets of principles and newcomers’ hard skills and use-value cannot be readily assessed (e.g. university and company reputations). The integration skills discourse is thus not entirely successful in convincing employers that newcomers – marked as outsiders - have neutral/universal/transferable value.

ELT students recognized that their interlocutors evaluated them based on Other indexes, such as their perceived foreignness (as the recruiter did). In doing so they simultaneously questioned the ideology of communication and soft skills as the keys to integration and even that by having the right attitude and communication skills one is guaranteed to get a job. For example, studies have shown that applicants with resumes that had foreign names were three times less likely to be interviewed than those with English names (Oreopoulos 2009). Indeed, students largely did not focus on language as their greatest barrier to integration, but rather on their lack of what employers called “Canadian experience”, which they understood to be working or earning a degree in Canada, as we can see in the following example.

In one ELT class, the teacher, Tony, continually told the students that they needed to work on their soft skills in order to get a job. In a lesson, he asks: ‘if you don’t have a certificate on your resume that they are looking for how can you explain that in an interview?’ One student, Vik (the nuclear engineer from Ukraine) replied: ‘if you don’t have the certificate you won’t get an interview’. Vik questions the assumption that he would even get an opportunity to explain himself if he does not have the proper Canadian certificates. In another class, a guest speaker asserted that ‘it’s easy to get a job in Canada. All you have to do is write a resume and they will believe you. You can say you worked on the moon and they will believe you.’ The students respond as follows:
Vik: But what if they ask for a reference from the moon?
Mikhail: Canadian experience?
Guest Speaker: how do you answer that question?
Besnik: A lot
Guest Speaker: I hate that question, true I don’t have Canadian experience but I have international experience…make it a positive thing never a negative

In this response Vik cleverly points out that the foreignness of their references often hinders immigrant job applicants, as does their lack of Canadian work experience. Newcomers recognized that regardless of how they sell themselves through talk, their personal experience is fraught in local labour markets that value “Canadian experience” over “international” or foreign experience, despite the valuing of the latter in policy and business rhetoric. Indeed, as I noted in Chapter 1, many scholars have shown that the lack of recognition of professional immigrants’ credentials and foreign work experience are the main contributing factors to their downward mobility (Kustec et al. 2007, Guo 2007).

The ELT programs I observed focused almost entirely on soft skills and were largely unsuccessful at helping ELT students obtain work placements or even internships that students found valuable. Clients thus often expressed their frustration after hearing the same tired advice on soft skills and of improving the self, rather than receiving concrete employer connections through ELT. It was not that they felt learning language and communication skills was completely irrelevant, but that their importance was inflated at the expense of concrete employment supports. Furthermore, several ELT students told me that they understood they had to sell themselves from the first lesson, but changing their behaviour or “soft skills” through short-term prescriptive “language training” seemed unachievable. One student, Vik, told me, ‘this is not something you can learn in a workshop.’ Counselors evaluated criticisms of ELT not as indicative of the quality of their services or as an opportunity to challenge dominant discourses and governmental policy or to practice more critical pedagogy, but rather as characteristic of attitudes in need of adjustment and the line between skills training and attitude adjustment became blurred (Dunk 1996).

Tony and Vik, for instance, frequently disagreed over the value of soft skills. Tony’s job was to teach communication skills and workplace culture. Vik thought that teaching soft skills was a futile exercise, for it was not something, as noted above, he felt one could learn in an a classroom. Tony told Vik, who was from Ukraine, that he will fail if he applies his ‘European
thinking’ that ‘focuses on hard skills’ in Canada: ‘I will be blunt. If you are an asshole and inflexible and don’t have soft skills, you will not get a job’. What led up to this comment was a disagreement between Vik, Besnik and Tony over how long it takes to train new workers. Someone in class asked what “phase out retirement” meant, which was referenced in an article the class was reading. Tony described phase out retirement, by drawing diagrams on the chalkboard. He explains that someone gradually works less, while passing on their experience and knowledge to other employees. A student, Besnik, questions Tony’s assertion that it takes a long time for their experience to be passed onto other employees. He notes: ‘I worked at an organization of 350 employees, the government [in Albania]. After about five years I could replace anyone there, not a big difference with technology and so on, these days’. While Tony disagrees, Vik supports Besnik noting that Tony’s model is flawed for an ‘entry level person would not be taking over the retiree’s job’. He goes up to the front of the room and starts to change Tony’s model on the chalkboard, outlining the chain of managers and positions employees worked their way up through, explaining ‘so you would not need so much transition time’. Although Vik and Besnik presented relevant and logical arguments, Tony reiterates that he is talking about highly complex, specialized jobs and that by following the simple model - ‘it doesn’t work like that in Canada’ -Vik has “flawed thinking” and then continues to discuss how his inflexibility makes him unemployable.

Tony marks Vik an outsider, who lacks knowledge of Canadian norms, while suggesting that without the right attitude - a compliant one - he does not have the ‘soft skills’ to get a job. Instructors often asserted their legitimacy to prescribe particular norms by claiming superior knowledge of ‘Canadian (workplace) culture’, a claim that several students, like Vik and Besnik often refuted. Indeed I was often called on to be an expert as a ‘native Canadian’ – I was used as an example of how to speak and talk. It was not obvious that Vik or Besnik’s professional opinions do not apply to the Canadian context. Rather than focus on the merits of an alternative model, Tony suggests that Vik’s unwillingness to accept his authority as the Canadian, makes him unemployable. Without the right attitude, an agreeable one, he does not have the ‘soft skills’ to get a job and in his frustration Tony claims that ‘many newcomers don’t have soft skills’.
This was not an isolated incident. In another class, when Vik disagreed with Tony, the latter noted that ‘if Vik is an evil\textsuperscript{68} engineer he won’t get a job, he will end up working at [a corner store]’. Tony also made a joke about employers wanting to make sure you’re not a ‘terrorist’ through behavioural-based interview questions. Such comments play on culturalizing and racializing stereotypes of the ‘Other’. These stereotypes are also implicit in advice given to ELT students on Canadian workplace culture. For example, a pamphlet I received at a conference for ‘internationally educated professionals’ lists a series of tips on how to adapt to Canadian workplace culture, including the following: “In Canada a person’s authority is related to their position and responsibility. Women hold the same kinds of positions as men and have the same level of authority.” Here, the culturalized subject of the patriarchal male immigrant is reproduced. The act of referring to organizational culture seems to depoliticize accusations of assimilation. However, the line between communication skills training and assimilation is clearly blurred in ELT, as the former is caught up in attitude adjustment, as instructors explain the cultural background knowledge behind communicative practice. In these examples communication skills training becomes a way of addressing cultural deficiencies and of prescribing certain kinds of good Canadian workplace values while attempting to adjust the attitudes of new immigrants. I refer to this process of turning the ‘professional immigrant underemployment problem’ into a ‘lack of soft and communication skills’ problem as skill-washing. This phrase plays on the term white-washing in order to highlight how counselors glossed over systemic discrimination in the classroom and instead encouraged professional immigrants to become more flexible in ways that invoke implicit or explicit norms of Canadians as White. The focus on selling oneself as a “bundle of skills” (Urciuoli 2008), in many new immigrants eyes, seemed unrealistic given how they were marked as foreign or racialized. For instance, one informant, a university professor from Venezuela, told me that one employment workshop on “branding” focused on examples of very successful (White) Americans, such as Martha Stewart and Bill Gates. She said, ‘the examples are not relevant to me.’ When I asked her ‘why not,’ she gave me an ‘isn’t-obvious-look’, as she replied, ‘because I am an immigrant.’ How could she successfully sell herself? Her remark highlights how well-meaning employment counselors who treated immigrants in skill and white-washed ways, as capable of success, as being on equal grounding as Canadian-born professionals, was a liberal color-blind democratic

\textsuperscript{68} The teacher, Tony, did say “evil” not “civil” engineer.
approach to the labour market which failed to take into account the ways in which it was deeply discriminatory and racist. In skill-washing, rather than problematizing, sociocultural and communicative difference, counselors ignored structural and systemic discrimination and instead promoted assimilatory processes. Consequently, their lack of success in the labour market was construed as due to their lack of soft skills, rather than to systemic discrimination, such as lack of credential recognition. Furthermore, the soft skills they were identified as needing by counselors and employers were indeterminate, ever shifting. They had to learn approximately ‘500 skills’ to embody the Canadian worker.

The only “foreign” skill that was occasionally recognized as an asset was their multilingualism. Common in integration documents as we saw in Chapters 2 and 3, is the diversity discourse in which immigrants’ ethnic backgrounds and bilingualism are converted into commodifiable knowledge and skills that can help Canada gain access to “other” markets in the competitive global economy. This discourse of diversity, which was espoused by the recruiter above, characterizes diversity as enriching. However, my research shows that ELT often does not guarantee the valuing of one’s multilingualism in high paying professional work, but rather it is “de-skilled” in low-paying, contingent settlement work. Although the ELT programs I examined were largely unsuccessful at helping their clients find professional work, they were successful at helping students who sought employment in social work, since the settlement sector could offer them Canadian job experience (as I will discuss in Chapter 7). Maria, an ELT student, got employed as a refugee counselor. She got this placement only after volunteering in the settlement sector as a translator for free, and because she spoke Albanian (which many of her clients spoke). Here her foreign language competency was “value added”. Another ELT student, Ana, with a PhD in education from a university in New York, received a receptionist position at the organization where she had taken ELT, because she spoke Russian and English, but only after working at a retail store for a year and only after volunteering in this position for several months for free. Both of these jobs were acquired after months of free labor were contract positions, typical in the precarious settlement sector. Duchêne’s (2011) work at a Swiss international airport has similarly shown how, despite a discourse that values multilingualism, low-paying workers such as baggage carriers are not remunerated for their multilingual work.
Going Beyond Language?: Soft Skill-ing Cultural Difference and Immigrant Integration

At a skills upgrading centre, the Settlement manager told me that new immigrants were not seen as needing skills upgrading in the ‘old sense’ because they were professionals. But she still thinks there needs to be some upgrading. She noted that at the ISAP (Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program) conference she attended the week before they were starting to question the current policy focus, noting that there was a ‘language overload in Toronto’; that is, the only funding one received for immigrant settlement was in language training. For instance, this particular organization does not receive any government support for training immigrants in “hard skills”. Throughout my fieldwork, the sector both reproduced and questioned the focus on language as the key to integration. However, a focus on soft skills was consistently deemed important.

There was a (not always successful) attempt to uncouple language and soft skills in a proposed integration policy shift, which aimed to “[go] beyond official language ability” by focusing on soft skills. The government ultimately pursued a different set of policies that once again cast official language proficiency as the key to immigrants’ economic prosperity and social inclusion (see Chapter 8). I focus on this unimplemented policy, however, for it demonstrates how skills discourses in integration programs are far from neutral, but rather aim to teach one how to be effectively and affectively Canadian. This proposed policy also exemplifies the attempt to render soft skills technical in ways that make social experience knowable, measurable and something that can be acquired and commodified. In characterizing immigrants as in need of ‘skill’s development’ these deeply assimilatory policies continue to erase the systemic discriminatory nature of the Canadian labour market. These efforts to skill-ify integration also failed to take into account that the value of labour in the post-Fordist regime is not merely ascribed to skills accrued through (past) labour time, but rather is produced via contingent events which involve consumers/employers subjective interpretations of value. As I argued above, even if one possesses the right soft skills they may nevertheless have little value in discriminatory labour markets. In this regime, discrimination is seemingly invisible, yet affectively woven into the means of production.
In the fall of 2010, I received a draft of a proposed integration policy shift that was being circulated for discussion, prior to attending a conversation with various stakeholders in Ottawa, the national capital, at Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). A summary of this discussion was later publicly circulated in a Metropolis report, “Going Beyond Official Language Ability”, which challenged the conflation of soft and language skills. This policy discussion outlined that the solution to the problem of integration was not merely better language, but rather newcomers’ soft skills needed to be further identified, standardized and upgraded. The proposed Language/Skills settlement stream, one of six streams, ‘recognizes the increasing value placed on skills that are outside of the realm of language development, credential recognition and technical knowledge.’ The focus is not on technical skills, but rather the new approach to Skill Development recognizes the importance that ‘social and cultural capital can have on a newcomer’s ability to attain her or his settlement goals’. The proposed policy highlights human capital (language, professional skills, education, work experience) and social capital (cultural knowledge, ability to appropriately and successfully communicate in the labour market and other social environments). Furthermore, it notes: ‘Limited or little knowledge of Canadian workplace culture and lack of essential skills severely limits a newcomer’s ability to gain or retain employment. Employers are placing increased importance on soft skills over technical knowledge’. Soft skills were defined ‘as a set of skills that influence how individuals interact with each other, including personal management skills such as attitudes and behaviours that drive one’s potential for growth and team work. These can also include inter-personal communication, workplace culture and cultural awareness.’ The document further outlines the need for more rigorous and holistic skills training that takes the whole person into account and proposes that counselors set up “skills timelines” for new immigrants to determine individual paths of acquiring the skills they are lacking. This skills development thus aimed to provide a technical means of prescribing cultural assimilation. But why has the term “soft skills” become the terrain of intervention?

**Soft Skills and Immaterial Labour in Post-Fordist Times**

The term “soft skill” has a particular meaning in the post-Fordist labour regime, which brings certain kinds of workers and citizens into being (Gramsci 1971, Harvey 2000, Molé 2012a, 2012b). As I discussed in Chapter 1, a dominant form of labour in Canada’s knowledge-
based economy – immaterial labour – aims to capture the soul, to harness a worker’s entire being for its productive potential (Berardi 2009). Maximizing one’s potential in labour thus seeps into Life (Adkins 2008). Soft skills blurs the lines between self and work and are what Foucault calls “technologies of the self”, a way of fashioning subjectivity (Urciuoli 2008). As I also noted in Chapter 1, the personal and affective are reified and rendered technical (Li 2007) in theories of human capital and in skills discourses, which attempt to make it knowable, trainable and commodifiable (Urciuoli 2008).

As I argued in Chapter 1, theories of immaterial labour largely do not take into account the sociocultural particularity of labour markets. The presentation of the embodied self should project corporate values and is increasingly important in comparison to more technical so-called hard skills (Hancock and Tyler 2008:206). For example, in behavioural-based job interviews one’s technical knowledge is less significant than how one looks and sounds. Employers aim to transform embodied dispositions – distributed unequally - as well as emotional and communicative performances of the self into skills (Witz et al. 2003:37). Value, here, is not created through (past) accumulated labour time, but through performances of the self and of a brand. The value of skilled talk is thus always contingent, accrued relationally in the context of highly unequally interactions. The contextual evaluations of skilled performances increase the potential for discrimination to be invisible since subjective evaluations of one’s soul and its embodiment are viewed as legitimate in hiring practices. The reference to etiquette also signals how in the soft skills approach to integration, belonging to the nation entails conforming to normative racialized and classed performances of embodied behaviours and values.

At the policy discussion in Ottawa, I was the only one in the room not on board with this deepening soft skill-ification of integration. The other participants probably wondered why I had been invited, since rather than quibble over how we should define soft skills I questioned why we were talking about them in the first place. For me, soft skills in this discussion was code for “like us”/assimilation. The chair of the conversation had aptly referred to the soft skills policy as a “Miss Manners approach”. Indeed at an IEP conference, there was a keynote speaker who spoke on business etiquette. She talked about posture, smiling, the Canadian way of doing things, how to present your Canadian business card, how to conduct small talk, etcetera. Job fair “how to guides” also mentioned “manners” such as having firm handshakes. One such guide, a magazine I received while attending a job fair, outlines the key to job advancement in Canada as
mastering soft skills, so you “fit” with company culture. The article goes on to blame the lack of minority representation in higher jobs on lack of soft skills. It cites a survey, the findings of which report “visible minorities” are less satisfied with their careers and more likely to perceive workplace barriers than white colleagues: “So why does this ‘glass ceiling’ continue to exist? Without significant minority representation at higher level jobs, it makes sense that many minority Canadians may not have the same level of comfort and business acumen that is required to move up the corporate ladder. The importance of fully understanding and mastering these soft skills cannot be overstated!” (Pinnock 2008:6). This article blames the glass ceiling for racialized groups on the lack of soft skills. The author also states: “While Canadian companies are now planning their strategies for the pending global war for talent – it is vital that we minorities learn how to be perceived as ‘extraordinary’ –how to stand out in a crowd. Without these soft skills job advancement will continue to be elusive–even if you are the best and brightest. Perception is Reality!” (Pinnock 2008:6). Difference, whether racialized or culturalized, is cast as a “skills deficit problem”.

**Measuring Soft Skills**

The experiential, sensory and tacit aspect of soft skills, however, threatens to render measurement impossible. As McElhinny (2012) notes, in corporate management there is anxiety about capturing “intangible” assets, for “tacit knowledge is seen as particularly recalcitrant because it defies easy articulation, can only be acquired experientially, may require a shared social context” (236). For instance, the Metropolis report on this policy discussion claimed that the participants did not like the term soft skills, quoting my own words that it “is too opaque and deliberately fuzzy” (4). In using deliberate, I aimed to highlight its discriminatory potential, but my intention was not heard. Rather, it was reported that the term was deemed problematic because it suggests that these skills cannot be measured and are less important than hard skills (like language), and thus the term “soft skills” needs to be “rebranded”. The report also entextualized my contribution, in which I reported that the majority of professional immigrants did not find soft skills training useful, as follows: “when presented as [soft skills] immigrants don’t want to learn them because they don’t think they need them” (4). Soft skills were nevertheless deemed important, they just needed to be rebranded so immigrants would buy-in to their value.
Even though this policy classified language as a hard skill and communication as a soft skill, the impossibility of separating the two was highlighted. For instance, the report on our policy discussion states that a study estimated that 25% of wage differentials for university educated professional immigrants was due to soft skills deficits. Since the tests were administered in English, however, the authors qualify that it is not possible to disaggregate them from language. The report continues:

“Despite difficulties in separating language from skills, the roundtable insisted that soft skills can be measured. “Everything is measurable!” exclaimed one social scientist in the room. In fact, measures of soft skills already exist in the form of competencies [...]It’s well described and quantified and documented in competencies that are not specific to immigrants but are regularly used by schools and by regulators.” (4-5)

Soft skills are thus ultimately characterized as measurable, which suggests that they are commensurable and that they can be assessed and inculcated in the same way. However, as Urciuoli (2008) argues and my previous discussion shows, they are actually context dependent and their value is linked to the contingent event rather than accumulated through labour time. Attempts to fill in immigrants’ cultural/experiential deficits by prescribing appropriate skills problematically assumes that individuals can own and “accumulate forms of capital” (Adkins 2005:112), independent of how they are evaluated and by whom. Although soft skills training is often characterized as apolitical, the highly unequal social and political context that deems certain groups as deficient is evident in the context of immigration (cf. Mirchandani 2003). Soft skills training attempts to transfer immigrants’ hard skills: it aims to help immigrants gain access to the labour market and to increase their mobility. Through skills development, however, hierarchies between immigrants and the native-born are reinforced and reified.

**Soft Skill-ing Culture: Canadian civics**

In addition to soft skills training, this proposed policy suggested teaching Canadian civics to new immigrants. While the participants unanimously supported soft skills training (with the exception of myself), when the conversation shifted to considering Canadian civics the room was divided. The minute national culture was on the table, assimilation – something Canadians pride themselves on not requiring – reared its head and many people argued against civics classes that
explicitly taught culturally Canadian values. The CIC report on this discussion, characterized the debate as follows:

“One particularly divisive example is whether Canadian civics should be included as an important soft skill in CICs settlement programming. On the one hand, it was argued that civic participation is not necessarily linked to employment participation and that teaching civics presupposes that this is something immigrants need that Canadians already have […] On the other hand, a number of participants argued that Canadian values related to civics, such as inclusiveness and diversity, are embedded within the Canadian workplace […] One participant made clear that employability does not exist in a silo which we can separate from the rest of our lives. Employability is tied to who we are and how we live. She explained that, ‘One of the toughest things when you immigrate is to feel like this place is your home. You will always feel like an outsider if you don’t feel this is your home […] Do I feel at home here? If yes, I want to give to my workplace, engage myself, do things – it makes me a better employee if I feel at home in Canada. The civics piece is integral and gives me an identity of some sort. (3)

These differing perspectives result from different understandings of how soft skills are “cultural”, as being embedded in workplace or national culture, and the extent to which they could be separated. Ultimately, the report concludes, “Canadian core values…should be integrated within the teaching and development of soft skills to immigrants” (3). The blurring between life and work, and between being good workers and good Canadians is explicit here. A third understanding of culture (as ethnic) informed the conversation, as is evident in the following example. The report states:

“An important note…about how the cultural lens we use to measure soft skills is not always appropriate. An example was given about a researcher who found that immigrant families were much less willing to make charitable donations to established health foundations than non-immigrant families when canvassed in their neighbourhood. This led to an assumption that immigrants were less charitable and less engaged in Canadian society than non-immigrants. Further probing revealed, however, that, ‘immigrant families were […] heavily involved in their own communities, were involved in their ethno-cultural organizations, and were participating in Canadian society even though it was not obvious.’ This example illustrates the need to approach the measurement of skills without cultural bias and reinforces the assertion that immigrants are not necessarily lacking in soft skills, they are just not always made apparent” (5).

The value of volunteering or of being engaged in charity as a prerequisite to citizenship reproduces the notion that adopting certain core Canadian values defines integration and echoes the recruiter Mike’s sentiments. Ethnic culture is tolerated and a “culturally sensitive approach”
pursued so long as a core Canadian culture – as a way of life – is conformed to. Here soft skills are not neutral or context independent but rather index alignment with Canadian core values. This skills policy reproduces Canada’s dominant integration paradigm since the introduction of multiculturalism in 1971, of tolerating “multicultures” as reified fragments at the margins of the unmarked core White Canadian civic culture (Haque 2012). For instance, Ameeriar (2012) shows how immigrants can “be different, but only in certain contexts” (514), such as cultural festivals. However, at work one has to sanitize their bodies of “alterity” (Ameeriar 2012). In the current labour regime, being a good worker further entails adopting a Canadian soul, which cannot be left at home when one goes to work, for one must be at home at work. One’s value in the economy of immaterial labour is thus intimately tied to effectively and affectively indexing and embodying Canadian-ness.

However, there is a contradiction between the valuation of experience and the anecdotal and the need to make it “technical”, to codify and quantify and convert experience and knowledge into skills. There is acknowledgement in the “Going Beyond Official Language Ability” report, for instance, that skills cannot necessarily fully capture the excesses of social experience, as it poses the following question for discussion “Are skills measurable?”. It is this excess that it constantly seeks to harness, manage and yet which threatens to render such classifications incomplete and therefore ineffective at solving the ‘unknown’ socio-cultural differences that render newcomers unemployable. So while this document questions the ideology of language as the key to integration, it reinscribed the skillification of “soft skills” (including communication skills) and of sociocultural difference. The attempt to skill-ify is said to universalize their employability, for:

“The recognition of ‘skills’ … is thus conceived as an instrument for combating exclusion. For it allows people to equip themselves with a stick of qualifications and inspire potential employers with confidence in their savoir faire, while circulating over an extensive, heterogeneous space” (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005:386).

However, as I have argued such ‘skill-washing’ of structural and systemic discrimination actually increases the potential for discrimination, including racism, since the skills focus masquerades as neutral, while increasing assimilatory processes in integration programs; that is, of requiring newcomers adopt a notion of the self as a project of self-improvement and skills accumulation.
A Miss Manners approach to citizenship did not seem to bother most self-professed liberals for it was not seen as assimilatory. Indeed, Canadian-born applicants are asked to do the same thing and business schools have etiquette classes. Here it seems the market is not seen as cultural or assimilatory – but rather universal which makes it free from accusations of assimilation. The intimate prescription of immigrants’ behaviours and attitudes is seen as legitimate.

This soft skills development addressed the concerns of the settlement counselor - who told me that there was a “language overload in Toronto” - which was shared by many who worked in settlement. This policy, which would be resource intensive, however, was not ultimately pursued. Instead, the government made stricter official language requirements to qualify for immigration, arguing that official language proficiency is the key to labour market integration and social inclusion (and to the prevention of ethnic enclaves). Language, here, again stands in for having the right kind of cultural values. Indeed, critics of this policy argued that the new language requirements would privilege immigrants from Anglo countries, such as Australia and the U.K. Rather than fund costly integration programs that create citizens through skills development, the government aimed to recruit made-to-order Canadians (see Chapter 8). In both instances, skills discourses, whether they are about linguistic hard skills or communicative soft skills, structure immigrants’ inclusion into the Canadian nation.

Conclusion

Teaching workplace communication in ELT rests on a contradiction between recognizing that communicative background knowledge is inextricably linked to one’s socio-cultural experience and the notion that language is a skill that can be systematically taught. Well-meaning ELT instructor’s understood the politics of indexicality, that linguistic forms signal particular attributes, but their attempts to fill in immigrants’ cultural/experiential deficits by prescribing appropriate skills problematically assumed that individuals can own and “accumulate forms of capital” (Adkins 2005:112), independent of how they are evaluated and by whom. The important recognition that language is cultural, here, becomes a dangerous terrain of governmental intervention and of behavioural adjustment. The teaching of language and communication skills is seemingly neutral, rather than assimilatory. However, I have tried to show how ideal communication skills and the genres they privilege hierarchically structure job
seekers as less competent if they do not adopt a self-reflexive notion of the self as well as convey stereotypically Canadian values such as being a team player. Communication skills training thus becomes, in part, a technique of neoliberal governance (Inoue 2007). Furthermore, the “fetishization” of communication skills (Urciuoli 2008) as the key to job success within ELT, obscures the structural constraints that limit migrants’ mobility and success in the Canadian labour market. In the following chapter, I continue to examine how reflexive self-improvement is encouraged by settlement counselors, paying particular attention to its temporal dimensions.
Chapter 6
From Survival Job to Success Story:
Reflexively Learning How to Labour

‘...I used to look at some media, mainstream media, in Vancouver and all they
used to focus on were immigrants who failed and as an immigrant I really don’t
need that approach. Tell me who succeeded. Tell me how they succeeded. Tell me
how I can succeed: that’s what’s more important for me. And so as my journey
continued and I started the Canadian Immigrant magazine, I got a chance to meet
all these wonderfully successful immigrants and I kept asking them, ‘what is it
that makes you succeed?’ So they asked me, ‘why?’ I said, ‘you know we have a
quarter million immigrants coming into our country every year. What is it that
makes that one immigrant succeed so huge and what is it that makes another one
live in a survival job for the rest of their life’...’ [my emphasis]
-Naeem “Nick” Noorani

Embodying a “success story”, Naeem “Nick” Noorani travels across Canada to deliver
his speech “7 Success Secrets for Canadian Immigrants”. Thrust into the media spotlight, as a
result of his book Arrival Survival and his magazine Canadian Immigrant, he has become,
willingly or unwillingly, an immigrant voice and a keynote speaker in the Canadian immigration
circuit. I first heard him speak in Toronto at a Teachers of English as a Second Language (TESL)
conference (Nov 2008) - where his infectious enthusiasm and motivational message of self-
improvement won the crowd of ESL teachers over - and then again at a conference for
‘internationally educated professionals’ (Nov 2009). The success story also looms large in
Noorani’s Canadian Immigrant magazine - whose motto is “Inform. Educate. Motivate” -
particularly in its “Success Story” section. The magazine addresses various areas of settlement,
but success is largely defined in terms of employment. Cover story headlines highlight success,
as the following do: “From Survival to Success: Sri Lankan-born motivational speaker Bahi
Krishnakhanthan promotes living life to the fullest” (Sept 2008); “Sky’s the Limit: From taxi
driver to hotel magnate, Sukhdev Toor reaches for the top” (Aug 2008); and “Recipe for
Success: passion and patience are key ingredients in Sanjeev and Jay Sethi’s booming restaurant
chain” (Oct 2008). Other public awareness campaigns led by organizations, such as the Toronto
Region Immigrant and Employment Council (TRIEC), also distribute “success stories” through,

69 The quotations around Nick are not my own: that is how he brands himself. He is known as
Nick to me and to the immigrant integration public more generally.
for example, a traveling exhibit called 20 Journeys. Funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the exhibit has been displayed mostly in city and regional centers, purporting to show and tell “the story of immigrants who have contributed to the vibrancy of the Toronto Region labour market and celebrates their success and the programs and employers that have shared in their milestones”. This exhibit features a close-up of 20 faces and their accompanying stories. The stories are short, featuring a few key sentences under headings, variations of which highlight: the start, the struggle, the turning point, their success and their advice to other immigrants.

As indicated above, the counterpart of these immigrant success stories was not named “failure”, but rather “survival”. In the opening excerpt, “Nick” notes that he strove to figure out how one succeeds, rather than gets stuck in a ‘survival job’. As I noted in Chapter 1, one clichéd form of the “survival job” is that of the cab driver, or rather the PhD or doctor or engineer who is driving a cab. At events I repeatedly heard traveling speakers relate to the audience their experiences talking to their very educated cab drivers. Even “Nick” started his TESL conference speech by saying: ‘I took a cab on the way here. I always talk to cabbies because in Toronto they are always with a PHD here’. As I discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, this stock narrative perpetuates the implicit notion that such work is not as valuable as professional work. Similarly, the key phrase “survival job” carries the “taste” (Bakhtin 1981) of classed notions of valuable work, while simultaneously articulating what it means to be a valuable immigrant and future Canadian citizen-worker - a skilled professional. The success stories I examine, then, are professional immigrant success stories.

In this chapter I focus on how and why the success story became an authoritative genre, within the space of the workshop or classroom in the immigrant service sector. Although success stories are heteroglossic and can have multiple meanings, “heteroglossic tendencies do not exclude the creation and maintenance of monoglossic formations” (Hall et al. 1997:281). For instance, Hall et al. (1997) demonstrate how ‘robust’ social work stories gain authority in institutional spaces. Although their heteroglossia allows for other readings, I argue that the professional immigrant success story is a robust genre in immigrant service organizations (and beyond). When the teaching and prescription of HR materials fails to convince students that they alone are responsible for their employment futures, teachers often told success stories in which un- or under- employment becomes a “problem of the self” (Rose 1999:xvi). In particular, I
examine how immigrant settlement and integration staffs’ success stories promote the ethic of life-long learning and skills upgrading, through which one should continually capitalize one’s knowledge to respond to labour market demands. I argue that the anecdotal success story is a powerful genre precisely because it draws on self-help’s mode of self-reflection, a technology through which one is reflexively encouraged to accept responsibility for one’s own employment risk and one’s skills’ lack of transnational mobility. I thereby examine how such narrative tropes are implicated in the conduct of conduct (Rose 1999, Foucault 1991). However, these stories often emerge not from a cold calculated will to govern, but rather from a counseling “structure of feeling” (Williams 1977) and a will to (give) hope. This will to hope is an affective and productive form of governmental intervention through which counselors try to reconfigure their clients’ orientation towards the future – a politics of temporality that is caught up in neoliberal logics of human capital and self-appreciation. Affect and desire thus play a role in neoliberal transformations and in technologies of subjectification (see Richard and Rudnyckyj 2009, Rofel 2007).

This chapter, then, like Chapter 5 examines the (re)production of the ideal neoliberal citizen-worker-subject; or rather, how counselors in immigrant service organizations attempt to shape the desires of (future) citizens toward work and to form flexible and self-disciplining subjects appropriate for the ‘knowledge-based economy’, but with a particular focus on temporality and affect. Also, whereas I focused in Chapter 5 on the ways in which certain ‘Canadian values’ are ‘skillified’, in this Chapter I focus on certain notions of desirable work in the post-Fordist labour regimes. Although they construct particular discursive subjectivities, such stories do not necessarily produce neoliberal citizens or post-Fordist workers. Their tellings, however, close down the space for challenging structural inequities as they silence the contradictions professional newcomers face due to the disjunct between their valuation at the border and their devaluation in Canadian labour markets.

Before discussing success stories, we must first examine its darker flipside – which its existence presupposes - the trope of the “survival job”. Like success stories this trope also encourages one to view oneself as a project in need of improvement.
A Survival Job is ‘Not a Real Job’: Learning How to Label Work Experience

One morning in an engineering Enhanced Language Training (ELT) class we read and discussed an article from the Metro Newspaper, as we often did. The article prompts the ELT teacher, Miro, to inquire about the housework people do (or do not do) in Canada and how it may be different from what they did ‘back home’. Vivek, a civil engineer from Bangladesh, notes that he helps out at home because both he and his wife have ‘survival jobs’. Neil, a mining engineer from China, also shares that because his wife works - ‘she is the provider,’ he says with a slight laugh - he needs to do housework. The teacher, Miro, asks: ‘what does she do?’ When Neil starts to respond, describing her job as a ‘labour job’, Miro and Lily – a chemical engineer from China - simultaneously and knowingly offer the phrase: ‘survival job’. Neil continues to elaborate: ‘she works making clothes’, to which Vivek responds, “this is the history of the immigrant here.” Here a ‘labour’ job is discursively corrected or reframed by two interlocutors as a ‘survival job’. It is within the spaces of immigrant service organizations that newcomers often learn the term ‘survival job’ to describe work that is not commensurate with one’s professional training. It is also within the space of the classroom and in the hallways of immigrant service organizations that many share their common experience of working in ‘survival jobs’, a term that comes to describe the ‘history’ of many immigrant work trajectories. The term ‘survival job’, however, is told not just in the construction of narratives but also in formal class instruction. For instance, while teaching a class on writing resumes, Carl notes: ‘you need two resumes, one for the junior position, as ‘your first job won’t be first class…you have to dumb down your resume a bit…you need one for survival jobs and one for others’. ESL classes include, then, teaching the sanctioned vocabulary of the professional immigrant narrative. Neil was newer to Canada than Lily and he was still learning the vocabulary in which experience is commonly and appropriately structured within the space of immigrant integration.

Before hearing its description, Neil’s wife’s labour job is deemed to be a survival job. The opposite, then, a non-labour job, is not considered ‘survival’. The artificial separation between manual labour and knowledge sector jobs thus underlies the key phrase ‘survival job’. However, other low-paying jobs in the expanding tertiary sector were also called survival jobs. In another class Miro described the labour market in Canada: ‘here there is no job security, yet
companies like to keep people a long time. Well not at Tim Horton’s [a donut shop], but Canadians don’t call this a real job. What Kori’s husband does is a real job [engineering]. Sales is not a real job, well it is a real job sure, but not like a job like Kori or my wife [in IT] have’. Here Miro notes that a survival job, like at Tim Horton’s or in sales, is ‘not a real job’. He corrects himself, admitting that it is real, as in it obviously exists, but it is not as real as a professional job in academia, engineering or IT. Others similarly felt that a survival job is not a ‘real job’. For instance, Vik asked me to edit his resume for grammar. Having proofread his resume before, I noticed a new job was listed; a Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) mechanic position. I looked up, surprised, asking ‘you got this job?’, since I had not heard anything about it. He hesitantly replied “sort of” and I asked no more questions, respecting his evident reluctance to say more. He evidently saw the puzzled look on my face, for later he told me, ‘I did get this job, but I don’t want to say I got this job, yeah, because it is a kind of survival job’. For Vik, a survival job was shameful: it was barely worth acknowledging. Why is a survival job, not a real job or only a ‘sort of’ real job to some new immigrants and to settlement workers?

The term ‘survival job’ is a slippery one. It comes to stand for many things such as labour jobs and low-paying sales jobs, yet it always carries the taste of ‘survival’, of inadequate work, of not being ‘a real job’. A job that is not real, that is only for survival, implies that desirable work ought to provide more than mere survival, that it ought to be fulfilling work that does more than just pay the bills. A real job must have a future, for Miro notes that immigrants who work in factories or in pizza delivery are in “no future jobs”. When describing the ELT program to a job recruiter, Miro says that this program ‘was the missing link [in the settlement sector]. Before people were forced to take survival jobs and the more they stay, the more they remove their chances to get an even entry level job in their field.’ Others referred to survival jobs as dead-end jobs they provide no opportunity to ‘move up’ or to get a pay raise. Miro makes a distinction between survival jobs and entry-level jobs, presumably because the latter offered a future even if they were low-paying. This is an important distinction, for many of ELT clients who were labeled ‘successes’ for getting employment in their field, had only obtained entry-level positions (see Chapters 4 and 7).

But the opposite of a survival job is not only a job that promises socioeconomic advancement, but rather it also enables one to be happy, according to settlement workers. Miro
notes that he loves his job. Before teaching, he says ‘I tried other things, I was in sales, but I was not happy. I never lost a job, but deep down I was not happy. I tried construction too, like painting’. Sarkis, an Armenian electrical engineer from Syria, responds: ‘What I love, I love in other parts of my life, like relationships. I need to go with my ability [when deciding on a job future]…’. Sarkis disrupted Miro’s assumption that his students are focused on obtaining jobs they love. The former felt his employment aspirations should be based on his abilities, while he locates what he loves as outside of work. Indeed, he was an avid yoga practitioner and he enjoyed hiking. He asked me about clubs or associations in Toronto which he could join. What he described resembled organizations like the Legions popular in the post-war Fordist era. Sarkis valued his leisure time and conformed to the division between work and life forged under industrial capitalism – a notion that assumes work is fundamentally alienating (Adkins 2012).

Miro clarifies:

When I say I love my job, love is not the true word, so I should say I feel good, okay. For example, I did sales, but I had a degree in English literature and linguistics…There was no future in sales for me: it was “survival”. I was talking to a minister’s wife who I sold shoes to, and I was telling her about my background, and she told me “don’t waste your talent.” […] As I told you before when I went back to teaching I told my wife I could do this for free. Love is too much, but overall you should like it. There are always things you don’t like.

Miro tries to clarify his use of love, thinking that Sarkis does not understand this particular usage and recognizes it is not as precise a word as it should be for an ESL class. But for him a job that is desirable is one that one would do for free, which collapses the division between work and life. Miro further elaborates that one’s satisfaction with a job has to do with its status, in an economy of value in which professional work is laudable:

If you take an engineer to work as a cashier they will never be happy. It’s about status; how you see yourself […] My uncles would introduce someone as Dr. first then their name at a party. You are asked, ‘what is your name and what do you do?’ What’s more impressive - being a surgeon or a garbage man? Is it fair? No. But it’s the way it is. Being a [ESL] teacher is not that impressive to my own family. It is how people see you. Plumbers make more money than me, but do I want to be a plumber? No. Choose one option and focus on that. You can be really successful in Canada, but it will take time.

Here Miro, as many who worked in settlement frequently do, makes what is usually unsaid explicit for newcomers. Miro recognized that professional ‘knowledge’ jobs like teaching do not
necessarily pay more than ‘survival jobs’ like plumbing. However, the former are capable of fulfilling one’s ‘self’: they can be ‘loved’. He makes explicit classed norms that deem working in sales a waste of his talent and post-secondary degree. He projects these norms onto professionals as a generic subject, claiming to know how they inevitably see themselves. He thereby normalizes classed hierarchies of what constitutes valuable work and life. It is these classed hierarchies of value that are assumed to be shared by the Canadian viewers in the following commercials on immigrant de-skilling, produced by TRIEC (mentioned in Chapter 2).

One commercial opens with the camera overlooking the shoulder of a male employee, sitting at a desk, in a dress shirt and in front of a laptop. Across from the desk is a woman and a man (wearing a dress shirt and tie). The business environment around them is modern and sleek, with leather chairs and couches in the background and office walls made out of glass. We can only see the woman’s head peaking out above the laptop. The camera zooms in to focus on her as she says in an accented voice (to the stereotypical Canadian hearer): “Look, your company has not achieved post-acquisition economies of scale. Cash is king and yours is tied up in assets of depreciating value. So you must liquidate slow-moving inventory and apply for R&D grants”. She finishes, folding a binder closed before handing it to the man sitting beside her as she stands up, revealing to the viewer that she is wearing a janitor’s uniform. She grabs a spray bottle and rag, that up until this point have been hidden from view. As she exits the office the man glances at his co-worker across the desk with an incredulous look on his face before looking behind him where the woman pushes her cleaning cart behind the glass wall. The screen then goes black before being overlaid with white lettering: “IF CANADA IS A LAND OF OPPORTUNITY, WHY IS AN MBA CLEANING OFFICES. Hireimmigrants.ca.”

Another commercial in this ad campaign conveys the similar waste of skills/talent message along with conveying a sense of degradation on the part of the skilled immigrant. The scene opens with a view at desk level of a man in a business-suit and tie. Across from him are hands holding what looks to be a resume, while a youthful voice asks “so this says you went to Tehran University”. The man corrects the pronunciation, “Tehran University, yes I did”. The screen then shifts to provide a view of the interviewer, a young man in a fast-food uniform, with stacks of fast food items behind him. He asks: “And you graduated with a Master degree.” “Master’s degree in mechanical engineering,” the interviewee responds. “Right and you were a senior engineer at Beharmian arga”, the interviewer responds hesitantly while making a confused
face, about not knowing how to pronounce it. The interviewee corrects him again and the interviewer notes: “Well this is a great resume...So can you work a softy machine?”. Again the screen goes to black, displaying the following: “IF CANADA IS A LAND OF OPPORTUNITY, WHY IS AN ENGINEER SERVING FAST FOOD? hireimmigrants.ca”.

Another commercial, in French, conveys both messages of skills waste and class degradation. A courier with a Doctorate in computer science overhears problems in an office he presumably could fix, but with a discouraged look he leaves the office when handed a package. In all of these commercials, as in the trope of the doctor taxi-driver, it is the MBA, the engineer, the PhD (in computer engineering) who possess skills that are not being utilized. They present extreme versions of “the overeducated immigrant” working in the extreme versions of underemployment as janitors, as messengers, as fast-food service workers. My fieldwork revealed, however, that immigrants experience various states of more subtle forms of underemployment, such as working in entry-level positions in one’s field of expertise. The expertise in the instance of the janitor and of the messenger is presented as able to solve problems the businesses are having in both instances. The point is clear: not utilizing their skills is a waste. The businesses specifically and the Canadian economy more broadly are losing economically by not utilizing their expertise. Additionally, the fast-food commercial portrays most poignantly, as does the messenger commercial, through resigned looks, the degradation of not living up to one’s (skilled) potential. The viewer is asked to sympathize with the immigrant protagonists who experience the shame of class or status degradation. The commercials not only criticize underemployment, however, but implicitly they devalue work deemed low skill (working as a cleaner, messenger or fast-food employee). They do this by the incredulous look on the faces of business men amazed by the knowledge of a janitor, and by the belittling of the young, slightly ignorant and awkward Canadian interviewing a much more educated and cosmopolitan interviewee. The problem is not the nature of such low skilled jobs but the occupation of them by highly skilled and educated immigrants. Here the ideal immigrant is prevented from being a full citizen “in a land of opportunity”.

One ELT program co-coordinator at another immigrant service agency, Alejandra, contested the notion of work and value that was conveyed in the term survival job and which Miro explicates. She was the only person I heard critically question the term. As Alejandra and I discussed ELT in an interview, she catches herself using it.
A: “if you are an engineer you know that you are not going to get your license in a year, so in the meantime you’re working in any other job. But at least that would be like long-term planning if you know that when you’re working in -the word that I hate - survival job. I absolutely detest that word=

K: =Okay can you tell me why you hate that word, because I do too (laughs).

A: Because again, I guess because I grew up here. I was taught that work is work, you know? […] My father was a diplomat. I came from a very pampered background, you know. We came here with six kids. He went to work in a factory and to him it was work and, you know, he had to put food on the table. He had to pay rent, whatever, and it was never a matter of a survival job. It’s not that important: I’m embarrassed whatever. We were taught that a different work ethic, you know, it doesn’t matter who you are or who you were or who you had been, you know, honourable work is honourable work.

K: I agree … so many people use this term survival job (A: xxyeahxx) and to me it connotes that non-professional work isn’t valuable=

A: =that’s it: that’s what I’m [saying]

K: [saying] … I just don’t understand how people even working in the sector, why they keep perpetuating that notion that these are not valuable?

A: That’s it. And if I could write something about it I would. I’ve been thinking about it many many - like already a few years - because the term survival job I never heard it when I started teaching like 18 years ago. It’s been in the last, I don’t know, five years or so that I started like: ‘oh I’m doing a survival job.’ ‘What do you mean a survival job?’ Like survival implies that you’re about to die so you grab onto anything that’s not, you know, whatever. Like come on, you know?

K: [and it’s not valuable it’s not yeah

A: No you try to explain to them an autoworker - like right now the situation is bad - but an autoworker was very valuable here, you know? You working in an auto plant you made a good decent living, you know?

K: … like it just like to me it’s valuing certain class norms

A: Yes that’s right. Like for me - you are absolutely right - when they use the words survival, I think that’s why it angers me, because it has the connotation of class and we’re not supposed to be a classed society. And I’m like I’m only doing this demeaning job for now but I’m really a professional and it’s not… I mean when people ask me I say, yes my father was a diplomat but so what? He worked for seven years as a metal worker.
Although this is an interview, it turns more conversational and we co-produce a narrative as we both discuss why we hate the term ‘survival job’. While I brought class into the discussion, she initially focused on value more broadly, on putting work in its place, on challenging this notion that work is more than work, that work can be equated with one’s self-worth. Whether or not one is a diplomat or a metal worker they have value and the work is honourable. Alejandra also perceptively noted that the term survival job suggests despair: as if one will die if they do not take this job; as if it is a matter of life or death; as if life without a professional career is a life not worth living; as if family and friends and hobbies do not amount to life. Alejandra’s story reveals that immigrant de-skilling is not new, but what is new is a discourse that problematizes it more deeply when work is no longer work but rather in Berardi’s (2009) words, the object of one’s desire.

My discussion with Alejandra, however, failed to consider how these survival jobs are generally un-unionized and low-paying, unlike good paying manufacturing and construction jobs that immigrants typically held in the era of immigration Alejandra’s father had been a part of in the 1950s and 1960s. As John Shields argues (and as I mentioned in Chapter 1): “growing immigrant inequality is largely the consequence of the absence of sufficient numbers of good jobs because of the expansion of ‘flexible’ labour markets” (2003:i) and the “proliferation of contingent forms of employment” (2003:1). He elaborates:

“During the 1950s and 1960s, male immigrant labour market success was, in large measure, the consequence of the wide availability of job and relatively high wages in the manufacturing and construction sectors, neither of which demanded high levels of formal schooling…The relative decline of the manufacturing and construction sectors, and the rise of the service sector, created a far more challenging labour market for subsequent waves of immigrants” (Shields 2003:28)

Currently, although the immigration points system favors professional immigrants, a third of all immigrant workers are absorbed in the sales and services occupations, which are “characterized by both high turnover rates and low wages” (Shields 2003:29). The precarious nature of this work is often captured by the trope ‘survival job’. There is a seeming contradiction, then, between narratives of work that make it the object of desire and narratives of work that characterize it as increasingly insecure. (I will return to this discussion of work insecurity in Chapter 7).
Standing in the middle of a job fair at a settlement organization, Saba – an employment counselor - tells me how she is disappointed by the quality of this job fair. She complains that it is so far away and her clients have to pay for the TTC [public transit] to get here: ‘it’s a lot when you don’t have a lot to live off of.’ She tells me:

‘when I came here I had a survival job. I got a job at [a clothing store] and the person who hired me was from Pakistan [she is also from Pakistan]. He asked me if I wanted to be paid a wage or commission. I was confident in my sales abilities so I asked for commission, but when I got my paycheck it was only 7.46. I had made all these sales, so I asked him, ‘you are from my country and you don’t pay me commission’. He said ‘you don’t get commission’. I only got 250 or something. I didn’t know about the labour standards and he said ‘I don’t care go to the labour board’. But I said, ‘it is in your computer, you have my hours…I say I will quit.’

Saba sympathizes with her clients who have traveled a long way to a job fair that merely sells more programs like hers, rather than feature employers as advertised (see Chapter 4 and 7). She told me about her survival job to demonstrate that she understands what they are going through. Like so many others she worked in a low-paying job, despite having an MBA and extensive experience working as a job developer in Pakistan. Here a survival job is one that paid very little, one that had poor working conditions, as her boss took advantage of her. What makes this job a ‘survival job’ to Saba, in part, was its exploitative nature.

Caroline, who worked in IT in China, described her low-paying job at Coffee Time as ‘hard’, not because it was illegally exploitative, but because it required emotional labour (Hochschild 1983), which she was not accustomed to. One day Miro asks Caroline, why she was not in class last week, ‘do you have something going on?’ ‘Yes’, she says, ‘I have a part-time job, lots of training’. Miro asks ‘where did you get the job?’ Caroline responds:

‘At Coffee Time, just part-time. I thought before that my job sitting at the computer all day was boring, but now I think that was a good job. I thought the job would be easy: I am smart, I can memorize everything, but it is hard. The boss says so many food words I do not know. My classmate introduced me. They said you should get this job to improve your English and I thought it would be easy. My classmate does everything really fast and I am slow. They ask one, two sugar, but some people say just a tiny bit and I look at them, ‘is this okay’. And the owner in every day always talking to customers about weather, children, always smiling. They say customer come, smile [she imitates the smile].’

I ask ‘in your training does the boss tell you to smile?’ She responds, ‘yes, you must always smile, smile, smile…’. Caroline revealed that her previous assumption that ‘survival jobs’ were
easy was erroneous. What is characterized as unskilled labour actually required a lot of concentration and “skilled” emotional labour. A few months later I ran into Caroline at a conference, which offered advice and networking opportunities to internationally educated professionals. I asked her if she still had a job. She looks surprised, perhaps because if she had a professional job she obviously would not be attending the conference. She asks for clarification: ‘survival job?’ ‘Yeah’, I say, ‘at Coffee Time’. ‘Yes’, she did. Although it was a hard job it was still not a real job for it needed to be qualified by the adjective ‘survival’.

It is the exploitive or low-paying aspect of many jobs labeled ‘survival job’ that Alejandra’s and my conversation as well as my discussion here perhaps problematically obfuscates. I do not intend to belittle the working conditions of many of those jobs that do not share the wages and benefits of unionized jobs deemed working class, in manufacturing, for example. But as a signifier, survival job always signified a hierarchy of valuable work that nevertheless privileges work that has been classically and artificially labeled as “mental” or “knowledge” work and which requires post-secondary education. It is significant, then, that a center that acts on the behalf of and for immigrants whose employers illegally kept their wages do not commonly call such precarious, temporary work ‘survival jobs’; rather, their colloquial term for such work is ‘bad jobs’. At a leadership conference, for those involved in immigrant integration research and advocacy, a leading employee of this center states:

‘There are engineers delivering pizza and accountants cleaning factories. How to get them in better jobs is the focus. My question is how do you make sure that the person cleaning and the person delivering pizza has a decent job as well. This conversation has been missing. […] We need to have a conversation. If we are just making sure accountants get accounting job, we are washing our hands of bad working conditions.’

This center aims to improve the working conditions of precarious and temporary work rather than focus on shuttling people out of them by improving individuals.

On the one hand calling bad jobs survival jobs, brings to one’s attention that such low-paying work makes it hard for one to stay afloat, to escape poverty. On the other hand, the way in which they are structured in relation to professional work reproduces hierarchies of value. In immigrant service organizations the lack of trying to suffuse such jobs with more value individualizes survival rather than conceptualizes it as a structural problem. Rather it is a temporary stopover on the way up in an immigrants work trajectory of “re-skilling”. In an
interview one prominent immigration speaker and consultant baldly told me: “if I were to bring people into this country, I’d bring people at the higher level and I’ll tell you why. These are the people that are going to contribute to the fabric of this country socially, economically in every single way. They are going to contribute to this nation. You tell me if I bring in 600 plumbers, how are they going to contribute to this nation?” Immigrant integration programs perpetuate this view that ideal citizens are professionals. Although Canada needs plumbers, immigrants who stay in those jobs are not valued nor are they “good” citizens.

ELT programs thus focused on ensuring that ideal citizens, admitted through the points system, did not end up working in survival jobs long-term, and that it was a mere stop-over on the way up, if at all. In answering the question ‘Do you plan to continue your education’?, that an ELT teacher posed, T.J., who worked in IT for IBM in China, reports that he will work in a “survival job” in a casino if he has to and then he will get an IT job. He also wants to go to Rotman (a local business school) to get his MBA, but he notes, “the first thing is survival”. Many employment counselors understand the necessity of taking a survival job while upgrading: ‘do what you have to do, do a survival job, work on your vocabulary’ (Miro). But others discouraged one from taking a survival job if they could afford not to, for the longer one worked in a survival job the less likely, they reasoned, one is to get a professional job in their field. It was better to dedicate oneself full-time to job searching for professional work. Miro conveys this belief in the following monologue:

It is perfectly normal to go back to school; this is how Canadians do things. This is a very good program really. The more you work in survival jobs, the further away you are from what you want to do. You send resumes, but you get no response because you don’t know how to write a resume. Your expectations are high and you get disappointed, frustrated, sometimes depressed. You worked in a factory survival job so you don’t have much time to talk to people. You just work and go home. You don’t need to speak English, or very little. You need to focus on what you want in the long run. It’s not easy to figure out how to do it here if you are working in a survival job. If you work in sales you have some experience with English, but do you want to be a salesperson?

Here Miro, again, ventriloquizes the thoughts and voice of immigrants and his immigrant hearers. He notes that it is hard to get out of a survival job because they are tiring, and because one has little opportunity to improve one’s English, or to work on professional career goals. This is a concern for many ELT participants too: Vik mentions that he is not happy with his current “survival job”, but he does not know how he will find a job now that he is working all the time.
Many, following this advice, had quit such survival jobs to attend ELT during the day and to dedicate themselves to the job of finding a job. Sarkis noted that he is taking a course on AutoCAD, a design computer program, and ESL classes full-time, for he ‘say[s] no to survival job that pays 10 or 12 dollars an hour because it is hard to find the time to improve AutoCAD if I do’. Often a partner was working in a survival job to support such job searching – as a sushi maker at a supermarket or as a daycare worker, for example. In HR circles and in immigrant services organizations the ideology of treating a job search like a full-time job was prevalent and in line with the neoliberalization of unemployment and the emergence of the ‘active unemployed’ (see Chapter 7). Nevertheless, many clients held ‘survival jobs’ either before or while attending ELT. How, then, can one get out of a survival job? The key was offered in the widely circulating professional immigrant success story.

The Will to Hope: Professional Immigrant Success Stories and the Ethic of Life-long Learning

There are several forms of the success story, but most prevalently a short “sound bite” version in which one persevered with various job search strategies, until one gets a job in one’s field. Another type demonstrates how one became more flexible, changing career goals, upgrading their skills and of course persevering until they received an acceptable job. Teachers and speakers continually told either their personal immigrant story of perseverance and/or anecdotal stories of other successful immigrants. For instance, workshops were often peppered with ‘sound bite’ success stories, which were offered as support for the facilitators’ advice. In one workshop on job searching, the facilitator, Sarah, drew on several stories to illustrate the points she was making. These stories were obviously from her roster of a select few, for she apologized throughout the workshop to Ahmad, whom she had previously counseled one-on-one, for already telling him each story saying: “I think I told you this story”, “You know this story”, and finally “for some reason I tell you all my stories”. When discussing the point: “How do you use the labour market research information for your job search?”, she told a story of a Chinese engineer who spoke German. Sarah suggested that he start applying in Kitchener-Waterloo because they have a large German-speaking population there, as his German would be “value-added” in this market. Sure enough he found a job there. Another story illustrated how a
carefully crafted resume ensures a job interview. With her help someone fixed up their resume and sent it out to only one job ad and ended up getting the interview and the job. She tells another story of networking: she asked her clients to cold-call ten companies. One person said, ‘I will call 100 companies’, and it was on the 90-something call that he received a response and requests for his resume. In addition to many other anecdotes, she also referenced her own story in passing, noting that she was once a cashier and how she was determined to further her career by going back to school to become a counselor. Such continual claims to know people who had succeeded, because they followed the advice she gives in the workshop, aimed to inspire and offer proof of her claims. Such techniques valorized experiential knowledge over statistical knowledge, for highlighting successful exceptions was, no doubt, more effective than citing dismal statistics on un(der)employment (see Chapters 1 & 2).

These success stories do not only emerge out of a will to convince or educate/govern, although they do, but also out of the will to (give) hope, from what I call a counseling “structure of feeling” (Williams 1977). The “will to hope” plays on governmental scholars terms for the conduct of conduct, such as Li’s (2007) “will to improve” and Cruickshank’s (1999) “will to empower”. In doing so, I aim to draw attention to the affective dimensions of rule, such as hope, that are not necessarily calculated or articulated as an aspect of governmental rationality, but which are simultaneously caught up in the will to govern particular subjects. I do so in order to abandon the dichotomy between reason and affect and instrumental and affective action “rooted in Western European cosmology” (Rofel 2007:23, see also Richard and Rudnyckyj 2009:62), for to get a job one must not only have knowledge and objectifiable skills, but also appropriate ‘sentiments and desires’ towards work that “shape their productive activities” (Rofel 2007:23). To succeed ELT policies and programs need “to produce and foster a wide range of desires” that “normalize and, in so doing, constitute those who are also excluded and marked as nonnormative” (Rofel 2007:23). In articulating appropriate action, ideologies and desires towards work, counselors construct a normative ideal citizen-worker, which in turn marks some embodied job seekers as appropriate citizens and others as inadequate.

The will to give future-oriented hope defies, or perhaps exists because of, the overwhelming odds of failure (or survival) (cf. Miyazaki 2006). ELT courses advertised that they offer sector specific language training and employment supports. However, as we saw in Chapters 4 and 5, ELT teachers were ESL teachers and often had no experience working in the
sector, and sector-specific training was thus limited. Rather, as discussed in Chapter 5 there was a massive repetition of the material on soft skills and good communication skills. Clients were sold a repackaged version of the same material on soft skills, which are viewed as prerequisites to participation in Canada’s knowledge-based economy, as means of production. For example, rather than being provided with valuable networks, they were taught how to network. As a result of being cycled through an endless repackaging of how to sell oneself, clients often became discouraged or angry. Counselors did not view such criticisms of their services as accurate but rather as endemic of discouraged attitudes in need of adjustment (Dunk 1996). Encouragement and hope were seen as a necessary remedy.

There was a particular moment in which a ‘structure of feeling’ (Williams 1977) compelled me to encourage a client rather naively. What led up to this moment was what promised to be an exciting week for ELT participants, that included attending recruiting activities and a job fair. Both promised to provide opportunities to network with employers and perhaps even an impromptu interview. However, the recruiter was not impressed with the candidates’ and we were all under-whelmed by the job fair, for service providers and community colleges had more booths, ‘selling’ their up-grading programs, than employers did. In class, Miro, asked the clients what they thought of the job fair. Neil bluntly responds, ‘there were no employers there’. Lily notes: ‘I think there are more people than jobs because the government keeps letting people in through immigration, maybe they should close the door. This is a problem for government.’ Miro launches into a long-winded explanation about why government labour market analysis is not accurate because of the lag between application and admittance time, and he then moves on to encourage the class saying, ‘you can get a job, but it just takes time, you need to work on your English, maybe go back to school’ and he then continues to list all these things that one could do. Lily quietly insists, ‘I feel hopeless” as tears well up in her eyes. I break the pained silence: ‘you know that was just a bad job fair, there are better ones.’ Or so I thought at the time. Subsequently, I attended many more job fairs that were equally unhelpful. I did not normally fill silences in the classroom or speak unsolicited, but here I rashly responded the way I had often seen counselors do, for I wanted to give hope. The will to instill hope, to console individuals, was a common strategy of ELT staff. Such emotional labour was a part of the everyday work conditions that service providers faced and had to manage. To cope daily with discouraged or disbelieving clients, counselors told inspirational stock success stories.
After my outburst, we continue to discuss the job fair as well as their meetings with the recruiter. The class continues to express their feeling that they cannot get a professional job in Canada. Sarkis notes that Lily has the same problem as him. In China she worked on old television technology that they do not use here in Canada. This statement, in which Sarkis casts their skills as irrelevant in the Canadian labour market prompts Miro to tell a short success story:

Start now, you have a future and skills, you can learn anything, take a training course or two. I know someone who studied in China, but she studied water treatment in the library, a US system more advanced than here in Canada. It was novel. She got a job, an entry-level job, but they were very happy with her because she had this knowledge.

Here Miro conveys the value of continuous learning and of continually upgrading oneself professionally. Here success is defined in terms of an ‘entry-level job’, which is marked as success in relation to the lurking alternative, a ‘survival job’. With this short anecdotal success story, Miro wraps up the discussion as we head to a Telephone Skills workshop. As the workshop is being set-up one of the ESL teachers makes an effort to place one of her fake stone signs beside her nametag at the front of the room. It reads, “Move to life’s music for it’s a beautiful dance”. At the break the workshop facilitator shakes the hand of a person who participated in the workshop, discreetly handing off a candy saying “thank-you so much for your contribution”. Subtle praises and remnants of encouragement were strewn throughout organizational practice. What emerged as a ‘structure of feeling’ for me, or rather an impulsive will to give hope thus becomes a more conscious technique for experienced staff, who have reflected upon the need to offer encouragement and to motivate clients.

At another organization, a guest speaker, Camila, began her class on interviewing by asking them what their “Fears about Interviewing” were. After everyone listed their fears she concluded, ‘okay so there are cultural and language barriers, for example as Nik said there is no interview process back home. The Canadian way is different than other parts of the world: Canadian society is an individualistic society. You need to learn the rules of the Canadian workplace culture and Canadian culture wants someone with soft skills.’ Nik, who was an engineer in Albania, responds: ‘what if I had no hard skills, but perfect soft skills, can I get a job? No.’ Camila quickly intercepts: ‘I can’t respond to this, it is a different topic, but I can on Saturday if you want.’ Nik agrees and Camila gets back on track with her presentation. Later when discussing how to answer interview questions, she tries to offer motivation and
encouragement by appealing to her own experience: ‘the bottom line is to be yourself, be aware of your skills, you need to remember you have skills otherwise your self-esteem will go down and you lose confidence. I’m an internationally trained professional and I came here 10 years ago as a lawyer. No one wanted to hire me. I felt my skills were useless, not recognized.’ But, after discussing more struggles she faced, she urges the class:

Camila: don’t give up. Don’t forget what you are about. You need to change your strategy. Things that worked in your country of origin don’t necessarily work here: you need to learn the name of the game.

Nik: But I came here- I applied and they only looked at my hard skills, not my soft skills. And I am disappointed because if I invite you to a party but have no chair for you to sit on or no plate or no beer, I’m inviting you only to take gift from you. So this is disappointing for me.

Camila: I feel your pain, but different societies and different cultures have different values. This society welcomes you, but because it is individualistic you need to create a change for yourself. You are given the resources, but it is up to you.

Nik: I know…then don’t select by hard skills, but by soft skills [he is talking about the points system].

Camila: But we are not in a position to change the interview process.

Nik: Canada is a huge development country, with a different culture but I have discussed this with my friends and they agree that if we were admitted, we need more help getting a job.

Camila: Try to put yourself in the position of employers. What’s the combination of skills-

Nik: If in employer position, must select people - if invent car, don’t laugh with people because working, can’t shake your hand, but-

Camila: this is a different topic.

Nik: yes.

Camila moves onto the next slide. Nik explicitly questions the taken-for-granted “truth” that soft skills are essential in the knowledge-based economy, noting that an engineer inventing a car does not necessarily need to have soft skills. His frustration emerges from the fact that he is continuously told he needs to work on his soft skills to get a job in Canada and for his diploma to have any value, as demonstrated in Chapter 5. When Nik continues to complain about the points
system, Camila tells him to talk to his MP (Member of Parliament), ‘for this is not the place, it is not a vent session’, she says, ‘you need to accept the fact and work within it.’ Nik critiques the government, as Lily did, recognizing the disconnect between their evaluation at the border and the discrimination they face in the local labour market. However, this is interpreted as the wrong attitude and outside of immigrant service organizations’ control and in several turns Camila attempts to close the conversation and finally redirects him to his local MP. Camila uses different institutional resources available to her to try to validate her views, such as questioning the relevance of Nik’s contribution. According to Camila, material gains, that is, obtaining a job, are ultimately tied to a willingness to cultivate an appropriate relation to the self as an object of improvement and by accepting responsibility for ‘integration problems’.

Later in the workshop Nik’s wife Maria notes that in an interview they asked her what she did not like about Canada:

Maria: They were thinking winter, but I said it is hard to get a job. Maybe in 5 years I will have a job.

Camila: It took me 4 years, when I was coming back from Brazil, to feel at home.

Maria: When I have job, then I am home.

Nik: No because you need to improve, continuously, so not at home. You can’t say I am at the right place now.

Maria: Back home we didn’t have someone to fire you, you were there until retirement.

Nik: But not now, it’s different even in communist system…

The discussion escalates as Maria and Nik take different positions. Camila uncomfortably says, ‘maybe we are getting too heated’. I unintentionally deadpan, saying: ‘it’s okay they are married.’ The class laughs, the tension is cut, and Camila states:

I want to give some encouragement. I will not ask anyone how old you are, but you are never too old to make changes. I met with a lady who was 50 years old. She was a single mom with bad credit history: the situation is bleak. I met with her at Humber College as a counselor, and she said this is not what I want for my life; I want to be a psychologist. I said are you aware that to be a psychologist you need seven years of school, yes, okay then great. She applied and got accepted into several schools and she chose to go to York University because it was close to her house. It’s been four years and at 54 she is graduating with honours from her program and has been accepted into a program at OISE. It was not easy: she had kids, [student loans] and worked 2 days a week, but she is
changing her life. You are never too old to go to school. […] you need to have faith in life.

When Camila is unsuccessful at deflecting criticism of the Canadian immigration system, she tries to appeal to the class, letting them know she understands where they are coming from, and ultimately leaves her presentation script to tell a success story. Camila’s narrative creates a client hearer that is characterized as needing encouragement, for the problem is rooted in the individual. Camila’s story is one of self-transformation. The situation is bleak, and the protagonist is unhappy with her life, which is elided with work. She has a professional goal and to reach that goal she goes back to school, overcoming various barriers, and finally she succeeds in changing her life, on the path to a professional career. In her story, as in others, one is always discouraged and they make a decision to change their life through a series of self-improvement strategies, which lead to success or empowerment. Clients need encouragement and faith in their “capacity for self-realization” (Rose 1999:145). Such stories “fabricate subjects…capable of bearing the burdens of liberty” (Rose 1999:viii), and in them work “is a means of self-fulfillment” (Rose 1999:xxix). The protagonists’ life is bleak and the way out of this bleakness is within her career trajectory.

These success stories are not stories of success earned easily; rather, they placed value on life-long learning in the perceived knowledge-based economy. As I noted in Chapter 5, life-long learning constitutes workers as subjects who should continually increase their competencies and skills. This ‘capitalization of learning’, is not limited to school or educational institutions, as it is, in part, a technology of self-regulation. Individuals are rendered responsible for minimizing the gap between their individual skills and labour market demands and “in this way the social costs of production are displaced onto the individual” (Olssen 2008:43). To succeed one needs to reflexively evaluate and construct oneself, which requires “introspection about personal skills” and resembles “discourses of self-help” (Fogde 2008). It is for this reason, I argue, that the success story or experiential narrative, in which self-reflexivity is privileged or encouraged, is an authoritative genre within the immigrant service sector. Furthermore, such success stories assume that people should and can think of their life in the present, in terms of future possibilities, rather than in terms of past failures.

Indeed, Camila’s appeal to her own experience reveals her self-regulation. She told the class that although she was initially discouraged by the lack of recognition her law degree
garnered in Canada, she continually strove to improve herself until she was successful working in employment counseling. She noted that immigration gives one the freedom to start over and to follow one’s passion, such as her dream of teaching dance classes, which she has recently started and hopes to incorporate into her career in the future. (Dance, she noted, is good for self-esteem, and she would like to get a government grant to offer free lessons to discouraged immigrants). She encourages students to focus not on what they cannot control, the systemic discrimination they face, but rather on their future possibilities, if they develop new skills in the present. Note that success here is not that of the ELT programs stated agenda, as a bridging program, where engineers get engineering jobs, rather it is one of reskilling and becoming flexible labour. Miro also told me how it took him a while, after immigrating, to realize he needed to change and he went back to school to get his current job. As noted earlier, he worked in sales before going back to get a Master’s at a local Canadian university and before getting a job in the sector teaching English. Such stories illustrate how employment counselors and ELT teachers actively live and feel the hope and advice they offer and how they have come to self-reflexively rationalize how it is best to govern themselves and others. They illustrate how failure/survival and time, structural constraints of the labour market within the regimes of flexible accumulation as well as particular available frames in which one classifies experience, disciplined them to change their attitudes towards work. These experiential stories reveal the fact that many of the workers in the immigrant service organizations are reformed clients who were once unruly or merely surviving. The hope was not just for the clients, then, but for counselors as they justify to themselves why they had made it. The will to hope is, here, an affective “means of subjectification that simultaneously produces those who enact it and those upon whom it acts” (Richard and Rudnyckyj 2009:62).

**Hope for the Capacity to Self-actualize**

Hope, as a category of analysis in anthropology, has been studied in terms of a loss of hope for an alternative to capitalism, for a new utopia (Miyazaki 2006). For instance, in *Spaces of Hope*, Harvey argues that the “inability to find an ‘optimism of the intellect’ with which to work through alternatives has now become one of the most serious barriers to progressive politics” (2000:17). Hage’s work similarly conceptualizes societies as “mechanisms for the distribution of hope,” arguing that “neoliberal regimes have contributed to the “shrinking” of this
capacity” (2003:3). However, there is not an absence of hope in neoliberal regimes, but rather I have shown how a particular kind of hope is implicated within a specific assemblage of neoliberal rule, and how it is viewed as integral to the making of appropriate citizens. Hope as affective social motivator is mobilized by integration service providers to encourage new immigrants to overcome “problems of the self”, which are seen as prohibiting entrepreneurial success in Canadian labour markets. Similarly, in their analysis of affect, Richard and Rudnyckyj (2009) “are not so much interested in what structures feeling, but rather in what feeling structures” (62); that is, on the productive power of feeling. In my analysis of hope, however, I pay attention to both the conditions in which particular hopes arise and that which such hopes produce.

Whereas hope often “depends on some other agency—a god, fate, chance, an other—for its fulfillment” (Crpanzano 2003:6), for many counselors it lay in one’s individual freedom to act, in one’s capacity for self-actualization. Philosophers have argued that at times hope can induce change, while at other times it can lead to paralysis: “One can be so caught up in one’s hope that one does nothing to prepare for its fulfillment” (Crpanzano 2003:18). Within immigrant service organizations, counselors attempted to induce action through hope when clients’ felt either hopeless as Lily did, or one’s hope was founded in inaction, or a notion that a higher power – often a program or the government – would grant them a job. Viewing hope as a method, Miyazaki argues that “hope lies in the reorientation of knowledge” (2006:149). Often newcomers’ experiences contradict their hope of finding desirable employment. Yet, counselors attempted to reorient or reinterpret clients’ knowledge or experience of the job market to inspire action or the ‘conduct of conduct’. Counselors’ hope, rooted in self-fulfillment, evokes a neoliberal moral order, in which one accepts responsibility for their future by locating faith in themselves. In this sense hope is an affective and productive dimension of governmental power.

Recently, Adams et al. (2009) have described the condition of “thinking and living towards the future” as an affective and temporal state of anticipation that, although not new, increasingly governs contemporary life. Indeed the counselors’ “will to hope” is rooted in a “regime of anticipation”, in which investments in skills and human capital in the present promise future success, if anticipated properly. Anticipation “is the palpable effect of the speculative future on the present” (Adams et al. 2009:247), and possibility is the means of managing the future in the present (Adams et al. 2009:259). To understand how institutions, such as the state or
corporations, use affect to interpellate and govern subjects, Adams et al. (2009) draw on Sara Ahmed’s notion of affective economies “in which affect does not originate in individual bodies but is provoked in individuals through larger circulations and strategies, thereby accruing its value and potency as a moral economy through its distributions” (249). Such “Distributed anticipation – as mass fear or a politics of hope – can be politicized, mobilizing and sometimes creating states of war, nationalist communities, and economic productivity” (Adams et al. 2009:249). Indeed, one counselor surprised me by identifying one of the biggest barriers to professional immigrants’ employment success as fear. Similarly, recall how Camila started her workshop, asking about clients’ fears about interviewing. They aimed to dispel clients’ fears – engendered by experiences of precarity and overwhelming ‘survival’ and to instead instill hope, a hope caught up in an anticipatory regime (Adams et al. 2009:260).

As stated above, anticipation is not just a temporal orientation; it is also a moral imperative (Adams et al. 2009:254). In The Corrosion of Character, Richard Sennett similarly examines the effects of post-Fordist flexibility on personal character and on “new ways of organizing time” (1998:22). He suggests that “sheer strength of will” and “assuming responsibility for events beyond one’s control” (1998:29) amounts to ethical character for flexible workers. Within a precarious environment managing one’s risk demands anticipatory actions. The immigration points system is designed to increase Canada’s overall human capital and economic productivity. Its integration programs aim to ensure such human capital is not wasted in un- or under- employment, but rather profits individuals and the nation, while minimizing its risks. However, the devaluation of immigrants’ human capital in Canadian labour markets also becomes a problem of the self that requires one to accept responsibility for their risk by accumulating additional capital acquired and accrued in local contexts. Furthermore, Sennett notes that the need to accept insecurity in everyday practice requires a “capacity to let go of one’s past” (1998:63). Indeed, through their success stories, employment counselors asked clients to ignore past experiences that indicate failure/survival as a logical outcome of their job search and to become entrepreneurs whose present actions are suffused with future oriented investments in human capital, such as going back to school or increasing one’s soft skills.

Whereas some anticipatory regimes are more calculated and actuarial, Feher suggests that self-appreciation through human capital investments is largely speculative under neoliberal capitalism. While initially human capital aimed to measure the return on investments expected
from schooling or training, Feher argues human capital has widened to include in its evaluation a number of other factors. In short, “my human capital is me, as a set of skills and capabilities that is modified by all that affects me and all that I effect” (Feher 2009:26). Returns on human capital, then, are not merely monetary. Rather human capital is a new form of subjectivity, emerging with neoliberalism, that corresponds with the decline of the free laborer (Feher 2009:24). Unlike free labour, human capital “does not presuppose a separation of the spheres of production and reproduction” (Feher 2009:30). Like the current “preoccupation in capital growth or appreciation rather than income, stock value rather than commercial profits”, the primary goal of investing in one’s human capital is to continually appreciate (Feher 2009:27). It is difficult to predict the appreciation and depreciation of human capital “both because the future marketability of a conduct or a sentiment cannot easily be anticipated and because the correlation between financial and psychological forms of self-appreciation cannot be homogeneously established” (28). Feher concludes that rather than possess his or her labour power (as the free laborer did), the neoliberal subject’s relation to his or her human capital is speculative (2009:34). While the desire to help clients develop their human capital, in order to ensure their employability in Canadian labour markets, was a shared goal amongst counselors, they were faced with an ethical dilemma: to give hope in a more utilitarian or speculative manner. For some counselors, giving “realistic advice” was important, such as needing to obtain a Canadian degree. For others instilling even speculative hope (i.e. ‘believing in yourself’) was of paramount importance in constructing entrepreneurial subjects dedicated to life-long learning and continual skills accumulation.

Miyazaki points out that in response to social theorists’ “incapacity to imagine alternatives to capitalism…Ultimately, Harvey urges social theorists to emulate the hope of the speculative spirit of capitalists to recapture hope for critiques of capitalism” (2006:162-163). Speculative hope also plays a part in moving the governmental integration system along in the face of overwhelming failure and thereby contributes to the reproduction of the flexible neoliberal labour market, in which immigrants take it upon themselves to retrain and readjust in the hope for a better future. Interviewing a settlement counselor who clearly saw that government programs like ELT rarely worked according to its lauded goals, she nevertheless latched onto the idea of incremental change – it was not a utopian project, but there was hope in it. It was that hope that she tried to capture in a project she initiated on immigrants’ stories, that
she collected to showcase on the organization’s website. In the face of dismal statistics, overwhelming experiences of failure/survival and the contradictions of the labour market, employment counselors are presented with a dilemma – to tell a bleaker ‘truth’, or ‘will to hope’. More often than not, a few stories of exception (of success) come to be portrayed as within the ‘normal’ expected realm of possibility.

I have watched, over two years, informants shuttle through various “golden tickets” only to realize that they were ineffective, but continued to hope that maybe the next one will be better. Such perseverance, valued in the success story and reproduced through governmental integration discourses, is rooted in the hope that they will defy the odds and that this time they will be able to make the right investments. Lily admits that before she immigrated her friends told her it would be hard, but she thought ‘I will do better’. One informant’s wife is frustrated with him, for his over three year attempt to find a job while she works in day care has been fruitless. She tells him to just drive a cab or something. Yet, he holds onto the dream of being a professional engineer in Canada. He meets with his Canadian-born mentor (an engineer), now and again, showing him bits of paper - advertisements, membership forms, business cards - that signal his next ticket. Such perseverance despite the odds seems increasingly speculative to his wife and his mentor.

The effects of the “will to hope” are multiple, but it uniformly individualizes hope rather than locates it in a collective politics. These success stories, as well as the individualized focus of ELT service delivery, shut down the space for critique and social advocacy. Rather than use complaints as opportunities to construct a critical politics of government policy, such potential was always left untapped and hope was the response, which carried within it a neoliberal notion of individual freedom to change one’s fate. The will to hope colonized the space to speak openly about structural constraints and the space to foster a different kind of knowledge production. However, although these affective narratives are modalities of governance, they continually slip outside of the parameters of governance, for the stories reveal injustices that others do not need to interpret under counselors’ framings and that exceed or evade logics of capital appreciation.

Although ELT instructors attempted to modify their clients’ relation to work, to themselves and to the future to help them become more employable, these narratives also did not necessarily form docile subjects. It is evident that Nik finds that he is less free to work in what he calls a democratic system. Nik notes that he is not used to change, that he had a diploma, and
thought that he would get the same here. His wife Maria confides in me: ‘it is hard for Nik as he is not flexible like me’. Nik was not the only one who felt such narratives of change overwhelming. Seo-Yun noted that since moving here from South Korea every year her life seems ‘narrower and narrower’ as she had less friends and support. On another occasion she told me that they tell her to do all these things at the center, but she needs support. Here she is not talking about the encouragement they provide, but concrete support, with helping her gain connections with employers. And Vik is sick of hearing about the learning process, and that he can learn from each unsuccessful interview. Rather he says, ‘I’m results-oriented; it only matters whether or not I have a job.’

**Conclusion**

The anecdotal success story is effective for two reasons. First, because it is more positive than (past) statistics, for it rests on logics of speculation and anticipation in future possibilities; and secondly, because it encourages self-government through the individualizing reflexive process its form generates. The professional immigrant success story and the survival job trope frame experience and give authority to experiential knowledge according to neoliberal notions of labour, and of temporality, which delegitimize some newcomers’ alternative interpretations of their own experiences, which often root the problem in structural contradictions and past experiences of job search ‘failure’. Hope in one’s capacity for self-realization is a key aspect of neoliberal governmentality, evident in the deployment of success stories, which aim to will future-oriented action in the present. The power of this narrative technology lies, not only in a calculated will to govern, but in its harnessing of affective desires and sentiments, of hopes for future possibilities.
Chapter 7
Becoming Flexible Labour: Gaining “Canadian Experience” through the Active (Un)employment Industry

Ana told me that her greatest barrier to getting a professional job is networking - not knowing anyone to promote her - and her lack of “Canadian experience”: “it’s like a vicious cycle:…you cannot get a placement without having Canadian experience and then you cannot have Canadian experience without getting a placement”. Sarkis similarly describes the ‘Canadian experience problem’ as a ‘chicken or the egg problem’: what comes first, a job or Canadian experience? I asked Beth, a case counselor, what her clients thought was their biggest barrier to professional employment. ‘Language and Canadian experience,’ she said. She described this notion of ‘no Canadian experience’ as spreading like wildfire. She does not even know if employers have told clients, “you don’t have Canadian experience so I’m not hiring…or if they just heard this from people.” Perhaps, “it is just a rumour…who knows,” she said. Other ELT staff, like Saba, Jeanine and Alisha, all agreed that newcomers perceived their lack of Canadian experience as being their greatest barrier to professional employment. “That is very much a focus for them,” Alisha told me.

While its power may have accumulated through rumour, many of my informants revealed that employers explicitly asked them for “Canadian experience” in job interviews. Ana told me: “I didn’t know how to answer, but now after attending so many courses I know to say that I don’t have much Canadian experience but I have world experience that I can bring to the job,” she said wryly while laughing, “and maybe even more valuable than Canadian experience…and I have the skills that are transferable to this job.” We both chuckled at the absurdity that this scripted talk would change employers’ opinions and at the fact that she now knows how to answer, as it was repeated over and over again in ELT classes (see Chapter 5). Maria had also reported in an ELT class, that someone had asked her for Canadian experience at a restaurant. When I asked her about this incident later, she told me it happened when she first came to Canada: “One of my friends had to go for some weeks and she said come and replace me. And when I went they asked me, ‘Do you have Canadian experience?’ To do dishwashing?,” she said incredulously. “But everybody told me that everywhere they go they ask for Canadian experience.”
The phrase “Canadian experience” was omnipresent in the immigrant service sector. It was this perceived lack of “Canadian experience” that attracted most students to ELT. They hoped the bridge-to-work component of the program would offer them this ubiquitous, yet elusive, experience. This desire shaped students’ approach to ELT – with hopes that it would offer them Canadian references and Canadian places of work to display at the tops of their resumes. When these supports did not materialize (see Chapter 4), employment and settlement counselors, including Beth, tried to help their clients gain “Canadian experience” through other means. From its initial circulations in the anecdotal, of newcomers turned away at interviews because they were told they had no “Canadian experience” to integration cliché, “Canadian experience” has become naturalized as needing to be acquired by new immigrants. Furthermore, it became a phenomenon that had to be mapped and classified. For instance, I met a community researcher who was conducting a survey, asking newcomers how they got “Canadian experience”. Similarly, the question for many governmental workers was, what are the best ways in which newcomers could get “Canadian experience”? Although many counselors disapproved of the need for “Canadian experience” – viewing it as a form of discrimination - they nevertheless encouraged obtaining it, since it was what many employers required.

This chapter examines how skilled immigrants were encouraged to cycle through the active unemployment landscape of job fairs as well as labor in various forms of training and unremunerated or partially remunerated work as means of gaining experience that employers offering skilled employment would hopefully deem adequately “Canadian”. Such work, however, offered no such guarantee. Rather, I argue that the injunction to get “Canadian experience”, often combined with dissatisfaction with current work (i.e. survival jobs), became a means of directing immigrants towards future skilled and meaningful employment, which may never arrive (Adkins 2012). In Chapter 6, I discussed how a future-oriented temporality was reproduced in narratives of success in the integration sector which were not necessarily an effective means of convincing newcomers they were responsible for their employment futures. In this chapter, however, I show how the injunction to get “Canadian experience” through the training and education industry became a productive means of creating an active unemployed that invested in their future potential, and which constructed unemployment as highly productive and eventful (Adkins 2012). This industry is based on the “imperative for work to be more than a job” and “is predicated on the limitless postponement of meaningful work” (Ducey 2007:188).
The ‘injunction to gain “Canadian experience”’, enacted through a series of technologies and techniques of government, resembles the range of labour market activation policies that arose for the unemployed in Canada since the mid-1990s. Workfare and the focus on lifelong learning are central to these activation techniques that aim to improve the employability of the unemployed. As Adkins argues, “activation policies fundamentally rework the materiality of unemployment” (2012:635), for it “now buzzes with value-producing activity, including anticipation of events yet to come” (2012:637). Unemployment is “not opposed to or differentiated from employment but as part of a continuum of productive moments” (Adkins 2012:622) and activation devices are “entangled in the movement of productive and value-creating activities away from the formal labor process and their dispersal across the social body” (Adkins 2012:637).

While integration programs ultimately aimed to produce flexible skilled workers who “fit” employers needs, they also, in part, ended up (re)producing precarious labor in various kinds and states of (un)employment. In addition to regulating labour, I show that a “side effect” (Ferguson 1994) of integration programs was the reproduction of the transition industry, which caters to and profits from the active un(der)employed in the regime of flexible accumulation (Harvey 1989). In this chapter, I will first demonstrate how the integration sector encouraged new immigrants to gain ““Canadian experience”” and how new immigrants themselves sought to obtain it, in response to employer discrimination. Secondly, I will outline various forms of ““Canadian experience”” and how they did not guarantee, but rather often deferred, meaningful employment. Thirdly, I will demonstrate the extent of this deferment by following, in detail, the (un)employment trajectories of a few skilled immigrants.

Canadian versus International Experience

The term “Canadian experience” is not new, nor is its problematization, as discussed in Chapter 3. The practice of employers requiring it has been considered widespread enough to warrant critique in various government-sponsored media campaigns, which implicitly and explicitly reproduce the “selling diversity” discourse that values international experience (outlined in previous chapters). While on the one hand some government-funded initiatives are critical of employers’ requirement of “Canadian experience”, it is nevertheless simultaneously naturalized by integration programs. For instance, a resource guide, “Get Connected”, distributed at a CIC-funded conference for Internationally Educated Professionals (IEPs), noted that the
conference aimed to help attendees “discover how to connect with employers who are hiring, how to gain Canadian work experience and learn about Canadian business cultures” (emphasis added). ELT classes also had lessons on “Canadian experience”, which asked: “What is it? Where do we find it?” In one such lesson, the teacher talked about a commercial, funded by the federal government, that featured two well-dressed men in India, talking about a Canadian job applicant with no Indian experience. ‘They reversed the situation newcomers are facing. It is a powerful commercial’, he said, ‘for global experience is needed’. As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 and as is evident in Ana’s comment above, teachers encouraged their students to try to sell their international experience when asked if they had any “Canadian experience”. This ‘selling diversity’ discourse exists in tension with the discourse of “‘Canadian experience’”, as I will illustrate in the following ethnographic example.

I attended an expensive business lunch on diversity, at which David Miller, then Toronto Mayor, spoke. He cited a study by the Bank of Canada, which outlined the financial losses of not recognizing minorities, immigrants and women in the labour market. Noting that the city’s motto is “Diversity our Strength”, he argued that the “city’s success is from creating opportunity to every single Torontonian (to succeed)”. He reproduced the discourse of a prosperous city, which is inclusive, safe, economically strong, green, has adequate housing, supports human rights and is creative (see Chapter 2). In reproducing this discourse he highlights how valuing diversity and social programs are justified and commodified under the rubric of economic prosperity. The other panelists, diversity experts from large corporations and banks, similarly argued that they needed to “win the war for talent” because diversity makes stronger competitors. They “want diversity of thought” and are “about building bridges not conformity.” Also, they noted ‘customers want to see themselves in their employee bases’. Interestingly, at this business lunch which sold the benefits of diversity, an audience member asked the panel why they were focusing on women and minorities when what most people faced here was lack of “Canadian experience”: ‘how are they helping people get Canadian experience?’ The answers empathized that it was a waste to have PhDs driving cabs, and that it was about valuing foreign credentials and recognizing major universities elsewhere.

This audience members’ question highlighted the contradiction between the value of international experience in “selling diversity” discourses and the practice of devaluing foreign experience in the Canadian labour market. It also implicitly questions the panelists’ claim that
they want diversity of thought and diversity of experiences. The audience member was perplexed as to why the problem with “Canadian experience” was not being addressed since it was a large barrier for many new immigrants. The difference here is that “diversity” understood in terms of skin colour, gender or sexual orientation are incorporated into workplaces, but “foreignness” in terms of less-Western cultural difference is not. Canadian experience suggests its superiority as Western. Furthermore, the companies that were primarily invested in this discourse were large financial companies, such as banks and accounting firms whose diversity initiatives were motivated by their desire to expand in ‘diverse markets’ both domestically and internationally, as mentioned in Chapter 2. An HR employee from a large bank was a guest speaker at one of the ELT programs I attended. When this presenter was discussing how to act in an interview, one student asked her how many people they had interviewed who did not have “Canadian experience”? She insisted that they hired people without “Canadian experience” all the time. The persistent student asked: ‘if you hire 100 people how many don’t have Canadian experience?’ The presenter responded that ‘in banking we have to represent the community and we need other languages.’ Recall from Chapters 2 and 4 how multilingualism is presented as an asset in the selling diversity discourse. But the student insisted that this could be a different group from those who have “Canadian experience”.70 The presenter paused to think of a concrete example, saying that in Toronto, with her current group of trainees, a cohort of 15, at least 2 or 3 have no “Canadian experience”, but ‘it is for a CSR71 role not a senior role’. This answer, confirmed for the student that it is difficult to get a position that is not entry level without “Canadian experience” even in businesses that were sold on the benefits of diversity.

Saba told me that employers all say they want someone with “Canadian experience”.

“They are always asking if they have worked a little bit in Canada,” she reported. She has to convince them that they may not have “Canadian experience”, but they have tons of experience. Saba even told me she had a recruiter, originally from Bangladesh, who said, “I need someone with Canadian experience.” She used such an incredulous voice that we both chuckled. Saba, who immigrated to Canada from Pakistan, and Alisha, who immigrated to Canada from Jamaica,

70 Indeed, many Toronto residents, who were primarily (if not exclusively) educated in Canada are “diverse” and multilingual.

71 CSR stands for Customer Service Representative, which is an updated name for bank teller. A CSR can either work with clients face-to-face or over the phone in a call centre. This job requires a high school diploma.
were critical of this requirement. Citing an IT example, Saba insisted, “JAVA and C++ are the same internationally.” Alisha, an ELT teacher of finance and accounting, also told me she did not understand this obsession with “Canadian experience”, on the part of the employers: “I think there is too much of an emphasis on the fact that they are not native Canadians because - and it depends too for specific fields - like I cannot see what could be the vast difference between accounting in Iran and accounting in Canada, right? You got to add. One and one is going to be two wherever you go.” I complicate her example by saying that there may be a difference in how one files claims etc., but if one has “a master’s conceivably one could catch up fairly quickly.”

She replied:

“Right, exactly. That’s the part I see…the basics must be the same…you both know how to calculate depreciation. I just say use method A don’t use method B. So to me it would be different if it was a field like, I don’t know, advertising because that’s more culturally based but…like engineering or medicine, the heart is a heart wherever you go. They might be used to different machines but they will pick it up.”

Saba and Alisha both felt that IEPs’ skills, in computer programming codes, in mathematics and in anatomy, were transferable internationally and did not understand the obsession with “Canadian experience”. And yet both of these settlement workers – a job developer and an ESL teacher – did not get work in Canada until they gained “Canadian experience”. They both were hired in their current fields only after receiving certificates or degrees from local community colleges.

Despite a “selling diversity” discourse that commodifies multiculturalism and promotes the value of international experience in Canada’s globalized economy (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002), employers, then, overwhelmingly required “Canadian experience” for skilled employment and for their skills to be transferable (to have value) – a fact newcomers were acutely aware of. I, for instance, attended an engineering panel at a conference for IEPs, featuring many “successes” in the industry, including once new immigrants who were working in the field. There were a series of questions from the audience about “Canadian experience”: “How can a newcomer get their first work experience? Why do employers ask for Canadian experience?” Roland, a panelist who provides cross-cultural training, noted ‘you are not getting jobs and employers don’t want to explain why, maybe you have poor communication skills, bad body odor. To get passed this find a Canadian mentor and they can help you discern by Canadian standards what are the
behavioural things that don’t work.’ He also recommended volunteering strategically. Like “language as a barrier” (see Chapter 5), “Canadian experience”, then is an opaque term that when uttered can mean a variety of things and can be used to discriminate against new immigrants. Another Canadian-born panelist in an HR position noted that ‘they like Canadian experience but an applicant doesn’t have to have it if they test well on AutoCAD\(^{72}\) or similar skills and do well in the interview. They can get their foot in the door and then work their way up.’ The implication, again, was that newcomers could only get entry-level jobs without “Canadian experience”. Another panelist, Nandin – a successful newcomer - noted that gaining “Canadian experience” was a real challenge. He started in a junior position after he volunteered as an intern, as well as had a co-op, each for a month or two, which he included in his resume. Another panelist joined a short course at a community college, which his employer recognized. And yet another panelist recommended the book ‘you don’t have Canadian experience, how and where to get it’. This panel, like many other workshops and conferences for new immigrants thus naturalized, rather than challenged, employers’ apparent requirement of “Canadian experience”.

“How to Get Canadian Experience”

Given employers’ preference for putatively less risky new hires with “Canadian experience”, it is not surprising that counselors, eager to find clients’ work, encouraged gaining some. But the degree to which “Canadian experience” has become a socially meaningful, albeit opaque, phenomenon surprised me given its problematic erasure of immigrant’s “foreign” experience. I even attended an evening workshop at one immigrant service agency called “How to get Canadian Experience?” The workshop started by asking what Canadian experience is. The following answers were provided by recent immigrants: “workplace cues”, “way of thinking”, “safety, benefits”, “no accent, clarity”, “study in Canada”, “volunteering”. These answers reveal three types of Canadian experience: 1) cultural behaviours and norms (workplace cues, ways of thinking, no accent, clarity); 2) industry and regionally-specific codes and rules (safety, benefits), both of which could be demonstrated through 3) approximate Canadian work experience (studying and volunteering in Canada). To gain such experience this workshop recommended

\(^{72}\) AutoCAD is software used for design and drafting, primarily by engineers.
practice firms, internships, volunteering, and networking, in line with the above engineering panelists’ suggestions. I will discuss each in turn.

Practice Firms

The injunction to get Canadian experience not only denigrates and devalues immigrants’ foreign experience, but also renders employers not responsible for employee training. For example, an advertisement promised to help IEPs gain experience through practice firms: “No Job? No experience? Break the Cycle!...Gain work experience in a simulated business”. Here “Canadian” is elided and newcomers are characterized as having no experience. The “Canadian” in the phrase “Canadian experience” was frequently left out. For instance, when I attended an IEP conference, the volunteer orientation sheet told conference volunteers, such as myself, that “The Canadian job market is often puzzling for newcomers, not just for those seeking employment and job experience, but in understanding and adapting to Canadian business culture” (emphasis added). These elisions make explicit what is often left implicit, that the term ‘lack of Canadian experience’ essentially characterizes a newcomer as having no relevant work experience. Here, newcomers are treated as new labour market entrants, as needing to acquire skills and as deficient; rather, than merely needing to ‘transfer their skills’ across contexts and labour markets. Furthermore, unlike new labour market entrants with Canadian degrees, the value of their degrees was not (fully) valued. In the immigrant service sector, this viewpoint existed in tension with the more critical notion that immigrants had valuable skills. The hope was that “Canadian experience” proved that newcomers’ skills were transferable internationally. However, I will show how, in practice, the ‘injunction to gain Canadian experience’ governed job seeking immigrants to become part of the active unemployed. Like those compelled to work in active workfare welfare schemes, un(der)employed new immigrants, through upgrading projects, became not merely a reserve army but a labour force full of productive potential (Adkins 2012) in line with an “investor subjectivity” (Allon 2010), always oriented towards the future through skills accumulation and self-appreciation (outlined in Chapter 6).

Practice firms aimed to help new immigrants prove themselves and develop skills in a simulated Canadian business environment. The role of government, here, is to train those considered deficient in job experience. I visited a skills centre that had a practice firm for
To participate in this practice firm, one needed to be “job ready” with a language level of at least a CLB 6. A practice firm acts like a real business, conducting business with other practice firms within a simulated international economy. However, they do not actually produce tangible products or use real money. Eighty percent of a participant’s time was spent working on the business, whereas twenty percent was spent on active job searching. In addition to hard skills, practice firms focus on teaching participants workplace culture and soft skills. Several proponents of practice firms also claimed that it helps participants gain confidence in themselves. The firm reported a high rate of success: 80% of participants were reported to find work after the program. However, the immigrant service sector only had a few practice firms and it was the least common means of gaining “Canadian experience”.

I discuss the practice firm, regardless, because it demonstrates, in sharp relief, the tensions produced between different notions of the value of prescribing skills and learning norms in the classroom versus on the job. The emphasis on experience as a valuable indicator of one’s skills, abilities and knowledge is in tension with the reification of skills that seem to accumulate in individuals and which are transferable from context to context. As we saw in Chapters 5 and 6, students often felt that the prescriptive lessons they learned on soft skills in the classroom were limited because communication and behavioural-based norms were something that one learned through practice and over time. Also, behavioural-based interviews valorized experience-based examples that demonstrate skills through practice. Employers attempted to gauge, through experiential communicative means, both behavioural traits and one’s skill level. The notion that one can only prove/learn/develop skills through practice and experience is also reproduced by the idea of practice firms and internships. When such training is offered to new immigrants, it not only denigrates and devalues their foreign experience, but it also renders job seekers and the government, rather than employers, responsible for employment training.

Internships and Co-op Placements

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73 This program was funded by Employment Ontario from 2005 to 2012.
74 This statistic does not tell us whether or not these positions are entry-level or mid-level. Based on my extensive ethnographic research, it is safe to assume that most were entry-level positions.
The most sought after “Canadian experience” was a paid internship through organizations, such as Career Bridge, also mentioned at the “How to Gain “Canadian experience” workshop. Career Bridge is offered by Career Edge, which was started in 1996 by employers to help recent graduates enter Canada’s workforce. In contrast, Career Bridge is for mid-level positions for Internationally Qualified Professionals. It originated as a pilot project by TRIEC in 2003 with funding from the Government of Ontario, in unregulated positions, to help break the cycle of “no Canadian experience, no job, no Canadian experience.” To be eligible for Career Bridge one had to have been in Canada for less than three years (one needed to be “fresh”, the workshop facilitator said), have a diploma from outside of Canada, have three years of work experience in one’s field, with a minimum of a Bachelor’s degree, one’s credentials assessed by certain approved organizations and one had to pass an in-person language screening test. The latter assesses their English and business communication skills. If one meets these requirements, they become part of their system and gain access to 4-12 month paid internships in business, engineering, health sciences, and IT. They undergo a second interview for specific internships. The workshop facilitator admitted that there was a long waiting list, but one is guaranteed a payment of $1100. Although she acknowledged that this amount is not very much, she noted that they may receive more depending on the organization. Within six months of completing their internship, 80% of their clients find employment in their sector. In 2007, 68% of these were at the same organization as their internships. (The employer gives Career Bridge a fee if they hire their intern.) Since this program is employer-run, they are one of the few programs that had high success rates of placing new immigrants.

What Career Bridge offers is actually what most newcomers hope to get through ELT – a work placement, although they recognize it probably will not be a paid position. Beth told me that she wished ELT could offer “more placements [emphasizes by whispering] because you know what? Clients come up to me now and they say, ‘I don’t care about a job: I want a placement. Do you offer that?’ And I’m just like no, you want experience you don’t want the job? [K: We are offering a job] {we laugh}.” The primary goal of Beth’s organization is to get their clients a job. Work placements (i.e. internships) and mentorships are second and third

75 In pictures Career Edge is represented by a white person, Career Bridge a Sikh and Ability Edge a person in a wheelchair. Career Bridge and Ability Edge are symbolized by visible difference. Of interest here, is that the new immigrant is distinguishable by religion and by being racially marked.
options respectively, if they cannot place their clients in gainful employment. Yet many new immigrants felt that it was unrealistic to think they could get a job without “Canadian experience” and did not want to waste time searching for a job without it. The eligibility criteria for programs like Career Bridge, however, are quite stringent and do not challenge current employer hiring practice. Furthermore, they exclude those in regulated professions. The model of Career Bridge is thus unlikely to fundamentally address the un(der)employment of new immigrants, for it assists a limited number and pool of people. I asked the “How to get Canadian Experience” workshop facilitators if any of their clients had gotten a placement at Career Bridge. They did not know of anyone and admitted that it is quite competitive. Since such opportunities were scarce, new immigrants were encouraged to gain “Canadian experience” primarily through volunteerism.

Volunteering

Versions of the immigrant success story promote volunteering as a way to build “Canadian experience”, as “the first step to a bright future.” The facilitators of the “How to get Canadian experience workshop” also promoted volunteering, telling the success story of a client in IT who was volunteering at his level (in an unpaid work placement). They noted that their agency has invited Volunteer Toronto to discuss opportunities with them. At another workshop I attended, the presenter recommended volunteering through Charity Village, an Internet site that caters to the nonprofit sector. The following article on settlement.org also encouraged volunteerism: “If you don’t have Canadian experience you need to get some. You can do this in a number of ways. While no one wants to work for free, you may want to consider this for a short while. Volunteering in the area you want to work will help you prove that you know what is expected and will give you some contacts in the field.” Similarly, an article from Mark News, reprinted in the National Post, “How volunteering can help build ‘Canadian experience’” (Oct 27, 2011) features a picture of plastic gloved hands ladling soup into a bowl from a large pot. The author relays a common narrative that resonates with my findings. A new immigrant who was being turned away at jobs because she “lacked Canadian experience” sought advice from a settlement counselor who recommended volunteering. “Work for free? That’s not why I came to Canada,” she said. But she decided to give it a chance, and began volunteering at the YMCA, working with new Canadians like herself. She was eventually successful at getting a job in the
non-profit sector, since volunteering helped her with networks, Canadian English, and understanding business culture. The author concludes: “All this made her a strong candidate when the time came to interview for that job” and “For many new Canadians, volunteering is the first step to a bright future.” Like the protagonist of this success story many of my informants initially did not want to volunteer, but unlike this story, volunteering did not necessarily lead to gainful employment.

Many immigrant service agencies offered volunteer programs that catered to newcomers. For example, a volunteer orientation session I attended at Multicultural Immigrant Services was overwhelmed with volunteers and focused on processing one’s request – filling out police check forms and stating one’s volunteer interests. We received handouts and information on volunteering that outlined the value of volunteerism, which included “gain[ing] new skills and valuable work experience”. Volunteering was also characterized as “active community involvement” that supported the programs and services of the organization. However, volunteering was further described as allowing one to learn more about oneself and gain self-confidence. This volunteer program, then, was construed as much about helping the clients as it was about receiving help to run the organizations’ services. In short, volunteer work had personal and social value, if not an instrumental function (e.g. get one a job). As Muehlebach (2011) has argued, being socially useful and belonging through unwaged work is nostalgic of Fordist forms of work, and yet the injunction to work on the self through volunteering requires a post-Fordist subject (62, 75). Being a volunteer, here, involved charitably benefiting and belonging to the community through self-cultivation. However, while some new immigrants felt their volunteer labor had such social and personal value, most felt it was primarily employers who benefited from their free labor, which reduced the amount of paid work available to them (Le Guidec 1996). For instance, Ana and Mikhail, originally from Belarus, had lived in the U.S. for 9 years before immigrating to Canada when Ana graduated from her doctoral program. Ana said:

“In the U.S. they don’t expect people to volunteer that much, so they expect you to come and they pay you. Over here employers expect you to come and work for free and sometimes they even overuse it […] so they don’t hire people for this position but just continue recruiting new volunteers because it is better for them. But it’s like a wall or that glass ceiling for new immigrants because you cannot be hired if you don’t volunteer…you come, you don’t even think that you are expected to be volunteer so you don’t want to volunteer…you don’t volunteer because you think you hopefully would find a job without that, but there is no way because you don’t know anybody: you cannot be presented with job.”
Sarkis also told me about his friend’s negative experiences with unpaid internships or “volunteering”: ‘you work for 3 months and then they kick you out and you do not earn anything. They need somebody to do job for free, use it as free labour.” However, Sarkis currently volunteers at a food bank near his house because he feels he needs to understand the volunteering world. ‘In my country I volunteer in church and school, but here it is not like this, not in church only, there is a whole system. I must do some work, to understand the system. The volunteering system is part of Canadian life. I am thinking of teaching yoga, but not sure if I have the time. I would like to work for the Humane Society - I love animals - but I don’t have the time.’ There is thus some distinction for Sarkis between strategic volunteering to get a job and non-strategic volunteering to help others. While volunteering for most, if not all, was directly related to them wanting to gain employment, others (like Sarkis) also wanted to volunteer because they saw it as integral to a Canadian way of life and they wanted to feel “integrated”. Underemployed new immigrants who encountered the “Canadian experience” barrier and who sought integration and employment services in the non-profit sector entered a world that depended on volunteering. It is not surprising, then, that volunteering seemed indicative of a Canadian way of life.

Some new immigrants, like Alisha, who is now an ELT teacher, refused to work for free: “...as a newcomer to Canada I refused to volunteer. [Kori: Did you?] Yes, I said you will not hire me and pay me but you will take me to come and do it for free and I refused to volunteer. I did not volunteer. [As she is saying this she bangs her pen against the desk to enunciate her firmness.] … I was, like, I am job hunting: you see my resume - I have to sent you my resume to volunteer. If I am good enough to volunteer I am good enough to hire. It was hard but … people say, you know, you network and it’s an easier way to get - but I refused.”

Like Alisha, Aneesa did not want to volunteer, although in her own words she desperately needs “Canadian experience”. When I started writing this chapter, I spoke with Aneesa, who was looking for any work (i.e. at a grocery store, gas station, or coffee chain), so she could build up her “Canadian experience” on her resume. With a Master’s degree in English literature, from a university in Pakistan, her initial aspirations to work in the translation or teaching fields have not panned out. Our conversation turned to her friend, Zahra, who is always volunteering. Aneesa jokingly tells me how she scolded Zahra for taking jobs away from people like her. One of Aneesa’s desired job prospects includes being a teacher’s assistant – a goal that she thinks is
more realistic than becoming a teacher – but, she said, ‘now they just get volunteers to do that. Like Zahra had volunteered at the LINC school.’ Aneesa told her friend that ‘they enjoyed your services for free: it is people like you who are ruining it for the rest of us. This volunteering thing is a pain. Zahra is encouraging me to volunteer and I say no, sorry. Zahra even paid to volunteer,’ she chuckles. When I incredulously ask how could this be, she explains that they needed to get a police check done and Zahra paid for this to volunteer. ‘This is silly,’ she said. She feels that volunteers are ‘wasting time.’ Zahra tells her ‘that she is gaining experiences, and all that. But I tell her that you will get old and not have a job. She tells me she will get references, but what for?’ Another one of her friends found an advertisement in the paper that promised after volunteering as an accountant, one could get experience that guaranteed them $80,000–90,000 a year. But she said he looked into it and found out they needed to pay to volunteer. She feels it is all a scam and a way for businesses to get out of paying people.

She told me all of this is a jokey tone, like she could not believe how people could be duped into volunteering and how ridiculous this system is. She perhaps is saved from the twinge of bitterness and sadness many others conveyed while telling me about the volunteer trap, since her husband’s $50,000/year job as a bookkeeper for a government organization guarantees her financial security, with what is considered in Canada to be a lower-middle class income. However, they are increasingly going into debt with three children, and she thus feels it is time to get a job to maintain their aspiring middle-class lifestyle, which includes the comforts of home ownership in the suburbs and a new mini-van. This latter purchase and the recent trip ‘back home’ to Pakistan have maxed out their line of credit and credit cards. The trappings of middle-classness are too expensive in the GTA for one person’s salary alone. And yet, her employment options are limited by her need to factor in the costs of daycare.

Since we had this conversation she has decided to volunteer in the future and to apply for community college programs in the field of childhood education. She arrived at this decision after working at a coffee shop and another fast food chain, ‘to get a little Canadian experience’ in her words. Balancing childcare and minimum wage shift work took its toll. She was unsatisfied with her strict supervisor who did not understand her need to balance shift work with child care. Working evening and night shifts and caring for kids during the day was exhausting. For her, and others, even though they viewed volunteer labour and retraining as discriminatory or as a scam it
became a necessity. She reasoned that unlike many of her coworkers she had the potential to achieve more meaningful and higher paying work, by virtue of her university degree.

Despite reservations, similar to Aneesa’s, many newcomers volunteered although it was difficult to obtain strategic and relevant volunteer work, outside of the social service sector. Nik, for example, worked in a food bank, although he had initially wanted to get a “volunteer” work placement in his field of surveying. His counselor at an immigrant service agency did not know of any relevant opportunities for him. He and his wife had even shown up at companies, but they said they did not offer volunteer positions. He notes that by volunteering at food banks he is at least improving his English, although not his skills. Recall also the National Post article, discussed above, in which a newcomer volunteers in a soup kitchen – thus signaling that this type of non-professional volunteering is deemed desirable for new immigrants, for it is reasoned it at least offers them understanding of Canadian culture, if not skills development related to their professional field. Such volunteer work also positions them as citizens-in-training: they are responsibly gaining “Canadian experience” and helping those less fortunate than themselves.

At the volunteer orientation session mentioned above it was evident that the only way to fast-track the long waiting queue for volunteering was to know someone who requested your services. Although I was one of those who knew someone, I waited for over a year and a half to receive a phone call back, after emailing and calling a couple of times to inquire about the status of my police check. The person I was to volunteer for did not reply to my emails either. I later found out that she had moved on to a new job at another agency. However, newcomers occasionally were successful at fast-tracking this process. For instance, one ELT student volunteered to create a website for an ESL event. Since she has a degree in computer science, she was more than qualified for this work.

Because much of the volunteering new immigrants did was not as strategic as they would have liked, its job securing benefits were not necessarily evident. When I asked one of the workshop facilitators if she knew of any cases where someone got a job directly because of volunteer work, she could not think of any, ‘although I am sure there is’, she said. She noted, however, that they often hired people who first volunteered at their agency. Indeed, my only informants whose volunteer work led to employment were hired in the immigrant service sector, which is why some, like Roland, recommended ‘strategic volunteering.’ In regards to her ELT students, Alisha told me:
“…I see a lot of them wanting to do the volunteer work where they can and so on …I find some of them express a lot of frustration where their English is good or, you know, orally and written and so it’s almost like people are saying, ‘okay so you can’t get a job because you don’t have Canadian experience.’ And they go and they volunteer and then they say, ‘okay but you can’t get a job because you don’t speak English.’ But they are like, ‘but I speak English which is quite clear and understandable and I am still not getting a job.’ They get really frustrated that way, right?”

During a workshop on the nature of work in medical administration, one audience member similarly expressed frustration after volunteering was recommended as a way to get their ‘foot in the door’. They noted that they ‘had volunteered but never got a job: they tried that’. The presenter urged her to not give up. For many, volunteering did not constitute adequate “Canadian experience” and they continued to face discrimination. However, for counselors, volunteering nevertheless contributed to one’s self-development and understanding of Canadian culture. They were simultaneously included and excluded from the Canadian nation: although employers largely did not recognize their skills earned through volunteering, their unwaged labor was recognized as contributing to the non-profit sector and to the welfare of the country. For the counselors and some new immigrants like Zahra, volunteer labour fosters one’s productive potential and value. It is a means of becoming culturally Canadian, through being actively un(der)employed and by learning the “Canadian way of life”. Unlike workfare clients, new immigrants were not coerced to work in survival jobs. Rather they were encouraged to volunteer or to upgrade one’s skills was a way of reproducing (middle-class) aspirations for more meaningful work and of belonging in Canada. Put simply, volunteering with aspirations for upward mobility was valued by many as more desirable than working in a ‘survival job’, if one could afford it.

Re-training and Education

When volunteering failed to lead to gainful employment, many hoped a certificate from a college or a training center would break the requirement for “Canadian experience”. Tom, who runs an ELT program at a community college, wanted to know why employers were so fixated on “Canadian experience”, and whether having a college certificate would break the requirement for it. Many thought it would, especially if a lot of time had passed since they were employed in their field. For instance, many new immigrants got stuck in “survival jobs” and a few years later,
realizing they had a gap in their resume, felt they needed to go back to school. Indeed, recall the comment made by an integration counselor that one needed to be ‘fresh’ to be eligible for Career Bridge. The longer immigrants were out of work, the more unlikely they were to find work unless they received ‘Canadian’ training or education. Recall also the engineer above who noted his employer recognized his brief stint at a community college. The government funded some skill enhancement courses for new immigrants. For instance, engineers could receive free training on software. However, some immigrants took entire degrees, which they had to pay for.

I attended a bridging program orientation at a community college that incorporated ELT. After taking ELT one could fast-track their college degree by taking off a year. While ELT was free, the rest of their education was not.

Several of my informants were attending part-time courses at community colleges to upgrade their skills, while attending ELT and other integration programs. Sarkis, for example, was taking AutoCAD at a community college, although he has a master’s and bachelor’s in electrical engineering from ‘back home’. After graduating, he worked in Syria doing design work on a consulting basis, although his main source of income came from a family business in gold refining, where he working in the laboratory. In Canada, he decided to get a job using his engineering skills. However, the irony was that in “upgrading” his skills, he was simultaneously being “deskilled” in the sense that he was retraining for entry-level work in engineering.

Clients’ strategies to get entry-level jobs in their professions and work their way up were also not guaranteed. Saba, for example, noted that someone from Bangladesh with 10 years of experience, as an executive engineer, could not get work as a technologist, ‘because the employer thinks they won’t be able or want to do that’. Another case counselor describes this paradox as well. She noted that ‘engineers were high level supervisors, so here it is difficult for them to get work because what is available are technician jobs and they haven’t done that work in a long time. They are not well versed in those technical aspects. Engineers thus need to go back to school if they want to be a technician.’ This is precisely what Sarkis did.

Choosing to study at a university in Canada was less common, as it was more expensive and time-consuming. However, some new immigrants did. For instance, I spoke to a young woman from Pakistan who was working as a ‘volunteer’ research assistant for a community research project on professional immigrants. In Canada, she also previously worked as a waitress. She decided to get a Canadian degree and has applied to a university program in
Ontario. It is her turn to go back to school first, then her husband’s. Adeeb is also taking turns with his wife, who is currently studying at a local university.

Many ELT clients shuffled between unpaid and paid work as they cycled through employment programs and various forms of retraining, as they tried to improve their job prospects, all of which had uncertain results. In the process, new immigrants lived off the savings they had brought with them to Canada (as required by the government) or went further and further into debt. Going back to school and volunteering were actually relative luxuries that one’s financial situation did not always permit. For instance, remember Aneesa, who is currently working for minimum wage to help her husband pay down the credit line and credit cards. Once they are under control, she hopes to volunteer when and if she can, but because they immediately require money she works in a ‘survival job’ before taking on further debt to pay for school. The maxed out credit line, however, is not merely for “survival” (e.g. in terms of for food and rent) as it is for many immigrants. For her family, like others, being a Canadian citizen also involves the dream of home ownership and of investing in their future: it entails the financialization of everyday life (Allon 2010). They consume and become indebted to making and maintaining their investments. Volunteer work and retraining is thus an investment in a better future in ways that a survival job is not, but which requires access to more income and credit (to become privileged enough to go further into debt).

Job Fairs, Networking Events and Mentorships: Gaining Canadian Contacts

A common reason cited for one needing “Canadian experience” was to build one’s networks, since most of the professional job market is hidden (e.g. not advertised). Accordingly, new immigrants were encouraged to also attend job fairs and other networking events in addition to being set up with mentors. For instance, when it was not possible to help clients find work or an unpaid volunteer work placement, a mentorship was seen as another means of helping one gain Canadian contacts and knowledge of Canadian workplace culture. A representative from the HR department of a large national bank, a guest speaker at Multicultural Immigrant Services, presented on mentoring, networking and branding the self. She spent a lot of time discussing what makes a good mentor (expertise, connections etc.) and what makes a good mentee
(accepts/acts on feedback, is willing to take risks, has a positive attitude, takes initiative, makes things easy for mentor, is loyal and trustworthy to mentor, comes prepared, demonstrates resourcefulness, doesn’t ask for too much). When she asked the audience how to recognize or thank a mentor, one person suggested taking them out for coffee or sending them a card, as well as maintaining a relationship. The presenter suggested more concrete ways of giving back: ‘it could be as simple as helping with research, running photocopies, or volunteering especially for small businesses.’ This presentation suggested new immigrants should have low expectations for mentorships: one was not supposed to ask for a job and instead could offer free work that may pay off in the long-term.

Matching up mentors with the appropriate mentee was extremely difficult. For instance, I know of an electrical engineer that was partnered with a civil engineer. Although they are both engineers, the civil engineer has limited knowledge of electrical engineering and few contacts in that field. Furthermore, a nuclear engineer was matched up with a professional at Manulife because they had studied finance in their undergraduate degree, although his master’s was in nuclear engineering. That mentor had some contacts, but very limited, in the field of engineering, in which he was looking for employment. Also, there were not enough mentors for those who desired them, and hence matching up with the right partner was difficult. Even if it was a perfect match, the model depends on a lot of idiosyncratic factors since it is based on a one-on-one relationship. Its outcomes were thus highly variable. Newcomers were often partnered with mentors to meet program goals of offering either a placement or a mentor, and several mentors felt their mentees had varying opinions of what constitutes “job ready”. Job fairs, and other networking events were thus also encouraged by employment counselors.

I decided to attend a particular job fair after hearing about it from an employment counselor working at an immigrant service organization. It was held deep inside the belly of the massive Toronto Exhibition Centre, several floors underground. I lined up with job seekers outside the job fair room to pay the five-dollar admission fee. Free with the price of admission was the magazine *Opportunity: Job and Education Magazine* (Winter 2008), which includes advice on how to prepare for a job fair. The front page features an article on “Getting the most out of job fairs”: “The key is to treat job fair events like an interview; come prepared and have a strategy to get noticed in the crowd.” Once I entered, to my surprise booths were rather sparsely spread out in a large room. The booths typically had two representatives, each with a long line of
job seekers waiting patiently for their 3-minute impromptu interview, resumes in hand, dressed in business attire. The vendors that were represented were primarily large corporations, seeking entry-level employees. However, the job fair also included recruiters and community colleges advertising their services and programs. I located the employment counselor, accompanied by a few of her clients. Since his line was not as long, I also conversed at length with a recruiter – who described himself as Filipino Chinese - who catered to the “diversity” needs of employers. He was open about the lack of interest employers had in hiring internationally trained or educated professionals. He also told me that most people he places are in entry-level positions in big companies, not in high-level positions. Ehrenreich similarly found that at job fairs, in the U.S., company representatives “are not empowered to deal with professionals; they are indeed fishing for frontline, entry-level personnel” (2005:195).

There was even an annual conference, specifically for IEPs, held since 2002, which over 1000 IEPs attended each year. Funded, in part, by CIC, it was “intended to provide immigrant professionals with an opportunity to network, develop skills and gather information from employers, regulatory bodies and government on how best to integrate into the Canadian labour market in their field of work.” This conference also “celebrates diversity as a unique economic and social asset that sets Toronto apart from other cities.” The year I attended, Noorani presented his “Seven Secrets of Success” and the Honoured Guest speaker was Jason Kenney – Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism. The Mayor of Toronto at that time, David Miller, also spoke. There were presentations from different sectors and networking opportunities, including the panel on engineering I discussed above. While this conference gave new immigrants the opportunity to network in the industry with panelists and through roundtables, the Marketplace [the conference’s version of a job fair] was not filled with employers looking for employees. The exhibitors included: credential assessment services, community colleges, professional associations and bodies, immigrant service providers, universities, large national

76 Staff in the immigrant service sector were conflicted about whether or not to require their clients get their credentials assessed, since they were unsure whether or not these assessments would mean anything to employers and because they were costly ($115-200). They nevertheless offered information on these services, and several recommended their clients think about getting an assessment done. Some of the services were partially funded by the government. An employee of a credential assessment service noted that it helps employers understand credentials earned outside Canada, and that there are some concerns about bogus certification. It was one more thing newcomers could pay for to try to prove their educational experience was valuable.
banks and large financial firms. There were also representatives from CIC and a city in Northern Ontario. Similarly, their resource guide listed various agencies and programs as well as featured advertisements for banking and accounting firms. Less popular immigrant areas of settlement with job shortages, such as Northern communities, Thunder Bay and Sudbury as well as Timmons and North Bay, were also advertised. There were thus more integration services than actual employers at the marketplace. These job fairs and conferences thus did not deliver as many opportunities as they promised.

Not only is the majority of the professional labour market hidden, but employers prefer to recruit professionals from the currently employed. While large companies have their own HR departments, small and medium-sized companies rely on recruiters. Those working in the immigrant service sector were careful to point out the differences between more exploitive employment agencies and recruiters – although new immigrants ended up relying on both. Some employment agencies get a percentage of a client’s salary. Since recruiters do not directly take one’s pay, they were promoted by immigrant service agencies. However, the payment structure of recruiting does not reward risk taking. Recruiters are generally not paid until the employee they have recruited passes their three-month probation. For professional, highly skilled jobs, recruiters recruit within the currently employed, poaching people who are currently working for other companies and firms. Also, HR departments that may or may not use recruiter services, often encourage their employees to refer friends and contacts by offering them a referral fee. It is rare that high-level positions would be advertised or the target of the un(der)employment industry. In fact 80% of jobs are not advertised, as many workshop facilitators in the immigrant service sector were quick to point out. Also as Ana points out (below), even jobs that are advertised are often “inside jobs”; that is, they have candidates in mind, but are obligated by law to advertise them.

Moreover, whether or not there were job shortages in new immigrants fields was also not always certain. The hidden transcript or goal of the programs was often to help new immigrants transfer their skills to some type of entry-level work in their fields, broadly defined (see Chapter 4). For example, Saba noted they have doctors joining the program, but it is impossible for her to find them work as doctors. So, for instance, they help pharmacists become pharmacist technicians. Saba says, ‘It’s all about the demand and supply rule. JAVA developers are needed, but network administrators, not as much. In Alberta they want civil engineers and they don’t care
if they have Canadian experience or not, but in Ontario they are concerned.’ The extent to which there were job shortages in their clients’ fields was not always clear to the employment counselors. The competitiveness of Toronto’s labour markets is illustrated in the following example.

The Toronto District School Board organized a session at a TESL Conference on their ELT program for internationally trained language teachers. Audience members – all ESL teachers - interrupted the presenters with questions right at the beginning of their presentation and throughout. Many audience members seem to be confused as to why they were offering courses to new immigrants to become ESL teachers. One audience member asked: ‘have you researched the job market? There is an over-supply of ESL teachers’. Many audience members murmured in agreement. The presenters noted that they see a lot of failure and their clients just need a little orientation to the sector. ‘The job market in adult ESL is better than pursuing work as public school or college teachers. So they tell students that there is a big opportunity in ESL.’

One audience member said that Canadian-born teachers needed help as well. This protectionist comment, highlighted that the labour market was competitive even for native-born Canadians. There were also ELT programs for teachers (for elementary and high school education), which essentially prepared students for no job availability. There were very few jobs for teachers in Toronto, despite claims that baby boomers would retire, which would lead to shortages. Yet the government awarded money for this program, demonstrating no labour market research of job shortages was done when programs funding was awarded. These programs thus do not “identify labour market gaps, train people to fill these gaps, or promote better jobs” (De Wolff 2006:186). There are essentially no mechanisms for matching recent immigrants’ experience with available jobs.

In labour markets where jobs were available, as noted previously, new immigrants were funneled, generally into entry-level employment. Alisha, who taught the finance section of ELT, said that in general her students were from a managerial level in their home country, but they focused on getting jobs in banks in Canada, which “usually seemed to be in a job call center, entry level and book keeper or accounting clerk, so they are all focused on getting their foot in the door with the entry level type positions.” And of course, it is even difficult for these new immigrants to get entry level jobs unless they craft a persona of the typical or desired job applicant, since the employers worry that overqualified applicants will not stay in the job and
that they would quickly get bored. As Alisha notes “I had one student this week who he had a master’s and he had started doing it or maybe a second one in the U.S. and didn’t complete it so his level of English is still high and whatever and he applied for a job at a bank in a call center and they were like overqualified so”.

Employment counselors even advised clients to create resumes tailored to “survival” jobs, as Aneesa recently did. She told me she was disappointed that she did not get a gas attendant job, for which she had been interviewed for. Although the interviewer liked her, he told her friend (who had secured her the interview and contact), that he did not want to hire her because he was convinced she would not stay long. He thought that she would leave as soon as she received a better opportunity. Since she was well-educated and her husband had a fairly good job, he was convinced that she would not stay because she was not “desperate for work”. She felt that it was unfair that he made these assumptions about her – how was he to know what she would do? She said that she had even tailored her resume for the job: she only put her high school education on it, excluding her post-secondary education.

The benefit of cycling new immigrants through the transition industry, other than for entry-level employment is dubious (and even then it was difficult). Rather, going to job fairs, going back to school and volunteering are often part of deskilling processes rather than paths to success. And yet the costs of (re)training and (re)skilling are incurred at an individual’s expense. As Guy Standing (2011) pointed out, in flexible labour markets individuals must do considerably more work- and training-for-labour. I will illustrate the extent of this labour as well as the various ways in which many pursued “Canadian experience” by following three new immigrants’ work trajectories, which illustrate how individuals were oriented constantly towards employment, even if it never arrived. They also show how, through this process, many accumulated personal debt.

Skilled Immigrant Un(der)employment Trajectories

Maria’s Story

Maria immigrated to Canada with her family [her husband and three children], from Albania for ‘a better life’. Indeed, her story shows her endless willingness to try anything and everything in order to get a job commensurate with her skills. In Albania she had worked for the
government in the Regional Directorate of Social Insurance, after she graduated from university. She initially worked there as an economist, but later she was involved more directly with social work, until she left to work for the American Peace Corps, who came to the country “after democracy entered”. She helped their volunteers settle in Albania for a year until she came to Canada. When I asked Maria why they decided to apply to immigrate to Canada, she noted that at the time she thought this was the best country to live in because she heard that it was “very very multicultural and very helpful for new immigrants so you can find jobs very easy. We did not know it is so hard to find jobs.” Before they came they thought maybe they needed one year to improve their English, at which point they thought they would be fluent and would get a job right away.

When she arrived in Canada, after receiving counselling at an immigrant service agency, Maria decided to pursue both accounting and management as possible career paths. Her degree in economics had included a focus on management, and accounting was a practical, in-demand profession in Canada. While attending LINC classes, Maria took training courses in accounting at an ISA. She then volunteered full-time for a property management company for several months until she got a job in data-entry at a large retailer. She got her job through her church networks. A friend of hers from church had told her that they were looking for people, and she sent in Maria’s resume for her. She decided to quit her job after a year and a half because it became clear to her that there were no avenues for moving up in that company and that she would be stuck doing data-entry all day, every day, for years unless she made a drastic change. She also found it difficult to continue to apply for jobs and (re)train while working. She started again with another company full-time in property management, but she said:

“They only used me to do some work in computer. All the day I didn’t learn anything, so I decided to quit. I thought they are using me and I am not learning anything. So I thought I am losing time and I spent all the day and it was far more than one hour to go there and more than one hour to come back, so I lost all the day there and I didn’t do anything. So then I decided to go to school again for English and during the time I’m still volunteering and in the church I am volunteering too.”

I asked her what kind of volunteer work she did for the church, and she noted anything they needed. While attending LINC again, she also did statistical-based volunteer work for a community health centre as well as translating and interpreting work for an immigrant settlement organization. “I didn’t stay home ever,” she told me. Indeed Maria always struck me as
exhausted, although she remained upbeat and smiling. I used to have a similar commute time as
her and I would often run into her on the subway in the morning. She was always sleeping until
she got to work. And I always received emails from her late at night, although I knew she had to
get up early for work. I often thought, she must have only gotten a few hours of sleep a night.

After struggling to find work, she decided to switch her focus from management and
accounting to settlement and social work because, she said: “here is my heart and that was my
background [laughs]”. After some bad experiences with some unsympathetic counselors, she
started to think about being a social worker, and helping new immigrants in particular. She told
me: “I have this in mind, but I thought maybe it is hard to find job in social worker [field]
because everybody said in accounting it is easier to find job.” However, while working in data
entry, her director, with whom she had become friends, encouraged her to pursue her love of
social work. Maria recalls:

“One day she said [Maria] why don’t you go for social worker because I see you
more as a social worker. I don’t like to ignore your accounting field but I see you
as a social worker, so I think you will be a great social worker. So I had this in my
mind - she said this - but I was still how I can find job? It will be harder to find
job in social worker field. So this is the reason that I decided, thinking and
thinking, I decided I know it will be long time to go to school and to finish college
and to get a job in social worker, field but at least this is what I need to do because
I like to be happy…I will help with all my heart not like this lady that was there
only to get paid because she has this position, but she was not helping anybody”.

She is referring, here, to a story she had previously told me. She felt unnecessarily judged and
critiqued by some social workers that showed little compassion. She said they did not understand
how overwhelming it was for them when they first moved here. When I formally interviewed her
in 2008, she told me: “I decided I have to go to school, so I will never quit my direction in social
work.” While attending ELT in the spring and summer of 2008 she had received word that she
got accepted to a social work program commencing in the fall. She had also continued to apply
for jobs. She ended up getting a contract position, at a refugee settlement organization, to cover a
woman going on maternity leave. This job too, she had heard about, not through ELT, but from
her social networks at church. She was a good candidate for this position because the applicant
was required to speak both Albanian and English. She also had previous experience, in Albania,
working with people affected by Chernobyl. She thus thought she would be able to counsel
refugees suffering from trauma, although she recognized it would be an emotionally difficult job,
which worried her a little. Since the position was not permanent, she decided to continue with her studies, but part-time rather than full-time. Once the contract expired, Maria was out of work once again. She completed her studies, which she paid for with a student loan, and continued to volunteer, this time with seniors. Unfortunately, she was not able to find permanent work in the settlement sector and has now, three years later, moved on to yet another career. She has recently obtained her real estate license and has started working as a real estate agent.

Maria’s work trajectory illustrates several common themes and experiences. First of all, ISAs are not wrong in insisting that networks are key in the Canadian labour market. Maria got both of her jobs through her church networks. Most of my informants got their “survival jobs” from their networks of friends and contacts. For example, Sarkis also got his “survival job” repairing watches through a friend and Sarah got a job making sushi at a grocery store through an ELT classmate’s wife. The problem, of course, is not that new immigrants lacked networks, but that they had limited networks in their professional fields. Developing such networks, however, is a long-term process. Maria’s story also illustrates that many new immigrants get work in the settlement sector, either as volunteers or employees because of their language skills. This is also one sector in which volunteer experience does count as “Canadian experience” and may explain the emphasis and value counselors place on volunteering. However, Maria’s story also illustrates that work in the settlement sector, in particular, and entry-level work that new immigrants often get, in general, is often precarious. Settlement counselors were largely contract workers whose work was insecure and temporary (de Wolff 2006). Her story also demonstrates that getting a degree from a community college does not necessarily guarantee employment, as many new graduates are aware. However, Maria constituted a successful graduate of the ELT program (see Chapter 4). At the end of the program she would have been recorded as employed in her field (since she got the settlement counselor position before ELT was over.) Maria’s success is not manifested in stable employment, but rather she epitomizes flexibility as she retrains, works for free as a volunteer, works in contract positions, and ends up working in commission based sales – real estate.

Ana’s Story

Ana and her husband had been living in the United States when they applied to come to Canada. They moved to New York, from Belarus, because Ana had won a master’s fellowship at
a university there. She then decided to continue her studies, and she received a doctoral degree in education. She had previously obtained a bachelor’s and a master’s degree in Belarus in language education, but these five years of university were considered to be an equivalent of a four-year bachelor’s degree in North America. Ana taught children English in Belarus for six years. She also taught adult learners at university after she graduated for half a year. She paid for her doctoral education in the U.S. by working as a research assistant. They would have liked to have stayed in New York, but they could not get legal status in the United States. Ana was the principal applicant, and she easily scored highly on Canada’s skilled worker points system. They scored so highly, they did not even need to do an interview and after a year and a half they [the government] just sent them passports, she recalled. They immigrated to Canada in July 2006.

When I asked her how long she thought it would take her to get a job, she laughed, saying, “We thought it would happen right away, right, I mean everybody comes with that expectation.” Her husband did get a job right away, though, as an electrician. He took the appropriate licensing exams, which he passed easily. He has an engineering degree, but he worked as a technician in the U.S. as well, since he was not fluent in English.

Before her current job in a [big box retail chain store], working for minimum wage, Ana worked as a representative for a company that sold water treatment systems:

“I tried it for several months but it was, to tell the truth, they exploit people in very funny way. You have to go using your own car…they give you appointments though and you try to sell their system. So if you are selling the system then you are fine, even if it is one sale per week you are fine - you be doing 500 at least per week - so you will be fine…But you have to use your own gasoline, use your own car and drive so far away and because you are new and you don’t even have experience selling, it is really hard. So I tried it for few months and I gave-up.”

She did not make any money in that sales job. After that she explored working for a large financial services corporation selling insurance policies and mutual funds. But she realized:

“you have to study for that, then you have to get licenses. Then you have to pay for licenses and you have to take exams and everything. And I gave-up very fast because I understood this is not for me, I just cannot do that to people. I’m not sure…you also get commission, you know, and after that I decided no more commission. That’s enough commissioning and then I went to [the retail store]. [The retail store] was minimum pay.”

While working part-time in retail, Ana attended ELT in the evenings and on the weekends. She was hopeful that ELT would help her get a work placement. After ELT, Ana was one of the few
who got a volunteering placement for six weeks, although it was not in her desired field. Instead of working intensively, she requested they spread out the placement, doing it one day per week so she could continue to work. The placement involved working at the reception center for refugees. She helped clients fill out documents, and took them to banks and to get OHIP etc. She told me, “Basically I am not doing what I need to do, but it is volunteering experience. At least I know what it is.” Although she is unsure this will constitute “Canadian experience” in her field, she hopes at least it will be a networking opportunity for her.

When I spoke with Ana in 2008, she was considering taking a food safety course at a local community college, for her friend told her work in that field was well paying. However, she decided not to take the course after attending an information session on the program. She recalled:

“But when I went there I actually discovered that they don’t believe in their own program. I mean the person who was sitting, representing - it was information session - he kind of wasn’t sure that this program is good enough, you know. So if person not sure how can you (laughing)…he kind of wasn’t sure…what employers you can work for, what kind of job you can get after that.”

She had just been considering it only if they could guarantee employment, like by the government. She would like a government position, because they are good jobs, and actually she applied when she first came here. She told me: “you would laugh but I applied for management trainee. I don’t know…it was program, management trainee program. It was for people with at least master’s degree and of course I was so hopeful because I had degrees and everything. Then you had to take courses; you had to pass exams.” She took two exams, an English exam and another one on workplace culture, on different job situations or problems. She told me that she did not prepare, she just showed up, “because, you know, I was so [laughs and pauses] self confident in myself.” Because she did not practice, she told me she did not do very well. Her husband, however defended her, telling me that her mark was not that bad, she had received a B, her mark was in the 70s “which,” he said, “is not bad if you didn’t practice”. I agreed that her mark was indeed good, but as a doctor of philosophy, she was embarrassed by what she considered to be a low grade. She laughed while retelling the story not only because she did not prepare, but because she felt, the audience of her narrative, me, would find it absurd that she thought she could get a management position in government when she first arrived in Canada. She laughed at what she perceived to be her naïveté that she was smart, capable, skilled and
would get hired easily and quickly upon arriving in Canada. Her confidence has since dwindled. Indeed, she works in retail, part-time, for minimum wage to not only help pay the bills, but also because her husband thought she just needed to get out of the house, since she was feeling depressed at the state of her career. Her supportive husband was quick to praise her abilities, telling the ELT class about how her dissertation had won an award, and how she was featured in a magazine. He was trying to remind her that she had valuable abilities and achievements despite her failure in the Canadian labour market.

Since Ana used to teach English in Belarus, I wondered why she did not teach ESL in Canada. She told me that she is “not trying to get certificate here because I know…they will not hire me to a good place,” since she was not a native speaker. I responded that I honestly thought she could get hired as an ESL teacher in an ISA. “Yes that is what I mean,” Ana said, “I would not be able to work as real Canadian and I will work at LINC programs and ESL programs for immigrants and that is not what I am trying to achieve. It seems to be too low for me - I don’t know - that’s why I am not trying to get certificate. Maybe that’s my mistake.” Instead, she has been applying to colleges and universities for positions such as “International Student Advisor”, but so far no one has called her back. She feels that she is amply qualified for these positions, with a doctoral degree in education, and she felt her “resume was really good because I polished it so much”. She assumed that she does not get these jobs because she is not connected to those doing the hiring. She said:

“[The job ads] are honest. They say first of all we will consider internal candidates. So if there is an internal candidate then external candidates have no chance and then out of external candidates it’s hard to get into that because nobody knows you, you know? So I am looking for those kinds of positions. Hopefully, I wouldn’t need to study anymore to get hired here, because if I don’t get hired by January I’m going to get to [a community college] into human resource management and my heart is not there. So that you understand it is kind of very hard for me to go and study for next year, pay again money for something that I’m not sure that it will work or not but….I will go and I will do it because at least they have co-op program there and hopefully, I mean, I might enjoy it. I can see myself at that kind of job although the preferred situation would be if they hired me right away because I have experience and everything.”

If Ana got a stable, well-paying job, her husband would go back to school to study electrical engineering. But he cannot do that now, since he needs to support the family. He told me that his job is not that bad, but he is dreaming about his university major degrees.
I most recently spoke with Ana in May 2012. Since she had not gotten work she did go back to school in 2008. She had finished her HR degree from a local community college. But this program did not afford her the job opportunities she had hoped for. Now she works as a recruiter, independently, as a “consultant” from home. Recruiting was an area of HR in which Ana could find work, particularly during a recessionary time when HR departments were wary of expanding. She is starting to think that going into HR was not a good idea, she tells me, as it does not suit her personality. To be a recruiter you need to be aggressive, always contacting people, going after them and she is not good at that. I related my experiences with the academic job market to hers and we talked a lot about how to find other purposes in life when our careers were not going as well as we had hoped. She has given up on her career, but she hopes to be at least a good wife to her husband and hopes for her children’s futures. She deflects her hopes onto what she can provide for her family when her own fail. She told me that she also has comfort in the fact that she got out of Belarus at the time when she did. ‘It was not like today’, she said, ‘it was difficult to leave at that time’. She had recently returned to New York to visit with her friends from graduate school, her former colleagues. She told me that they all had such beautiful homes and that they cannot imagine the life she has here. When I asked her if she still attends the same church, she noted that they did, but that they are not members because they are still not settled, they have no house. She is still living in the same small apartment and her husband has the same technician job. He finds his job boring, but he still cannot go back to school unless she is making the money and is the primary breadwinner. We part ways encouraging each other to persevere in the face of competitive job markets.

Ana’s story, like Maria’s, illustrates several common experiences. When she first arrived she was confident that she could get a job in her field right away. Instead, she worked in, what she perceived to be a series of temporary jobs. As Ehrenreich argues, in the context of the United States, thousands of bad jobs are available to corporate rejects, particularly in sales and in non-standard employment (2005:181). These jobs are also open to new immigrants without “Canadian experience” because they are commission-based. Hiring employees with no experience poses no risk to the employer, rather “the only risk undertaken is by the job seeker, who has to put out money up front and commit days or weeks to unpaid training” (Ehrenreich 2005:189). When Saba and I discussed how the obsession with “Canadian experience” was perhaps related to risk adverse employers’ unwillingness to pay for training employees, Saba had
joked that the exception was in sales. She laughed, “the ads say no experience required”. Unless one is an extremely talented salesperson, it is difficult to make any money at these types of jobs. Ana felt that she could make more money working for minimum wage, part-time, because she did not need to invest her own resources to work there (e.g. gas).

Maria’s and Ana’s stories illustrate how many new immigrants’ readjust their expectations as they circulate through various jobs and programs that fail to give the results they were hoping for. It is through these various experiences of taking tests, submitting resumes to hear nothing back, to taking programs with variable results that shift new immigrants’ expectations and temporalities. While there certainly were successes, such as Vik, who received a stable, secure, high-paying job in his field, for many there were revised dreams and aspirations as they struggled to assess the needs of the labour market and to upgrade themselves accordingly. It is not within the space of the classroom that they learn these lessons, although well-intentioned counselors, of course, try to give them often too soon or too late (see Chapter 6). For instance, newcomers were often angry that they should be expected to accept entry-level work as an acceptable starting point. Many of these same people came to this conclusion a few years later.

Maria and Ana ended up working (although for Maria it was not permanently) in the settlement and in the transition industry. Both of these jobs were obtained after gaining “Canadian experience” in those fields. Maria volunteered in the sector and Ana took a Canadian program at a local community college. Although both obtained work in their intended fields (although these fields themselves shifted), this work was not secure, stable or high paying. And in the case of Maria and Ana, as in many others, the governmental programs for professional immigrants and the transition industry for the unemployed ended up reproducing both flexible labour and their own industry. Their stories are not uncommon.

Parveen, who has a master’s in medical anthropology from a university in Pakistan, took an ELT course and got an unpaid work placement as a healthcare counselor, counselling on post-partum depression. The placement was for only three hours a week although she had wanted more hours. After completing her placement and also doing more volunteer work in the settlement sector she got a job as a settlement counselor. However, she was commuting from one end of the GTA to the other for work. She quit her job as she found it impossible to care for her children while working full-time and commuting such long hours (three to four hours a day). She started volunteering in the settlement sector in her area, teaching English classes, hopeful it will
eventually lead to a permanent position. After Miro, an ELT teacher, told his class how he went from working in sales to going back to school to becoming an ESL teacher, Sarkis joked that at the end of his job search maybe he will be a LINC teacher, as lots of newcomers are ESL teachers. Indeed, a side-effect of the employment programs for new immigrants was to reproduce itself, creating a job market for un(der)employed immigrants. Others, like Vivek and Vik, however, were slowly working their way up in their field.

Vivek’s Story

Sitting over lunch at a large Chinese buffet restaurant, in a strip mall in Scarborough, I asked Vivek why he wanted to immigrate to Canada. He spoke about the political instability in Bangladesh, and how as Hindu minorities there was no future for his children there. He came here for their future, although they were comfortable in Bangladesh. They had two apartments, maids, a driver. Consequently, his wife had not wanted to come to Canada, but he had said to her, ‘what is money, if our children have no future?’ He, like so many of my other informants, tried to maximize the amount of points he could get on Canada’s points system. He thus took a French course prior to immigrating, so he could improve his score.

Vivek who has a degree in Civil Engineering, worked for over a decade in his field as a project manager, supervising the construction of bridges and highways in Bangladesh. He had also worked in Europe, for a few years after graduating, in Belgium and Switzerland. He describes himself as having had a good job in Bangladesh. When he married his wife he promised her parents she could finish her undergraduate degree. She proceeded to get her master’s degree and started her doctoral studies. She was in school for eight years, but she moved to Canada before completing her PhD in Agroculture. Once in Canada, Vivek’s wife went back to school immediately while he worked in a “survival job”. She attended a private college for one year taking a program with an unpaid co-op position (which Vivek calls “volunteering”). After this she landed a job in accounting. He notes that ‘it is entry level though and she had to work hard to get that job. She also is doing everything, she has to answer the phone and all that.’ I ask what she had to do to get that job. ‘Volunteer,’ he said. ‘Then she worked for an employment agency. She handed in her resignation and then she got hired full-time at another company.’
He meets with me as much as our schedules permit, as he wants to study my body language and how I say things as a Canadian. Much to my discomfort, he wants to learn from me. On the other hand, he feels like he does all the “Canadian” things the integration courses suggest, such as having a positive attitude. When I say that he does, he says, ‘I have all these things but I don’t get a job, I just need Canadian experience.’ Prior to immigrating he had phoned and talked to employers, but they said they wanted Canadian experience. I joked, ‘they said that, and you still came here?’ He said, ‘well they did not say that exactly, but that is what I got from what they said.’

He told me that it took him awhile to learn that he needed to go back to school for two years in Canada. He said his wife also realizes that he should have gone straight to school when they arrived. He came to this conclusion after sending off many resumes to no avail and after shuffling through many integration programs. He accessed several services, at a variety of ISAs before starting the Internationally Education Engineers Qualified Bridging Program at a local university in 2008, working towards a Professional Engineering License in civil engineering. (He had immigrated to Canada in 2005.) He paid approximately $6000 for the Bridging program. He had previously taken a construction estimating course at a local community college. Through another ISA, before attending the ELT course at Multicultural Immigrant Services, he took the Career Bridge English test, which he passed, and he thus obtained access to their website or pool of employer postings. However, he never got an internship through this organization. He also spoke about sending his resume to a recruiter who contacted him because Saba, the employment counselor at Multicultural Immigrant Services, had spoke so highly of Vivek. But he heard nothing back. When he followed up with the recruiter, he realized he was no longer working at the recruitment company. The high turnover in this industry made it difficult for Vivek and other new immigrants to network. Vivek thus felt that ultimately no one really helped him. When I asked about whether or not his friends could help, he noted that they could not because they are all in entry-level positions. He does not find many people here are his well-wishers, although one of his professors at the university is (and me). He again reiterates that he had wasted time because he should have gotten an education as soon as he came — without it, he felt it was not possible to get a job. He talks about how high rent is in his high-rise apartment in Toronto, so he would be willing to move elsewhere if he could get a job, after his degree is finished. He is hopeful that he will be able to get a job with the help of his professor.
We talk about his programs’ co-op placement as counting towards his one year of experience that is required to get a Professional Engineering Designation (P.Eng). When I told him that you do not necessarily have to have a P.Eng to get an engineering job, he replied ‘but I don’t want to do soils, or drafting’ [entry level positions]. I say, ‘I know I know, but many people do the same work as an engineer, they just can’t stamp the drawings.’ ‘But’, he says, ‘all the ads in the paper ask for a P.Eng’.

Vivek, who is an adept networker, dubbed me his “well-wisher” (like his professor) and he strategically keeps in touch with me (and I him). After I had completed my official fieldwork, he emailed me a photo of him meeting Mayor Miller as part of a photo-op for bridging programs for skilled immigrants. The photo, like so many other stories on government programs, seemed to indicate success. But Vivek is only slowly working towards employment commensurate with his skills after cycling through various programs, including ELT and a university bridging program. When I last spoke with Vivek, he was working in his field, and has received his P.Eng. His current job, however, is not in Toronto where is family is living, and it is not a permanent position. He hopes, though, that in the future this will lead to a stable job. It has been nine years since he immigrated and he literally had to start over. His decade plus of engineering experience in Switzerland, Belgium and Bangladesh were irrelevant to potential employers. He only started to have some success finding work in his field after obtaining a Canadian degree. But even then, the results are uncertain. He is far from achieving the comforts he experienced in Bangladesh, but he and his family moved out of their high-rise in Scarborough. They have purchased a townhouse in the suburbs, like Aneesa, hoping to continue to invest in their future and in their children’s.

Vik also told me bits and pieces of what he thought I wanted to know as a researcher during ELT breaks, telling me ‘his story’ of looking for a job in Canada. However, when I ask him if he would repeat it formally for an interview, he told me he did not want to because you don’t talk about things until they happen, otherwise they will not happen. ‘We have a proverb back home’, he says, ‘for instance you could say I will get immigration in two weeks, but then it is a month, then months’. I observed, however, how Vik successfully navigated the immigrant integration sector accessing as many resources as possible. He had been to several ELT courses, immigrant employment centers and community colleges. He continually worked in ‘survival’ jobs while obtaining technical certificates in various areas – the ones he could obtain for an
affordable price. He kept his wealth of contacts secret to obtain more through various organizations (‘if you have one mentor – it might be thought you don’t need another,’ he told me. Another trait that perhaps could be explained by the economy of scarcity he described as one reason why he wanted to immigrate. He illustrated this by explaining in detail the great feats he would have to go to to secure and then furnish an apartment in Ukraine). I too was a resource for helping him make grammar corrections on his resume. I told him, if anyone was going to make it, he was. After a year (and a half) he did finally land a job he deemed acceptable, as an operating engineer at a nuclear plant, but only after cycling through various positions and networking opportunities. He embodied the ‘flexibility’ touted in ‘the new economy’. He was young, enthusiastic and willing to recertify and upgrade until he reached his goal/ ‘result’. Once there, he realized that he couldn’t communicate with a lot of his workers very well, who spoke more working class English than he was used to, but that he was the only one with a relevant nuclear engineering degree! He had leased a shiny new black Honda, and he and his expecting wife had moved to the suburbs where his new job was located – he was one of the few successful informants I had. Yet, he still was reluctant to talk about ‘his success’ when I asked, for that would be to jeopardize it. He was still cautious rather than celebratory, no doubt because of his experiences in both Ukraine (where the economy was uncertain and your ‘money would freeze in the bank’) and Canada (where job security was not guaranteed, especially for newcomers).

Work for the Deferment of Meaningful Work

While skilled immigrants’ precarious labour was initially viewed as temporary, it became more permanent for people like Maria and Ana, as they joined the growing ranks of the precariatized (Standing 2011), which is increasingly racialized and feminized in Toronto (Vosko 2006). As demonstrated in Chapter 6, new immigrants attending integration workshops and classes on employment were told to get used to the ‘new economy’ in which there is no permanent job, which raises questions about the government’s role in the growth of precarious employment (de Wolff 2006). Employment counselors generally do not feel they promote precarious work, but rather just inform clients about the nature of work in Toronto (de Wolff 2006:184). However, they nevertheless play a part in socializing new immigrants to accept it as the status quo. Although a temporary job is often viewed as a means of entering the labour force, “increasing numbers of workers find that it is a dead end rather than a path to more satisfying
employment. As one agency manager put it: “The longer you are in contingent work, the less likely you will get a permanent job” (de Wolff 2006:185). In Toronto’s labour market, which is “polarized and segmented by “race” and gender…The City’s economy relies on an underemployed immigrant labour force to fill low-waged precarious jobs” (de Wolff 2006:185). Here, recent immigrants are flexible labour in the context of just-in-time production and labour market deregulation (de Wolff 2006:186).

Even if they did secure skilled work, like Vik and Vivek, they needed to be flexible workers –always anticipating insecurity. Such new immigrants take up a neoliberal citizen-subjectivity, by being responsibly un(der)employed, socially useful and active through volunteering and retraining (see Chapter 6). Rather than act on their feelings of being betrayed by the government or more specifically the points system and by Canadian employers, new immigrants like Maria, Ana and Vivek come to accept responsibility for their own un(der)employment. They shuttle through various programs, continuing to hope that maybe the next one will be better. But their investments seemed increasingly speculative: they were precarious in their inability to rationally predict or anticipate future returns on investments (Molé 2010:46, Bourdieu 2003:82), as noted in Chapter 6.

By continually investing in one’s human capital, one’s unemployment is highly productive (Adkins 2012). In post-Fordist work regimes the underemployed are no longer positioned as a traditional reserve army, “but as a site of potential and possibility” (Adkins 2012:633). Through a series of activation techniques unemployment is transformed from a state of uselessness or exclusion to a state of productivity and inclusion (Adkins 2012:635). Work, in narratives of immigrant underemployment, ought to be self-fulfilling, by being a maximal use of one’s potential. New immigrants learn in classes on ‘Canadian workplace culture’ that the generic Canadian worker is an independent contractor, who moves from firm to firm, client to client, selling themselves (Cooper 2012:645). Through training, skills upgrading and various other processes that ensure their continual employability and job-readiness, un(der)employed immigrants were urged to make investments in their future potential (Cooper 2012). Active unemployment, through training, unpaid work experience and volunteering, “ensure perpetual market availability or perpetual job readiness, even if employment never arrives” (Adkins 2012:635). This is part of the process of the “folding of economy into society” (Adkins
Productive and value-creating activities exist not merely in formal labor processes, but across the social body (Adkins 2012:637).

**Actively Unemployed in the Transition Industry**

Frustrated by the failure of these government programs and initiatives, Vik, a nuclear engineer from the Ukraine, astutely noted, ‘I realized why they have all these employment agencies, to create jobs.’ Indeed, a large market has emerged with the “flexexploitation” of labour (Bourdieu 2003), to manage workers transitions between jobs. Barbara Ehrenreich has shown that in the United States, the “transition industry” through which the unemployed and the precariously employed circulate through, can have the effect of “divert[ing] people from the hard questions and the kinds of dissent these questions might suggest” (Ehrenreich 2005:219), by keeping people busy and by promoting ideologies of individual responsibility. Although, it is not necessarily deliberate, she notes that

> “the constant injunction to treat your job search as a job in itself, preferably “supervised” by a friend or a coach, seems designed to forestall seditious musings. Much of the job seeker’s “job” – Internet searches and applications-is admitted to be useless, and seems to have no function other than to fill the time that might otherwise be devoted to reflecting on the sources of the problem” (Ehrenreich 2005:219).

As I have shown in Chapters 5 and 6, it is within governmental programs aimed at professional immigrants, as well as in the transition industry for the white-collar unemployed, that new professional immigrants “encounter ideologies that are explicitly hostile to any larger, social understanding of his or her situation” (Ehrenreich 2005:220). Manufactured busyness, volunteering and job fairs promised limited success for ELT clients, and yet ELT staff promoted them tirelessly. They wanted job seekers to try everything they possibly could since most of the job market was hidden and the alternative (do nothing) was guaranteed to fail.

In this regime, education and training are not valued or valuable only based on their traditional outcomes, such as “providing skills, knowledge, or upward mobility” (Ducey 2007:190). Nor are training and education necessarily based on individual needs (e.g. to address skill deficiencies) or employers’ demands. Rather, they have other “unanticipated and less visible flows of value” (Ducey 2007:190). For instance, using Spinoza’s definition of affect as the “power to act”, Ducey argues that the training and education industry for health care workers, in
New York City “attempts to direct the power to act (to engage, to actively participate), or to convert engagement into economic value” (Ducey 2007:192). In this context, when work fails to produce fulfillment, education and training offer a means of achieving it. If health care workers feel like they are moving forward, they may be more compelled to keep or evaluate their jobs more positively (Ducey 2007:200). However, “continual education and training is predicated on the limitless postponement of meaningful work. The education and training industry takes advantage of…desire for work that means something, but it does not provide such work” (Ducey 2007:195). Indeed, “the reality for workers entangled in the education and training industry can be, and most likely will be, a matter of the perpetual deferment of typical outcomes” (Ducey 2007:200). Here “power is exercised through “limitless postponements”” (Ducey 2007:200) and yet the immanent desire for meaning “constitutes a protean bundle of energy, a force” (Ducey 2007:201). Thus, “traditional ends of training and education-skills, a better job, more pay-may be perpetually delayed” (Ducey 2007:204). As Ducey notes:

“The education and training industry might be thought of as one system (among many) for controlling the flows of energy, in particular that generated by the desire for meaningful work. In so doing it attempts to direct affect, the power to act. The training and education industry perpetuates the endless reconstruction of bodies and capacities, the limitless reconfiguration of desire and its investment” (2007:201).

Similarly, the transition industry in Canada, works through the desire for skilled employment. It is predicated upon making one’s employment trajectory seem more meaningful in the present, even if such employment is perpetually deferred.

**Revised Dreams: “the mental shift is hard”**

Revising one’s expectations, however, was not easy. Many experienced the inequalities and uncertainty of the labour market in the regime of flexible accumulation as a personal problem, which required a mental shift and which often manifested in depression. When Alisha, an ELT teacher, immigrated to Canada from Jamaica, she got her first job by answering an ad in a newspaper in 2000. This, she noted ‘gave me issues afterwards,’ for she thought getting a job from newspaper ads and in her field was easier than it really is. She said the ad was for a government ministry: ‘it was a one year contract in my field in public relations.’ She said, “I came here because the Canadian government said they needed public relations people [laughs].
And then had a problem getting any further jobs. And then that’s when I went, okay I need to find a different career and so I went off to [a local community college]...and got the ESL.”

When I asked her how this experience influenced her teaching, she responded: ‘I can empathize, understand the frustration they are going through and the feelings they have as an immigrant. In certain ways I identify more with them than the native Canadian teacher. Coming from being a manager and now somebody is saying you got to work in a call center. The mental shift is hard.’

Saba, the job developer at Multicultural Immigrant Services, first visited Canada in 1992 through a youth program. She has an MBA, but when she immigrated with her husband in 2000 she was a telemarketer for five months until they moved to Windsor. Her husband went to school there to get a master’s in anthropology. He had previously worked in public policy, as a director of family planning in Pakistan. He then took a Sheridan college internship course, and ‘after seven years of struggle,’ he became a youth settlement worker, ‘which is okay, but where is the creativity?’, she asked.

There is a growing discussion, in the settlement sector, of the mental health of new immigrants. For instance, in Aneesa’s words, Yasmine’s, “story is so sad.” She had immigrated alone to Canada from Morocco, first to Montreal, then to Toronto. She eventually revealed to me that she struggled with depression, unemployed and in the face of failed dreams. She tried fighting it by maintaining a schedule, by volunteering and attending ELT classes, although she was convinced the latter were futile in helping her find a job. She often skipped class and cancelled evenings out with friends, isolating herself further. She felt she needed to consider returning to Morocco but she did not know how she could face everyone, or return to life there.

In reviewing interviews and fieldnotes in order to piece together the work trajectories and experience featured throughout this chapter I was struck by the sheer amount of wry laughter, through which my informants told their stories. Ana laughed at her naiveté, Alisha laughed at the fact that she came here because she thought the government wanted her precisely because she worked in public relations. The laughter suggests that their life circumstances were absurd or ironic. They chuckled at their previous ignorance and optimism, with a twinge of cynicism that comes with years of disappointment and a dose of reality peppered with failures. The choice for

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77 This discussion problematically individualizes structural problems, even if it recognizes external factors as being a source of psychological problems (e.g. migration), by focusing on individual wellbeing rather than on changing the conditions that create such stresses and depressions.
many was to either laugh or cry. The former, in conjunction with hoping for a better future and for more meaningful work, facilitated the reproduction of flexible labour.

Conclusion

The goal of integration programs was to produce flexible workers, who knew their jobs were never guaranteed, but who nevertheless were part of the relatively secure full-time core workforce. Yet, often, new immigrants joined the ranks of precarious labor – working in short-term contracts, temporary, part-time, and low-wage jobs - whose insecurity was relatively greater. The despair and precarity signified by “survival” is thus telling: it signifies a desire for work that offers both self-fulfillment and security. Whereas work was once “a secure site for inclusion, in the form of the lifelong career, the permanent job” (Rose 1999:158), it is now something that must be continually earned. Managing and taking risks “frames how neoliberal agents are oriented toward the future” (Gershon 2011:540). One is responsible for one’s failures and miscalculations, despite uncertainty.

While attending the National Metropolis Conference (on immigration) in April 2008, I participated in a workshop for graduate students, which discussed career opportunities in the immigration field in the community, government or academia. The speakers noted that to get a job in community or government one needed work experience; that is, networking and volunteering are necessary to gaining the experience required to be considered employable in certain sectors (with an oversupply of applicants). The constraints native-born youth and graduates face in entering the labour market are thus similar to that of new immigrants. One counselor, who worked with IEPs, astutely told me that youth and newcomers are facing the same job market dilemmas, yet all the money is going to newcomers. She asserted that it has to do with our competitive job market and we should be looking at the job market for similar experiences. Indeed the nature of the labour market is problematic for those who are not in core, secure jobs – disproportionately youth and new immigrants. The approach of integration programs that focus on barriers as an immigrant problem is thus myopic and problematic. Yet, it did not seem problematic for many to encourage new immigrants to gain “Canadian experience” since “experience” is a prerequisite to gaining employment for many new graduates. Sharon even saw it as problematic that new immigrants got more government money than youth. However,
the difference, of course is that new immigrants do have experience. This fact is often elided, as discussed in this chapter and as illuminated in the following example.

While attending a migrant activist fund-raiser held in a union hall, I noticed two sets of fictitious resumes taped to the concrete wall. One was by a Canadian-born applicant, the other a new immigrant. The Canadian-born applicant listed the following skills: “excellent cross-cultural communication although mono-lingual; traveled overseas.” Scribbled across the resume at the top in red pen, were the comments of a fictitious employer: “has overseas experience”, “excellent candidate”. The new immigrant’s resume was marked up with: “No recent experience,” “will not be considered,” although the resume listed a wealth of recent experience in a foreign country. This example brings us back to the beginning of the chapter in which we discussed the ‘selling diversity’ discourse, which is at odds with the practice of requiring “Canadian experience”. Since sending resumes garnered very little response, immigrants attended job fairs in order to get face time with employers or volunteered/worked for free to prove that they understand how to work in Canada, and for their previous experience to have value.

After attending a job fair, several ELT students and I discussed our dismay at coming all this way to the tiny strip mall on the edges of the GTA. We had all traveled for at least an hour by bus to discover very few employers were present. I came to think of all my hours spent on the TTC during fieldwork as a metaphor for the circuitous trajectories ELT clients often took shuffling through retaining programs, far-flung across the GTA. When I think of being “in the field”, I envision rumbling along on the subway or grasping for a bar to regain stability on a bus, while reading the Metro newspaper or Canadian Immigrant Magazine. Or of traveling from one end of the city to the other, reading the many advertisements for English lessons (even on backpacks of suit-wearing young Mormons), for immigrant services and for community college programs, which are plentiful in the spaces of public transit. For instance, in addition to advertisements in subway cars, a local community college stocked a brochure that listed all of their programs next to the daily newspapers in subway stations. These advertisements promise educational pathways to employment success. I journeyed far and wide around the GTA, as did others only to be disappointed by the destination. Long commutes captures that wearing down,

78 These signs advertise “Free English”, in both English and Chinese, with a phone number listed below. One day I copied a number down and found that it was the number of a Mormon assembly. Churches often offer free English classes and several of my informants attended these services.
the tiredness ELT clients often felt in regards to the need to continually improve and cycle through active unemployment solutions and programs. Rather than be a mere ‘bridge’ to professional work, for many clients, ELT, job fairs and volunteer positions were merely stops in their long-term un(der)employment trajectories.
Chapter 8
Conclusion

Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that for skilled immigrants “learning to labour” (Willis 1977) in Canada’s “knowledge-based economy” entails embodying a Canadian “soul”: one must embody the right aesthetic comportment and appropriate ethical and moral action. Integration programs for un(der)employed skilled immigrants attempted to prescribe the affects, behaviours and dispositions, constructed as valued by an overly homogenized “Canadian workplace culture”. Rendering the immaterial technical, counselors attempted to inculcate “soft skills” and teach new immigrants how to appropriately communicate “the self” to potential employers. Through this process socio-cultural differences became cast as “skills deficits”. New immigrants were urged to further commodify the self by gaining and marketing “skills” in order to be “employable”. This, in turn, involved adopting a particular kind of self that was always a project of self-reflexive improvement. New immigrants were asked to work on the self as “capital”, becoming, as Lazzarato argues, “no longer, properly speaking, a labor force, but a skill-capital, a ‘skill-machine,’ which goes hand in hand with a ‘lifestyle, a way of life,’ an ‘entrepreneurial’ ethical position” (2011:91). Economic production is thereby inseparable from the ethico-political production of subjectivity (Lazzarato 2011:72).

Employers who required “Canadian experience” further constructed immigrants as deficient. Demonstrating “Canadian experience” involved providing concrete proof, in the form of unpaid labour or education in Canada, of the transferability of one’s foreign credentials, which were overwhelmingly “Othered” by employers. Since the majority of employment programs were dismantled with the restructuring of the Canadian welfare state, integration programs for skilled immigrants, such as ELT, did not have the capacity to help new immigrants find work, even if they embodied the right kind of worker. Rather they encouraged new immigrants to become responsible immigrants/future-citizens through active unemployment: to entrepreneurially invest in their future potential in the present through various forms of skills upgrading and “Canadian experience”. Through “active” un(der)employment one strove to always be available for work, to be “work-ready”. In this economy the power to act requires trust, hope, faith, which anticipates possibility: the subject works on the self, accruing value that will hopefully be recognized in the future.
I have thus shown that while integration programs officially attempted to decrease underemployment, they often facilitated it, contributing to the expansion of the transition industry. Many new immigrants cycled through the latter in addition to various forms of insecure and precarious work. Others “upgraded” their skills through retraining, only to be de-skilled in entry-level work, perpetually hoping that success would arrive in the future and they would be able to slowly work their way up to more secure and prosperous work. Here skilled immigrants constitute not a traditional reserve army, but rather a labour force that contributes to both its own and the nation’s future value through unpaid volunteer work and through active citizenship even when unemployed. Belonging to the nation thus required adopting the ethical position of entrepreneur in work/life. These programs were thus also means of individualizing political economic problems and of governing the very subjects they aimed to help. They thereby facilitated the reproduction of ethical citizens and of flexible/precarious labour.

By virtue of not being “Canadian” enough, however, efforts to invest in and sell the self were often frustrated. Immigrants’ so-called experiential and skill deficiencies were vague and indeterminate and ever-shifting, depending on context-specific and subjective assessments of their value by various gatekeepers (e.g. employers). Investments were thus hopelessly speculative – oriented towards an uncertain future. While investment outcomes are always uncertain, those of immigrants were especially so, for in a labour market in which “fit” with one’s specific workplace culture is a legitimate means of assessing one’s capacity for labour, discrimination can be both relatively invisible and pervasive. Desirable (“skilled”) work for many new immigrants seemed to be endlessly deferred, as they continued to invest in their future potential with few guarantees in insecure labour markets in which their value was contingent and subject to discriminatory evaluations. Their hopes that self-investments would pay off often constituted a “cruel optimism” (Berlant 2011), as faith in future security was continually frustrated.

Lazzarato (2011) has argued that a particular form of *homo economicus* – “the indebted man” – has become dominant post-crisis. He argues that his “friends in cognitive capitalism are mistaken when they make “knowledge” the origin of valorization and exploitation. There is nothing new in the fact that science, skills, and technological and organizational innovations represent *the* productive forces of capital – Marx already understood as much” (Lazzarato
Instead, what is new is “the imperatives of the debt economy”, in which what is required:

is not knowledge but the injunction to become an economic “subject” (“human capital,” “entrepreneur of the self”), an injunction that concerns just as much the unemployed as the user of public services, the consumer, the most “modest” of workers, the poorest, or the “migrant.” In the debt economy, to become human capital or an entrepreneur of the self means assuming the costs as well as the risks of a flexible and financialized economy, costs and risks which are not only - far from it - those of innovation, but also and especially those of precariousness, poverty, unemployment, a failing health system, housing shortages, etc. To make an enterprise of oneself (Foucault) - that means taking responsibility for poverty, unemployment, precariousness, welfare benefits, low wages, reduced pensions, etc., as if these were the individual’s “resources” and “investments” to manage as capital, as “his” capital. As we can very clearly see, the concepts of entrepreneur of the self and human capital must be interpreted by way of the creditor-debtor relationship. (Lazzarato 2011:50-51)

The creditor-debtor relationship is the relation through which neoliberal power governs class struggle (Lazzarato 2011:51). Neoliberal policies turn “the social rights” of the welfare state into social and private debts. The “beneficiary as ‘debtor’ is not expected to reimburse in actual money but rather in conduct, attitudes, ways of behaving” (Lazzarato 2011:104). Repayment takes the form of the kind of self-investment I have described above – the “debtor’s constant efforts to maximize his employability, to take a proactive role in his integration into the work or social environment, to be available and flexible on the job market” (Lazzarato 2011:135).

Similarly, retraining for skilled immigrants was less about the knowledge it gave them, than about encouraging immigrants to take upon themselves the costs and risks externalized by the State with the reduction of public services and by corporations with wage decreases. Citizenship or inclusion into the Canadian nation for un(der)employed immigrants is thus contingent upon their ethical and moral action as “debtors”.

Lazzarato argues that the majority of the population are subject to the creditor-debtor relationship and “neoliberal policies produce human capital and “entrepreneurs of the self” who are more or less in debt, more or less poor, but in any case always precarious” (2011:94). While I agree that the creditor-debtor relationship is pervasive, I argue that it is important to parse out those who are more indebted than others, which depends upon how bodies and souls are valued in specific socio-cultural contexts. Geographically specific ethnographic research can highlight which populations become more precarious and/or more indebted than others. In Toronto,
Canada, those who can emulate the dominant Anglo civic values of “Canadian workplace culture” are offered inclusion into the labour market and nation. For instance, speaking acceptable, relatively unmarked English and being able to convey “being like us” affectively, and concretely, through credentials seen as acceptably Western/modern, are pre-requisites to being valued in Canada’s “knowledge economy”. Those who still bear too many marks of foreignness – physically, affectively and through “Second” and “Third” world credentials – are overwhelmingly excluded. Discourses that sell the value of diversity, in terms of bringing contacts and connections to “Other” markets, are conditional upon one’s ability to assimilate into the dominant civic Canadian/Anglo “way of life”. Diversity as something one can possess, as a skill or an asset, can then be valued, while diverse cultural ways of life remain largely unrecognized. But new immigrants can strive for inclusion into the nation through ethical action and work on the self. In this sense, skilled immigrants were often viewed as desirable future citizens – through volunteer work and retraining they largely accepted responsibility for improving the self and the nation’s future value.

**Policy and Change**

Since I conducted full-time fieldwork in 2008 and 2009, the federal government has made a series of changes to immigration policy, particularly after a conservative majority government was elected in 2011. The focus on “language as the key to integration” has intensified, along with the view that immigration’s value should be purely economic. There has also been a stronger focus on security and a rapid and marked shift to prioritizing temporary migration. Integration interventions made by government programs and public-private organizations, such as TRIEC, which that decried the underemployment of skilled immigrants, did not fundamentally challenge the valuing of immigrants for their economic contributions. It is not surprising then, that the government made a series of changes to immigration policy to create a “just-in-time” immigration system that attempts to meet labour market needs while ensuring that immigrants who are likely to be un- or under-employed are not admitted. Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) has described such changes as geared towards creating a “fast and flexible” immigration system that facilitates the flow of economic immigrants “who can help
grow [Canada’s] economy the minute they arrive.” The new system ideally enables immigrants to benefit themselves and the nation immediately, thereby minimizing training or integration costs. One main issue of contention between the political left and right is largely over the extent to which the government should pay for integration “costs”, echoing debates prevalent in the discussion of immigration policy in the 1990s, as outlined in Chapter 3. With a majority conservative government, integration costs were further privatized and individualized. These policy changes highlight trends this dissertation traces and the ways in which policymakers’ attempts to resolve governmental failures continue to problematically ignore structural causes of inequality.

Creating a “Just-in-time” Immigration System

As mentioned above, immigration policy continued to emphasize the economic contribution of immigrants to the nation, and ensuring that they integrate into the labour market rapidly. As Immigration Minister Jason Kenney stated: “Canada is looking for workers who can fill our labour market needs now…My vision for the immigration system is one that can get immigrants here with a job offer in hand, within months of applying to come to Canada” (CIC News Release, April 19, 2012). The introduction of new immigration streams and changes made to the Federal Skilled Worker and Investor Immigration programs were focused on maintaining immigration levels (about .8% of the population), while improving economic outcomes for newcomers. The government further noted that they want to be more competitive with other nations for the world’s “best and brightest” and thus moved towards a system similar to that of other countries, such as Australia, by limiting the number of new applications in order to reduce wait times (CIC News Release, April 19, 2012). While the government continues to reproduce the “selling diversity” discourse, promoting the benefits of skilled immigrants to Canada’s international competitiveness (CIC News Release, Nov 3, 2011), it has made policy changes to address the “underemployment problem”, which has been deemed “detrimental to these newcomers and to the Canadian economy” (Levitz 2012).

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80 Kenny was the Immigration Minister from 2008-2013. He was replaced by Chris Alexander.
In Chapter 7, I discussed how integration programs informally institutionalized a need for immigrants to have “Canadian experience”, a form of discrimination that devalues and Otherizes “foreign” credentials and work experience. Immigration policy further and more formally institutionalized employers’ preference for “Canadian experience” through changes to the Skilled Worker Program and through the introduction of the Canadian Experience Class (CEC) in 2008. The Canadian Experience Class offers permanent residency to international students and skilled temporary foreign workers who have worked full-time in Canada for 24 months within the last 36 months prior to applying (CIC News Release, April 16, 2012). The policy was “aimed at ensuring Canada retains talented and motivated individuals who have demonstrated a strong work ethic, have an ability to contribute to the economy, and will easily integrate into Canadian life” (CIC News Release, Nov 2, 2011). From the federal government’s perspective, individuals with “Canadian experience” “have already shown that they can put their skills as well as their experience to work” (CIC News Release, Sept 14, 2012). Foreign nationals graduating with a PhD from a Canadian program could also apply to the skilled worker program while residing in Canada, an initiative announced November 2, 2011. Immigration Minister Kenney argued: “The CEC and the PhD initiative represent what we hope is the future of immigration to Canada: bright young people who have a Canadian education or work experience that will be recognized by Canadian employers, and who have strong English or French language skills. Such newcomers are set for success” (CIC News Release, Nov 2, 2011). Rather than challenge employers’ requirement for “Canadian experience”, the government hereby accommodates their discriminatory practice.

The government news release on the above policy changes uses a “success story” to illustrate its intent - that of Mr. Core from India, who has a Master’s in business from the University of Toronto. Minister Kenny said: “He is now building a successful career, contributing to our economy and helping create jobs for Canadians here in Canada. Guarav is exactly the sort of skilled worker that Canada hopes to attract and retain through the CEC program” (CIC News Release, Sept 14, 2012). This success story reproduces the ideal immigrant that I discussed in Chapter 3 and throughout the dissertation - they are economically successful and create growth by employing themselves and ideally others as well. What has changed, however, is that now the ideal immigrant already preferably has “Canadian experience” –
Canadian education and/or work experience. They have already proven their success in the local labour market: their human capital has already contributed to the nation rather than exists as mere investments in potential future value.

Changes to the Federal Skilled Worker Program

To attempt to create a “just-in-time” immigration system that fills labour shortages in a timely fashion, in November 2008 the government introduced a list of 38 “in-demand” occupations and only processed skilled worker applications for those occupations. Furthermore, employers can now hire applicants prior to their immigration in certain sectors, if there is a demonstrated need in the Canadian labour market (CIC News Release, Dec 19, 2012). Which occupations are deemed “in demand”, however, is employer driven, raising questions about whether there actually are “job shortages”. Indeed, as I noted in Chapter 7, it was not apparent to some employment counselors that there actually were job shortages in Toronto for the occupations being prioritized by the points system. Recall, the ELT program for teachers – a job market saturated with an oversupply of native-born qualified graduates. It was always imagined by employment counselors that these job shortages existed elsewhere – in Alberta, in Northern Ontario, in rural areas. Academics, including myself, also murmured about whether or not there were actually job shortages, but we lacked concrete statistics to corroborate our suspicions. However, as I revised this dissertation, reports questioning this “skills shortage” made media headlines. In response to the rapid increase of temporary migration which privileges employers self-reported labour shortages, many academics, reporters and public officials have investigated the nature of government statistics that reportedly support their “skills shortage” discourse. They have been deemed questionable by some economists and Canada’s Auditor General (Goar 2014). The government thus merely facilitates the flexibilization of Canada’s labour market by recruiting from the global pool of labour, increasing employers’ access to more readily exploitable and cheaper workers.

To address the widespread lack of recognition of immigrants’ credentials, applicants are now required to have their credentials assessed prior to applying. This assessment, however, does

81 The occupations included managers from fields that varied from finance to construction, accountants, engineers and health care workers (from physicians to nurses). Skilled trades were also included, such as carpentry, electricians, plumbers and cooks.
The government also renders immigrants responsible for language training by standardizing and increasing language requirements (for further information see below). Moreover, being bilingual has been given less priority, with the explanation that “research has suggested that there’s no evidence indicating speaking a second official language has any bearing on positive economic outcomes for applicants” (Levitz 2012). Points for having secondary official language ability have been reduced from eight to four. Nation-building is thus defined solely in terms of economic success and with conformity to the dominant Anglo majority.

In sum, based on an evaluation of the skilled worker program, CIC argues “the biggest predictors of an immigrant’s economic success are having a job already arranged in Canada when applying; the ability to speak English or French; and having worked in Canada before applying to immigrate” (CIC News Release, Nov 25, 2010). Immigration policy attempts to ameliorate the underemployment problem not by changing structural conditions, but rather by attracting more appropriate immigrants who have already paid for their credential assessments and language training prior to arriving or have already demonstrated their skills have value in the Canadian labour market prior to being eligible for permanent residency.

“Language is the Key” to Social Inclusion, Social Cohesion and Economic Prosperity

Recent policy changes have also continued to emphasize language and soft skills as key to integration, but with a more explicit focus on social inclusion. The unimplemented policy I
discussed in Chapter 5, that of “Going Beyond Official Language Ability”, did not discredit the importance of language skills for integration, but rather aimed to provide skills training in areas other than language, since language training consisted of the majority of immigrant integration funding. This focus on soft skills training demonstrates a commitment to training, but one which again focuses on reforming the individual. Such so-called “roll-out neoliberalism” or “third way” governance demonstrates the politically leftist approach to immigrant integration in Canada. However, the more “economically fiscal” approach of the conservative government aims to download more of the costs of integration onto the individual immigrant, as demonstrated by the changes made to the Federal Skilled Worker Program. Additionally, although security has always been entangled with neoliberal modes of government, its emphasis under the conservative government has increased. I examine tensions between free-market ideologies and concerns over security which problematize sociocultural difference by focusing on the policy shift that more than ever links language to economic prosperity and social cohesion.

Minister Kenny stated that official language proficiency is the “single most important factor” for immigrants in achieving economic success (CBC News, April 11, 2012). When a series of policy changes increased the levels of language proficiency required of economic immigrants, a figure of the ideal immigrant now citizen, whom we discussed in Chapters 3 and 6 – Nick Noorani – welcomed the news, saying “it’s about time policy that is commonsense.” These changes highlight further, as I argued in Chapter 5, how language is a key means through which the Canadian government attempts to regulate immigration, reproduce labour, and manage the insecurity of neoliberalism while building a prosperous nation in the competitive global economy. More specifically, new language-based immigration policy aims to further individualize economic immigrants’ employment risks and integration costs while maximizing their economic contributions to the nation. In an emerging discourse on social cohesion, in particular, immigrants are viewed as responsible for accumulating the language skills deemed necessary for social inclusion, which is, in turn, conflated with economic success.

Minimum language levels have been introduced for all economic streams of immigration and applicants are required to take standardized language proficiency exams. The requirements set for each economic stream are seen to correlate with immigrants’ future employment prospects. As Immigration Minister Kenney argues, the immigration system “recognizes that the language ability needed to successfully integrate in Canada is different for a doctor as opposed to
a welder” (CIC News Release, March 1, 2012). However, the overall consensus is “the higher one’s language skills the better” since they lead to greater social mobility and flexibility. Changes to the Skilled Worker Program, for instance, make language “the most important selection factor” above education and work experience (CIC News Release, Aug 17, 2012). Immigrants are thus required to bear the costs of language accumulation prior to arrival.

In the flurry of media and policy discussions that accompanied these changes, however, was the reproduction of an emerging discourse on the importance of language to immigrants’ social inclusion and to the nation’s prosperity. As I have shown in this dissertation, when I conducted fieldwork, immigrant underemployment was problematized for potentially causing social exclusion (and the fear of social unrest lurked behind such a claim) and for underutilizing immigrants’ skills, which it was argued, cost the Canadian economy millions of dollars in profit potential. Both of these concerns are addressed in the emerging discourse that makes a very simple equation: Language = key to getting a job = key to social integration/cohesion + national economic prosperity. For example, the introduction of minimum levels of language proficiency for one economic stream (the Provincial Nominee program), was purported to have been motivated by an internal government report summarizing studies which argue that immigrants who do not have adequate proficiency in English or French work in “ethnic enclaves”, usually occupying low-paying service jobs. A lawyer who obtained this report via public access laws noted that it suggested those working in ethnic enclaves are destined to underemployment and lack of social integration (O’Neil 2012). Government regulations thus aim to keep out those that would languish in ethnic enclaves earning less than average remuneration. Here, language proficiency is equated with both the freedom to act entrepreneurially and to realize oneself through economic success and with the ability to integrate into the “Canadian mainstream economy” and society.

The government report drew on several studies to come to the above conclusions, making a distinction between the enclave and mainstream economy, noting that: “exposure to one's group reduces the accumulation of skills specific to the host country’s labour market, decreases the knowledge of the local native language and impedes immigrants' economic progress” (O’Neil 2012). This report problematically suggests that low-paying jobs are exclusive to ethnic enclaves, isolated from the so-called mainstream economy. In global cities, such as Toronto, the growing elite goes hand in hand with the demand for low-skill work in the tertiary sector (Sassen
2010, see Chapter 3). However, the growth of such work in Canada’s expanding tertiary sector is, in government reports, individualized and ethnicized. Structural issues are cast as the result of immigrant isolation and linguistic deficits, rather than as integral to the economy.

On a television show, *Power and Politics* (April 11, 2012), Immigration Minister Kenney argued that policy changes were motivated by the desire to avoid the mistakes of Western Europe, where “a lot of these ‘so-called ghettos’ which are characterized by social exclusion and all sorts of problems came about because those governments brought in people with low levels of education and little or no European language proficiency so they had no social mobility.” The host noted that the many reasons why ghettos form are perhaps not reducible to language. He further appeals to his grandfather’s experience of immigrating with no language proficiency. He nevertheless worked and learned English eventually. Kenney responded:

“In the 19th century perhaps it didn’t matter if we had people who didn’t speak English plowing the virgin soil …or working in factories in our big cities. Today in a modern economy, in terms of work safety, we need people that have at least a basic level of language proficiency to get along in a modern society. And to have any kind of social mobility they need to have basic level of language proficiency. And this is what we’ve always required of our Federal Skilled Workers.”

The host retorted that unlike other immigration streams, Provincial Nominees are admitted to the country because they already have a job lined up, so he’s not sure why they need to meet minimum language requirements. Kenney argued that such requirements “guarantee that those people are much better adapted in our economy to succeed. If they get laid off in one place they can go somewhere else much more easy with that language proficiency.” While language has always been viewed as important for skilled workers, the importance of language skills for work is expanding to the new economic classes, so that individuals can manage their risks (safety, unemployment) and maximize their economic potential (social mobility). Language proficiency is said to enable one to be more employable and flexible in an insecure labour market, but also to participate in the dominant Anglo culture or way of life. The government aims, then, to transfer its risks to individuals who are seen as capable of managing their own security.

As Heller and Duchêne argue, the “ideology of language as whole, bounded system inextricably tied to identity and territory is central to the legitimization of the nation-state” (2012:3). Yet, “Pride” no longer works as well as the sole trope of nation-state legitimization; rather, the state’s ability to facilitate the growth of the new economy depends on its ability to
legitimize the discourse of “profit”’’ (Heller and Duchêne 2012:10). Pride and profit are linked in complex ways. The notion of “language as a technical skill”, as something measurable and standardized exists side by side with nativist ones (Heller and Duchêne 2012:10, 13). As I have argued in Chapter 5, language is simultaneously marketable as a commodifiable skill and linked to national citizenship. A “good” (future) Canadian citizen entrepreneurially maximizes his or her linguistic capital and skills in order to maximize profit and minimize risk in an insecure labour regime. Yet, nativist assumptions sneak back in with concerns over security, ethnic enclaves and minimum language requirements. The latter aim to integrate immigrants into the dominant Anglo-Canadian way of life, as demonstrated in Chapter 3. The regulation of language in Canadian immigration policy is thus a deceptively neutral means of determining who is capable of governing themselves and of deciding who belongs to the nation, measurements based on both pride and profit. Minimum language requirements also ensure that the nation maintains a dominant cultural/national “way of life” that maintains social “cohesion”. Here, language and skills once again stand in for dominant Canadian norms/society, and “the good Canadian citizen” is increasingly understood in economic or financialized terms.

Indeed, critics of this program point out that these more stringent language requirements may reverse the effects of the liberalization of Canada’s immigration policy in 1967, which eliminated discrimination on the basis of race, religion or national origin through the introduction of a points system. Such changes, they note “will nevertheless have a series of unintended consequences for the makeup of Canada’s immigrant population and its ethnic diversity” (Omidvar 2012). They point out that those more likely to be admitted under the new system are from Anglo countries (U.S., U.K. Australia, New Zealand etc.), “at the cost of immigrants from emerging economic superpowers such as China, India, Russia and Brazil” (Omidvar 2012). They even note that “recent media reports show that the numbers of immigrants applying for permanent residence from China, India, the Philippines and Pakistan fell drastically in 2011” (Omidvar 2012).

**Temporary Migration**

Canada’s system of temporary migration is outside the purview of this thesis, but briefly, I would like to discuss the enormous increased use of temporary foreign workers both during and following my fieldwork, for it demonstrates the ways in which skilled immigrants are recruited
as ideal future citizens, whereas unskilled and low-skilled workers are recruited through temporary migration streams, which is advantageous to employers who can pay temporary foreign workers less than Canadian citizens (Black and Keung 2012). The government has recently increased the number of temporary labour migrants at an unprecedented pace and reduced the bureaucratic hurdles that employers must pass in order to apply for temporary migrants (Lenard and Straehle 2012). Temporary labour migrants have historically comprised a small number of migrants admitted to Canada, but since 2008, the “yearly number of admitted temporary migrants has exceeded the yearly number of admitted permanent migrants” (Lenard and Straehle 2012:3). Although temporary migration increasingly recruits both skilled and unskilled workers to Canada, it is very difficult for low-skilled workers to transition to permanent residency and citizenship (unlike skilled immigrants). As Lenard and Straehle (2012) point out: “low-skilled temporary migrants in Canada occupy a doubly unequal status vis-à-vis, first, Canadian citizens and, second, high-skilled migrants, who in most cases are able to attain, and indeed are encouraged to attain Canadian citizenship” (2012:4). While a few low-skilled migrant programs technically allow one to apply for permanent status, this often entails complicated and difficult legal procedures which in practice make it near impossible for these workers to settle in Canada permanently (Lenard and Straehle 2012, Nakache and D’Aoust 2012). The Canadian Experience Program (CEC) program, which I discussed above, also excludes those who worked in jobs that do not require post-secondary education. Immigration policy thus systemically discriminates against those deemed low skilled. It is only the highly skilled worker who is deemed potentially worthy of (still conditional) citizenship, whereas others, although needed by the Canadian economy, are not valued as potential citizens.

As the above discussion on language and social cohesion highlights, skilled immigrants appear to offer less social costs and threats to the nation than unskilled workers. However, with the underemployment problem and “the social exclusion” it potentially engenders, even skilled workers can be viewed as costly. The government thus aims to eliminate the integration costs of skilled immigrants by modifying the system further in line with employers’ desires and to recruit unskilled labour through temporary migration. In regards to skilled migrants, the temporary work system allows the government and employers to “try out people” without making them citizens: it institutionalizes discrimination in a new form.
Integration Programs

Although I have discussed the federal government’s changes to the immigration system thus far, I want to briefly examine some debates around integration programs at the provincial level, which highlight further the difference between more fiscally conservative and more fiscally liberal approaches to integration. In both instances, the ideal immigrant is responsible, employed and financially successful. Where they differ is the degree to which the state should offer services to ensure “equality of opportunity” or not. To highlight this tension, I want to discuss one provincial political campaign debate that involved the Ontario Liberal Party’s 2011 plan that outlined giving employers a $10,000 training credit for hiring immigrants. This was actually something I had discussed in consultations with CIC in 2010, as it was mentioned by some of my informants who felt incentives should be given to employers to hire immigrants. This proposed program was designed to make sure highly skilled newcomers, such as engineers and accountants, could work in their field (Howlett and Ladurantaye 2011). Liberal leader, McGuinty, noted that “The No Skills Left Behind Training Credit” would allow professionals to get the training they needed for certification, recognizing that: “You can’t get work experience here without your certification…It’s a Catch-22” (cited in Howlett and Ladurantaye 2011). This proposed program was consistent with a federal initiative that aims to help skilled immigrants cover the costs of foreign credential recognition as well as new internship programs. This “third way” approach to helping one get “Canadian experience”, like federal policy changes, does not fundamentally challenge the need for Canadian experience. However, it does not view obtaining it as the sole fiscal responsibility of immigrants. In contrast, Dalton McGuinty’s opponent, Conservative leader Tim Hudak, characterized the program as an “affirmative action plan for foreign workers” (Howlett and Ladurantaye 2011). Hudak objected to the amount of money being proposed for hiring immigrants and the tax incentive became a hot campaign issue. Nevertheless, McGuinty’s proposal aims to merely help immigrants obtain “equal opportunity”. In line with a neoliberal rationality of governance, all levels of government – from the left to the right – are reluctant to mandate equality and larger structural changes. For instance, such programs do not challenge the discounting of foreign experience, although they do help manage the indebtedness of new immigrants.
No Future?

In the past, I have consulted with CIC reporting on what changes my informants would like the government to implement, such as tax incentives for hiring new immigrants. This, for me, was an insufficient yet necessary ethical practice, for I feel indebted to my informants, as my academic career benefits from the time and knowledge they shared with me. Yet my recommendations also went beyond their suggestions. As I pointed out in Chapter 7, in 2010, I questioned the notion of soft skills as code for assimilation and thought the focus on this needed to be questioned. There has been encouraging steps in this direction. As the need for Canadian experience has been naturalized and further entrenched by government policies, academics and the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) have simultaneously challenged it. Izumi Sakamoto, a professor of social work at the University of Toronto, spearheaded a campaign to challenge the requirement of “Canadian experience”. As a result, Ontario became the first province to denounce it through the OHRC: it was recently deemed discriminatory and a violation of human rights (Sakamoto 2013). The new policy, unveiled July 15, 2013, by the OHRC states: “Employers and regulatory bodies need to ask about all of a job applicant’s previous work – where they got their experience does not matter. The policy also tells employers and regulatory bodies how to develop practices, policies and programs that do not result in discrimination.” As a proxy for discrimination, “Canadian experience” is now against the law (Keung 2013). This is an important and critical challenge to a discriminatory practice that has increased in prevalence since the liberalization of immigration policy in 1967. As my research has shown, since the requirement of “Canadian experience” is so entrenched in and naturalized by immigration and integration policy, substantial institutional change is required to eliminate this discriminatory practice. The above policy importantly begins this process, by making lack of “soft skills” and “fit” as reasons for not hiring applicants illegal.

The OHRC recommends that rather than use terms like soft skills, employers break their requirements down into competencies. It is not clear to me, however, how the semantic distinction between skill and competency will fundamentally change how employers value a particular kind of person, which is comprised of affects and behaviours that are not distributed equally, depending on one’s classed and gendered backgrounds in addition to nationality. However, in parsing out how to challenge the use of soft skills we can be aware of other potential means of legitimizing discrimination. This dissertation’s research can contribute to this task, for
it demonstrates how discrimination is re-entrenched in everyday practice through terms such as lack of “language skills” (see Chapter 5), which is also often used as code for certain affects and behaviours. I would recommend that challenges to hiring practice, backed by OHRC legislation could focus on “hard skills” and on demonstrating “competency” through more standardized testing, rather than through behavioural-based interviews, which are relatively more subjective than admittedly still flawed “standardized testing” methods.

I have also shown not only how “Canadian experience” is discriminatory, but further how it constitutes a productive form of power in creating a particular kind of Canadian citizen. To more adequately address this process we need to further challenge the precarious and insecure conditions of the labour market that render discrimination even more invisible. For instance, although the Maytree Organization has supported the OHRC, it simultaneously encourages internships as an effective means of addressing the un(der)employment of new immigrants. Like the programs I analyzed, new policy and programming continues to individualize integration. The OHRC legislation on “Canadian experience” is still framed in media reports by “a selling diversity discourse” that aims to capitalize on immigrants’ economic potential, which once again does not address the increasing insecurity of the labour market. What is lacking is a fundamental challenge to the economic logic of inclusion. In critiques of temporary migration, several have pointed out that the government’s immigration policy has shifted from nation building to focusing on economics and labour. However, the solution to the current focus on temporary migration should not merely be a return to what came before – a focus on permanent residency for skilled immigrants – for as this thesis shows, this system was also deeply discriminatory. We need to more fundamentally challenge the “selling diversity” discourse that links nationalism to economics or pride to profit.

We thus have to ask not only how we can better integrate skilled immigrants, but why we are valuing skilled immigrants in the first instance. And even this question, in my view, does not go far enough, for we need to also question the naturalized division between immigrant and citizen. Sharma notes that “nationalism [is] one of the ideological (and policy) vehicles through which racialized and gendered inequalities are achieved in an era of so-called colour-blind and sex-blind state policies” (2012:27). Citizenship and immigration policies allow nation states to absorb global inequalities into a flexible workforce “within nationalized labour markets” (Sharma 2012). In particular, “citizenship regimes rely on the creation of ‘foreigners’ to ensure
competition throughout the system and to obtain legitimacy for the inequalities that result” (Sharma 2012:30). Whereas the temporary foreign worker system does this explicitly through differential (im)migration status, my thesis has shown how permanent residents (and some citizens) are discriminated against by virtue of their foreignness in everyday practice. There are, however, “significant differences between being cast as a ‘foreigner’ in Canada but holding the rights of citizenship or immigration (i.e., permanent residency) and being legally defined as a ‘foreigner’ in Canada, as are ‘temporary foreign workers.’ That is to say, (im)migration status matters” (Sharma 2012:35). Temporary foreign migrant workers do not have access to the discourse of inclusion, of exercising the rights of citizenship. “Temporary migrant workers” are bound to employers, which restricts their mobility and decreases wages (Sharma 2012:36). The governments right to grant differential (im)migration statuses has been challenged by “no borders” politics (Sharma 2012:44). In Toronto such politics include “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” campaigns, “No One is Illegal”, and sanctuary movements, which all question and challenge the notion that non-citizens should be treated differently than citizens. They importantly advocate for access to essential services for undocumented workers and to end the exploitation of temporary migrants.

It is not possible to more fully address structural inequalities adequately within the current capitalist (and racist, sexist, and colonialist) global system. But like the left more generally, I am unsure of what to work towards, with the collapse of communism as a viable alternative project to capitalism. Yet, the global economic crisis of 2008 fundamentally shook people’s faith in neoliberalism – as an ideology that celebrates the free market as self-correcting – as it failed so spectacularly. However, like John Comaroff (2011), I am uncomfortable discussing neoliberalism in its noun form as a reified “accomplished object” (142). Rather the adjective neoliberalism or the term neoliberalization (Peck et. al. 2009) more adequately describe it as “a tendency, a more-or-less realized, more-or-less articulated, unevenly distributed ensemble of attributes” (Comaroff 2011:142). While the crisis of 2008-9 may have challenged neoliberalism as a global ideological project, it has left many of its capillaries intact, particularly in its governmental forms (Comaroff 2011). For instance, effective governance is still “measured with reference to asset management, to the attraction of enterprise, to the facilitation of the entrepreneurial activities of the citizen as homo economicus, and to the capacity to foster the accumulation, but not the redistribution of wealth” (Comaroff 2011:145), as I have pointed out in
reference to the enduring “selling diversity” discourse. The Occupy Wall Street movement that started in the crisis’ wake, with the slogan “We are the 99%”, importantly shed light on the widening social inequality and on elite accumulation. However, it ultimately did not come up with a viable alternative. As Wendy Brown notes, we need “an alternative vision of the good, one that rejects homo oeconomicus as the norm of the human” (2005:59). However, in critiquing neoliberalism, we need to avoid merely recuperating the welfare state with the sentiment “if we can’t have socialism, at least we can have the welfare state” (Brown 2005). As Berardi (2011) notes, we need to decide what comes next after the future (since the future as a utopia is over).

To end the conversation here, however, is to reinforce the status quo. A flawed, and yet necessarily “good enough critically applied anthropology” (Bourgeois and Schonberg 2009) is required. For me, as I pointed out above, this entails challenging the notion that citizens should be measured merely by the needs of a neoliberalized global economy, which privileges a particular kind of person. As the “no border” slogan goes, “good enough to work, good enough to stay.” Not giving citizenship to low-skill workers is caught up in devaluations of such labour, which also needs to be challenged. We need to revalue work, all forms of work, including feminized unpaid domestic work. Yet when the lines between work and life are blurred, what these re-evaluation processes look like needs to be explored further.

Indeed, the majority of my informants did not reduce their “integration” to the economic imperatives of the nation. Although skilled immigrants desired better work, and did not want to labour insecurely and precariously, which in one sense made them feel “not at home” (in Maria’s words), most did not immigrate to Canada merely for economic reasons. Rather they came here for a life that was more secure in other ways. And even if they did come with hopes for greater economic success and security, new hopes unfolded. For instance, Lily told me that she immigrated to Canada because, as an engineer, she was frustrated with her company that stopped designing and only manufactured others’ designs in China. She felt unfulfilled, redundant, only to suffer a similar fate in Toronto. She, like so many of my other informants, deferred her hopes for the future onto her children. These hopes seemed possible: her son was attending the University of Toronto. The stock phrase “I came for my children’s future” – is often adopted as a new form of hope for the future in the face of failed dreams. We must ensure that this is not merely another form of “cruel optimism”, but rather that we change the temporal politics of the creditor-debtor relationship, in which investments in future assets frequently become debts for
the poor, racialized and gendered to bear. After the future might not involve a utopia, but perhaps new forms of hope.
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## Appendix A: Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AutoCAD</td>
<td>Computer program for drafting and design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIC</td>
<td>Citizenship and Immigration Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLB</td>
<td>Canadian Language Benchmarks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELT</td>
<td>Enhanced Language Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>GTA</td>
<td>Greater Toronto Area</td>
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<tr>
<td>HVAC</td>
<td>Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (a mechanical trade)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEP</td>
<td>Internationally Educated Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITP</td>
<td>Internationally Trained Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISA</td>
<td>Immigrant Service Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISAP</td>
<td>Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAVA</td>
<td>Computer Programming Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LINC</td>
<td>Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPM</td>
<td>New Public Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>OCASI</td>
<td>Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants</td>
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<tr>
<td>P.ENG</td>
<td>Professional Engineer (Province of Ontario)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SER</td>
<td>Standard Employment Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCSA</td>
<td>Toronto City Summit Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TER</td>
<td>Temporary Employment Relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>TESL</td>
<td>Teachers of English as a Second Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOEFL</td>
<td>Test of English as a Foreign Language (often used for university Acceptance)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRIEC</td>
<td>Toronto Region Immigrant and Employment Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTC</td>
<td>Toronto Transit Commission (Public Transit)</td>
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