‘Seamless’ Transition to Citizenship? International Student Graduates, Race, and Structural Inequities in Canada’s (Im)migration-Labour Market Nexus

Everton G. Ellis
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto
2019

Abstract

Canada, like other economically-advanced nations, has gradually been implementing internationalization strategies to respond to the pressures brought on by globalization. The federal government, in 2014, launched an International Education Strategy, a university/college-led scheme to increase the number of international students to Canada. After completing Canadian postsecondary studies, they may transition to the labour market and then to permanent residence (reputedly ‘seamlessly’) via one of Canada’s economic immigration programs. This research critically analyzes the trajectory of international student graduates originating from the Caribbean and South/Southeast Asia as they navigate the labour market-immigration transition. The qualitative study is framed by theoretical perspectives drawn from anti-racist/postcolonial prisms, critique of neoliberalism, and conceptualizations of social capital and social closure to understand and interpret the lived experiences of 18 international student graduates of Ontario colleges and universities.

My analysis as well as five key informants supported the conclusion that Black Caribbean and South/South Asian student migrants with Canadian credentials do not experience a seamless transition from their post-graduation phase to Canadian permanent residence (PR). The findings reveal ‘hidden’ problems behind the apparent neutrality of Canada’s points system, and protracted wait times associated with Canada’s economic immigration programs as well as the emotional and psychological pain experienced by student migrants. It also demonstrates how federal policies such as the National Occupational Classification (NOC) codes and the Labour Market Impact Assessment
(LMIA) influence the transition of international student graduates. These racialized participants ‘whiten’ their resumés, and call upon various types of consultants and actors in their racial and interracial networks to circumnavigate structural inequities in obtaining employment. Not all the consultants are fully informed about immigration policy and omit crucial information or advise strategies that ‘off-ramp’ those applying for PR. Further, there are differences between applicants in their access to interracial networks necessary for obtaining employment. Finally, my study indicates that the labour market integration of Black Caribbeans and South/Southeast Asians in Canada is influenced by the complexities of gender, race, and racialization.
Acknowledgements

I am thankful to YHWH for bestowing upon me the grace to conceptualize, execute and complete this dissertation. Had it not been for your grace and help, this polished document would not have come to fruition.

I owe an incalculable debt of gratitude to Professor Linda Muzzin, my supervisor, for her support and guidance throughout my doctoral journey. Professor Muzzin has always provided me a listening ear and has always demonstrated her willingness to listen to and provide suggestions as to how I can improve and/or extend my ideas. Professor Muzzin stepped in at a critical juncture in my doctoral trajectory and agreed to supervise my thesis. I found her insistence and penchant for details beneficial as I wrote and revised each draft. Professor Muzzin has treated me as an expert in the fields of labour, (im)migration and anti-racist studies, and for this, I am extremely grateful. Her approach to learning and leadership style has not only facilitated and provided opportunities for my intellectual growth but has also made memorable my academic journey at the University of Toronto. I also acknowledge with sincere appreciation Professor Joseph Mensah (York University) and Professor Peter H. Sawchuk, who served in the capacity of committee members on my dissertation committee.

I met Professor Mensah at York University where I had the privilege of taking two of his courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Professor Mensah encouraged and championed my decision to pursue and interrogate this area often overlooked by the scholars in the fields of (im)migrant and labour studies. I am also appreciative of his candid, yet perspicacious remarks and feedback provided throughout the different phases of my academic journey. And how can I forget those invites for Christmas dinners and Summer barbecues on the deck with your family and friends! Professor Peter Sawchuk’s constructive feedback and intuition are truly appreciated. Professor Sawchuk was always available to provide assistance to flesh out my ideas or provide unselfish perspective on relevant matters in the area of labour studies. I am indebted to Professor Sawchuk for his unvarnished and frank commentaries – written or verbal via Skype meetings - and devotion throughout this rigorous process. To the external appraiser, as well as the internal and internal alternate examiners of my thesis, Professor Li Zong (University of Saskatchewan), Professor Ann E. Lopez, and Professor Maria
Athina (Tina) Martimianakis: thank you for the time that you have dedicated to this process. I am grateful for the astute and constructive analysis, commentaries and for recommending future directions in which to take my work.

I also want to acknowledge the incessant support of my mother Pauline Brown to whom I dedicate this polished piece of work. You have been a spring of love and a tower of strength for me and my number one cheerleader in all that I endeavour to accomplish. Your personal and financial sacrifices throughout the years have contributed to my stellar academic achievement. For this display of love, I am humbled and thankful to YHWH. I also acknowledge the colossal support that I have received from a convivial and tight-knit community of supporters: to my siblings Ewan, Zorie and William for being concerned about my academic progression and general wellbeing; Edward Thomas for his staunch support and friendship throughout my academic pursuit – Ed, you have listened to all my complaints and been my sounding board. Thanks for always reminding me that “its gonna be ok” even it appeared that the odds had been stacked against me. To my eleven-year-old niece, Princess Kathleen-Zara for her incessant love and care; always being concerned about her uncle and was even enthusiastic about sitting in at my dissertation defense. Kathleen-Zara, I hope this inspires you to reach for and achieve greatness. Uncle Joseph (Ben) and aunt Delores, for championing my pursuit of graduate studies and encouraging me to realize my dreams. To my comrades and confidants: Aumin, Garnett, Cameicia (Debbie), Robert, Carol, Novelette (Michelle), Doreen, Annelia and Juanita, thanks for your prayers, friendship and encouraging words – they got me through the arduous and gruelling process when I thought I would have quit. To Orlene, the Graduate Program Assistant in Development Studies (York University): thanks for the assistance and inspiration that you have provided me along my graduate trajectory. I also want to acknowledge with sincere gratitude the unwavering support of Mr. Kerith Masters (and his family) throughout my academic pursuit. I am grateful to you for being supportive of my academic journey since I met you in high school. I also want to acknowledge “unanticipated friends” for making the journey unforgettable. Alana Butler, Paula DaCosta and Paula Elias for always suggesting materials worth reading and for cheering my academic pursuit; and to my
friend Anthony Briggs for helping me to navigate academic life on (and off) campus, for being concerned about my mental well-being and always ensuring that I stay on top of my game.

I am also indebted to my key informants and respondents, without which, completing this dissertation would not be possible. I remain indebted to my participants and key respondents who are fanned out across Canada. Thanks for inviting me into your lives and offices where you took the time to share with me your experiences and interpretation of the immigrant transition in Canada. You reached deep within and mustered the courage to share your journey with me – a stranger! To Patrice, Andrew, Roger, Sheriden, and Claton for their assistance with recruiting this pool of respondents. And how can I forget the members of our monthly thesis group? Thanks to Paula, Janie, Patti-Ann, Tim, Helen, Miriam, Merrily, Sohyun, and Hayfa for your insightful comments on how to improve my work. I will always treasure the memories we have created in this intellectual space.
Table of Contents

Abstract........................................................................................................................................... ii
Acknowledgements........................................................................................................................ iv
Table of Contents ............................................................................................................................. vii
List of Figure(s) ............................................................................................................................... xi
List of Tables .................................................................................................................................... xi
List of Appendices ............................................................................................................................ xii
List of Acronyms and Abbreviations............................................................................................... xiii

Chapter 1 Introduction ..................................................................................................................... 1
1.1 Background: International Students in Canada ................................................................. 1
1.2 Purpose of the Study: Why the Transition of International Student Graduate in Canada .......... 5
1.3 Mapping the Careers of International Student Graduates Seeking Citizenship ............ 7
1.4 Significance of the Study .......................................................................................................... 8
1.5 Dissertation Outline .................................................................................................................. 9

Chapter 2 Historicizing Canada’s Immigration Policy and Practice: A Brief Review ............. 11
2.1 Introduction .............................................................................................................................. 11
2.2 Canada’s Immigration Policies and the Admission of Immigrants, 1867 – 1960s .... 11
2.3 The Immigrant Labour Market and Transition into Canada: The Points System .......... 19
2.4 The Global Race for Talent and Competitive Immigration Regimes ......................... 22
2.4.1 A New Approach to Colonizing Knowledge? ................................................................. 22
2.5 Canada’s Two-step Immigration System ............................................................................ 27
2.5.1 Canadian Experience Class (2008-2015) ..................................................................... 27
2.5.2 The Canadian Express Entry System: 2015 – Present ................................................. 29
2.5.3 The Provincial and Territorial Nominee Programs and ‘Skilled’ Workers ................. 31
2.6 Conclusion .............................................................................................................................. 38

Chapter 3 Theorizing Postgraduate Experiences of International Student Graduates .......... 40
3.1 Introduction .............................................................................................................................. 40
3.2 Antiracist/Postcolonial Worldview: Personal Glimpse (Ontology) ............................. 40
3.3 Anti-racist/Post-Colonial Perspectives ................................................................................. 42
3.3.1 Anti-racist Assumptions ................................................................................................. 42
3.3.2 What is the New Racism? ................................................................. 45
3.3.3 White Settler Nationalism .............................................................. 50
3.3.4 Intersectionality ........................................................................... 56
3.4 Racing Neoliberalism ....................................................................... 58
3.4.1 What is Neoliberalism? ................................................................. 58
3.4.2 What is ‘Racing’ Neoliberalism? ................................................... 61
3.5 Conceptualizing Social Capital .......................................................... 64
3.6 Conceptualizations of Closure Theory and Race ................................. 68
3.7 Conceptualizing the Postgraduate Transition of International Student Graduates
Into Canada’s Labour Market-Immigration Nexus .................................... 71
3.8 Conclusion ......................................................................................... 73

Chapter 4 Exploring the Lived Postgraduate Trajectory of International Student Graduates:
The Methodological Process..................................................................... 74
4.1 Introduction ....................................................................................... 74
4.2 Recruiting and Accessing Key Informants and Participants for the Study ........................................ 74
4.2.1 Recruiting Key Informants and International Student Graduates ................................................. 74
4.2.2 Description of Participants: International Student Graduates .................................................... 77
4.3 Data Collection: Methods ................................................................ 81
4.3.1 Semi-structured interviews with International Students and Key Informants ....................... 81
4.3.2 Key Informants ............................................................................ 83
4.3.3 Secondary Data Sources ............................................................... 84
4.4 Organizing, Coding and Analysis of Data .......................................... 84
4.5 Establishing Methodological Trustworthiness and Accuracy in the Research
Process ................................................................................................... 86
4.6 Positionality and Reflexivity .............................................................. 87
4.7 Ethical Concerns and Limitations ...................................................... 91

Chapter 5 The Canadian “Points System” as Applied to International Student Graduates ................................................................. 93
5.1 Introduction ....................................................................................... 93
5.2 Inequities in the Express Entry System ............................................. 93
5.2.1 Ageism vs. Work ‘Experience’ in Canada’s Express Entry ....................... 93
5.2.2 Problems Hiding behind the Neutrality of the Points System .................. 100
5.2.3 The ‘Rat Race” for Points in the Canadian Express Entry System ............... 104
5.2.4 Is there an ‘Ideal’ Immigrant for Canadian Express Entry? ...................... 109
List of Figure(s)
Figure 1.1 – The Structure of Canada’s Economic Immigration Programs ------------------------ 4

List of Tables
Table 4.1 – Key Informants’ Demographics  -------------------------------------------------- 75
Table 4.2 – Caribbean and South/Southeast Asian International Students’ Demographic
   Information --------------------------------------------------------------------------- 78
Table 5.1 – Eligible Points awarded by Age and Marital Status in the Express Entry’s
   Comprehensive Ranking System (CRS) ------------------------------------------------------ 94
Table 5.2 – Points for Select Student Migrants ----------------------------------------------- 97
Table 6.1 – Participant Occupational Skill Level as per the 2016 National Occupational
   Classification (NOC) Codes ---------------------------------------------------------------- 138
Table 7.1 – Participants’ Location Transition to Fulltime Employment indicating Timing,
   Network Assistance, Resume Whitening, Credential, Sector, Job Titles and
   Location of Ultimate Positions ------------------------------------------------------------- 155
Table 7.2 – Participants’ Educational Credentials and their Alignment with Jobs in Canada----- 182
Table 8.1 – The Initial and Subsequent Job(s) obtained by Caribbean and South/Southeast
   Asian Participants ------------------------------------------------------------------------ 189
Appendices
Appendix A1 – Recruitment Letter for Government Official, Immigration Officials and Other Experts
Appendix A2 – Recruitment Poster for Participants
Appendix A3 – Email Script for Recruiting Participants
Appendix B1 – Draft Interview Questions for Participants
Appendix B2 – Draft Interview Questions for Immigration Lawyers and Consultants
Appendix B3 – Draft Interview Questions for Government Official(s)
Appendix B4 – Draft Interview Questions for Human Resource Professional
Appendix C1 – A Diagram Indicating the Transition Routes for International Student Graduates in Canada
Appendix C2 – Initial Construction of the Transition Routes for International Student Graduates
Appendix C3 – A Subsequent Construction of the Transition Routes for International Student Graduates
Appendix D – A Picture Indicating One of the Participant’s Results Obtained on the English Language Proficiency Test
Appendix E – Job Description of a Mutual Fund Processing Associates as Advertised by Hortense Clue’s Employer
# List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBC</td>
<td>Canadian Broadcasting Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEC</td>
<td>Canadian Experience Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIC</td>
<td>Citizenship and Immigration Canada (now Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLB</td>
<td>Canadian Language Benchmark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNR</td>
<td>Canadian National Railway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPR</td>
<td>Canadian Pacific Railway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRS</td>
<td>Comprehensive Ranking System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFAIT</td>
<td>Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (now Global Affairs Canada)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESDC</td>
<td>Employment and Social Development Canada (formerly Department of Human Resources Development Canada)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSTP</td>
<td>Federal Skill Trades Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSWP</td>
<td>Federal Skilled Worker Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTA</td>
<td>Greater Toronto Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTHA</td>
<td>Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRM</td>
<td>Halifax Regional Municipality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITA</td>
<td>Invitation to Apply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISCO</td>
<td>International Standard Classification of Occupations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRCC</td>
<td>Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (Department of)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCP</td>
<td>Live-in Caregiver Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LMIA</td>
<td>Labour Market Impact Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LMO</td>
<td>Labour Market Opinion (now Labour Market Impact Assessment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>Management of Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPNP</td>
<td>Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPPs</td>
<td>Members of Provincial Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPs</td>
<td>Members of Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOC</td>
<td>National Occupational Classification Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSNP</td>
<td>Nova Scotia Nominee Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OINP</td>
<td>Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGWP</td>
<td>Post-Graduate Work Permit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNP</td>
<td>Provincial Nominee Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTNPs</td>
<td>Provincial/Territorial Nominee Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAWP</td>
<td>Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SINP</td>
<td>Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEM</td>
<td>Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TFW</td>
<td>Temporary Foreign Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TFWP</td>
<td>Temporary Foreign Worker Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YMCA</td>
<td>Young Men’s Christian Association</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 **Background: International Students in Canada**

Canada, like other Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) nations, has gradually been using policies and practices as strategic approaches to respond to the challenges resulting from economic, political, cultural and technological changes in the global academic environment, a process known as internationalization (Altbach & Knight, 2007; de Wit, 2002; Knight, 2006; Stromquist, 2002; Tremblay, 2005). In Canada, internationalization occurs at both the national and provincial (governmental) and institutional (university and college) levels and is informed by different rationales (previously foreign policy/diplomacy and now economic) (Knight, 2006; Trilokekar, 2010; Trilokekar & Kizilbash, 2013; Sehoole, 2008). These internationalization policies and practices include but are not limited to research collaboration, cross-border education, student exchange, the global recruitment of talent (including international students and faculty) and the establishment of branch campuses (de Wit, 2002; Jones, 2009; Knight 2006b; Trilokekar, 2010).

Since the decade of the 2000s, Canadian federal and provincial governments have increasingly recognized the economic value of international students. The federal and provincial governments, through their immigration and labour regulations respectively, have introduced a series of changes in order to increase Canada’s position as an attractive destination for international students (DFAIT, 2015). Together, these initiatives have made it possible for international students to participate in the labour market (Trilokekar, 2010; Williams et al., 2015). Individuals who desire to work in this country must apply for a Post-Graduate Work Permit¹ (PGWP) three months prior to completing a minimum of two years in a post-secondary program at a Canadian college or university. The international student is also required to demonstrate language proficiency in either of Canada’s official languages when applying to a federally sponsored program called the Express Entry System. Together these policies offer students the options of participating in the Canadian labour market and later pursuing a pathway to permanent legal status in Canada via the Express Entry System or the Provincial /Territorial Postgraduate work permits (PGWPs) will be discussed at length in chapter 2.

¹ Postgraduate work permits (PGWPs) will be discussed at length in chapter 2.
Nominee Programs (PTNPs) (DFAIT, 2014; Baglay, 2012). In an effort to compete with other OECD states, the Canadian federal government, in 2014, moved to deepen the economic reorientation process that drives its internationalization policy/role in international education which had already begun, albeit incrementally, in the earlier part of the previous decade (Trilokekar, 2010; 2015; Trilokekar & Kizilbash, 2013; Williams et al., 2015). In 2014, the Stephen Harper-led Conservatives launched the International Education Strategy, a more aggressive university/college-led scheme that is designed to satisfy the quota of 450,000 international students by the year 2022 (Williams et al., 2015). As such, this post-secondary-led scheme primarily targets students from developing countries/regions of the world. By January 1, 2015, however, the Harper administration also launched the Express Entry System. It operates as an overarching management system for the federal/provincial immigration programs (i.e. Canadian Experience Class and provincial nominee programs) to which international student graduates apply (CIC, 2015) (See Figure 1.1, page 4). But the initiation of the Express Entry System caused many international student graduates in this economic immigration program to question their future in Canada once they completed their postsecondary education (Zilio & Chiose, 2016). In referencing a 2011 study, Williams et al. (2015) contend that approximately 75% of (former) international students who have graduated from Ontario’s post-secondary institutions submitted applications to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) in order to change their temporary status. Nonetheless, there is an absence of data with respect to migrants who have successfully or unsuccessfully negotiated this system.

The perceived successes associated with the recruitment of international students – that is, the increase in the number of international students, the privilege granted students to secure part-time employment outside school campuses, PGWPs and transition of international students to permanent legal status - have been well documented in grey literature and by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (Williams et al., 2015). My initial interpretation of Williams et al. (2015) suggested that contemporary Canadian immigration policies have increasingly become more favourable to international students in their postgraduate trajectory. Recent changes to the immigration policies stipulate that all international student graduates desiring to immigrate are required to fulfill a minimum of one year (approximately
1560 hours or 30 hours per week) skilled work experience in Canada’s labour market and that they must be periodically selected from a pool that includes other categories of immigrant professionals also desiring to immigrate to Canada. However, I began to wonder whether there is a noticeable disjuncture between theory and practice of contemporary immigration policies that promise to facilitate their “seamless” transition from temporary visa/postgraduate work permits (via the labour market) to permanent legal status. In other words, I wondered, do these policies really offer international students a “seamless” pathway into Canada?

As indicated in Figure 1.1, the federally administered Express Entry System is comprised of and manages applications of skilled immigrants to the Canadian Experience Class (CEC), Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSWP) and Federal Skilled Trades Program (FSTP). However, recent comments provided in a prominent Canadian newspaper hinted at the frustrations that Canadian Experience Class (CEC) applicants, particularly international student graduates, encountered while seeking permanent admission to Canada on this federally administered economic program. In fact, the March 14, 2016 edition of *The Globe and Mail* introduces us to international students who, based on their experiences, are peripheralized by the economic immigration scheme which prevents them from realizing their self-actualization in Canada (securing a job in Canada and achieving permanent legal status) (McLeod, 2007; Maslow, 1968). In the *Globe’s* publication, an international PhD graduate of African heritage, in Canada, describes his transition process as being “stuck in limbo” and living at the “margins of society” (Chiose, 2016). In an attempt to reassure thousands of international students who are in the queue awaiting their permanent residence applications to be processed, John McCallum, the then federal Minister with responsibility for the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship portfolio, admitted that “international students are shortchanged by the Express Entry system” (Zilio & Chiose, 2016). McCallum further promised that the then new Liberal government would work assiduously to establish a federal-provincial task force examine how the Express Entry could improve the postgraduate trajectory of international students in Canada (Chiose, 2016). Despite the challenges they face, international student graduates from several regions, including Asia and the Caribbean, are continuously courted by recruiters of Canadian institutions to choose Canada as a destination for
pursuing higher education. In other instances, students, of their own volition, migrate to Canada to study in a Canadian (Ontario) post-secondary institution, and then decide to stay.

Figure 1.1. The Structure of Canada’s Economic Immigration Programs
1.2 Purpose of the Study: Why the Transition of International Student Graduates in Canada?

The current immigration scheme targeting international students assumes that they will have a 'seamless' transition process to the labour force and then permanent resident status (Government of Canada, 2013, 2014). Yet, as I have noted above, it is still unknown how international students as a group of im(migrants) navigate the labour market-migration nexus. Further, the degree to which sponsorship programs favour international student graduates and their labour market outcomes remains under-researched in Canada. Similarly, as the government claims the success of these programs, it remains silent on a full public disclosure of the results (Baglay, 2012). Also, outlined in chapter 2, the Canadian state has in the past used its historical racist immigration policies, based on economic demand, to structure the presence of Asians and Caribbean Blacks in Canada. The literature on immigrant/labour market and race relations in Canada discusses the limitations of contemporary Canadian policies and practices that have been used to “assimilate” and “integrate” immigrants, including immigrant professionals, who immigrate under the Points System (See Chapter 2).

The literature also argues that immigrant professionals have experienced what is called “democratic” racism (Henry & Tator, 1994; Hier & Singh Bolaria, 2007; Zong 2007). This is a concept that, at least for some, refers to the co-existence of “two conflicting values” in the society (Henry & Tator, 1994; Zong 2007). The Canadian state and other institutions express commitments to Canadian multicultural and democratic principles (for example, the notions of fairness, justice and equality) while simultaneously pursuing policies that arguably disadvantage some racialized and visible minority groups (Zong, 2007). The values are antagonistic because these institutions harbour “attitudes and behaviours” that include but are not limited to “feelings about minority groups and differential treatment against them” (Henry & Tator, 1994 cited in Zong, 2007:123-124). The literature also highlights covert forms of discrimination (including codified labour market inequities, preferred corporeal (body) images in workplace, and the questioning of the immigrant’s competence (Bauder, 2006; 2003; Guo, 2009). For Zong (2007:122-123), this new form of racism (covert racism) is so named because the discrimination or hostility often goes unnoticed and is more difficult to uncover by orthodox measures used in the past across different historical and societal contexts. Unlike blatant forms of racial hostility,
covert racism “appears [to be] non-prejudicial on the surface” and is experienced by minority groups in the society (Zong, 2007:123).

The lacuna in the literature regarding the outcomes of immigrating international students triggered my intellectual curiosity to embark on a study focusing on this migrant group in Canada. Recent immigration data indicate that Canada has already achieved its 2022 proposed targeted objective to attract 450,000 international students. In fact, recent Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) data confirm that there was a total of 494,525 immigrant students with a valid study permit in Canada as of December 31, 2017 (IRCC, 2017). Therefore, this dissertation, which proposes an inquiry into the lives of these ‘skilled’ migrants who choose to take advantage of the opportunity afforded by the state to immigrate to Canada, is very timely.

Besides the gap identified above, I personally observed the incredible obstacles that an international student I met in the Jamaican-Canadian community had to surmount in the postgraduate phase. It is through my interaction with this acquaintance that the multiple challenges interfacing with the institutions of immigration and the labour market were brought to my attention. With anecdotal or circumstantial evidence from the experience of this individual, coupled with the idea that Canada’s postsecondary-led education strategy is aimed at recruiting students from the developing world (IRCC, 2015; Williams et al., 2015), I questioned whether the problem associated with the postgraduate trajectory is similarly experienced by people belonging to other races and ethnicities. Thus, I decided that research exploring case studies of participants from two different regions would provide a more robust account of the complexities that this cohort of ‘skilled’ (im)migrants endure while navigating the immigration system.

Utilizing the interview responses of key informants, and international student graduates (also referred to as student migrants) who are from the Caribbean and South/Southeast Asia as case studies, this thesis critically analyzes how international student graduates navigate the labour market-immigration nexus in Canada. This research is guided by the general following question: How do student migrants, who are graduates of Ontario’s postsecondary system, navigate the labour-immigration nexus in Canada? Some sub-questions are:
a) How seamless are the policies and processes that regulate the eligibility and permanent admission of student migrants (international student graduates)?

b) How do federal policies of Employment and Social Development Canada, such as the national occupational classification (NOC) codes and the labour market impact assessment (LMIA), influence or shape the transition of international student graduates in Canada?

c) What are the labour market strategies utilized by international student graduates seeking employment in Canada? How disadvantaged are international student graduates because of the new requirement that stipulates that they must amass a minimum of Canadian one-year full-time work experience?

d) What are the racial issues encountered by international student graduates (holders of a postgraduate work permit) as they navigate the college/university-to-work transition?

1.3 Mapping the Careers of International Student Graduates Seeking Citizenship

Figure 1.1 shows the two routes (Express Entry and the Provincial/Territorial Nominee Programs) available to international student graduates seeking permanent legal citizenship in Canada. My first assumption from looking at government websites was that international student graduates would make a smooth transition in Canada. That is, it is implied they can anticipate an uninterrupted journey to permanent legal status upon exiting postsecondary studies. Upon completing postsecondary education in Ontario, International student graduates desiring to settle permanently in Canada are anticipated to follow one of two routes: the Express Entry or the Provincial and Territorial Nominee Programs (PTNP). Each international student graduate is expected to obtain a postgraduate work permit, prepare a curriculum vitae in order to search for employment, and if possible, form networks to find employment that adhere to the national occupational classification codes, and write English proficiency examinations, amongst other requirements on their way to becoming a permanent resident.
In order to investigate whether the process is indeed a ‘seamless process’ for students of colour, as indicated in my diagram of the transition system, I decided to choose international student graduates and other key informants to interview about their experiences and knowledge of the institutions and processes that the individuals must contemplate in order to move successfully through the system. I focused on two racialized groups, one from the Caribbean and the other from Asia, that I suspected had encountered impediments on their movement along the postgraduation trajectory.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The research builds on previous findings on immigrant-labour market experiences in Canada. It also contributes to existing literature by examining how international student graduates fare with sponsorship programs that promise a path to permanent resident status and seamless labour market transition experiences for these (im)migrants who are educated (and in some cases have worked) in Canada. This kind of research is important, as recent data on Canada’s demographic transition points to the need for more young people not only to fill vacancies but also to have access to good paying and more stable jobs. Recent demographic transition data also points to the need for more young people in Canada’s labour force. The 2016 census data indicate that the number of residents who are older than 64 years (5.9 million seniors) surpasses that of those in 0-14 age group (5.8 million) (Grant & Jones, 2017; Grenier, 2017; Statistics Canada, 2017). In other words, Canada has an ageing population as the number of individuals in the old-age-dependency stage of life (65 years and above) exceeds that of the young-age dependency (0-14 years). Therefore, the research speaks to the importance of Canada easing its immigration policy restrictions or opening up the immigration system so that international student graduates will find it easier to satisfy labour requirements in the transition process. The research also raises issues around brain waste, brain gain and brain circulation. It is brain waste if these young people, who are well educated/trained in Canadian institutions, are forced to take bad and precarious jobs and/or positions that are beneath their qualifications.
1.5 Dissertation Outline

This thesis critically explores in detail the transition of a small number of international student graduates of Anglophone Caribbean and South/Southeast Asian heritage who are navigating the labour-immigration nexus in Canada. I chose to do an in-depth interviewing rather than survey methods to reveal microprocesses in their labour search as they experienced it. Through the experiences of the international student graduates and key informants such as immigration consultants and lawyers in the immigration policy circle, my intention was to analyze the microprocesses that structure their outcomes. The thesis is divided into nine chapters. For each, I provide a brief outline. Chapter 2 historicizes Canadian immigration policy and practice and introduces contemporary policies geared towards ‘integration’ of immigrants. Chapter 3 presents the conceptual lens through which I examine the transition of international student graduates. These include a variety of approaches that together reflect an anti-racist/postcolonial perspective. Ultimately, I conceptualize a ‘race’ neoliberalism’. In the process of interpreting my data, I also refer to social capital (Bourdieu, 1984; 1986) and very briefly closure theory as discussed in the professions literature (Witz, 1992).

Chapter 4 outlines the details of the methods employed within this research such as how the participants and sites of study were accessed, the methods of data collection and the processes of organizing, coding and analysing the data. It also addresses my positionality and the reflexive politics in undertaking research of this nature as well as ethical concerns and limitations relating to the project.

This is followed by four empirical chapters, each addressing a different aspect of the participants’ transition in the postgraduation phase of the labour market-immigration nexus. Chapter 5 deals with the immigration challenges that international student graduates contemplate and experience in the transition to Canadian permanent resident status. It gives attention to the narratives of international students and the key informants who question the “seamlessness” of transition on Canada’s economic immigration programs, particularly the Express Entry and the Provincial Nominee Programs. As such, the chapter sheds light on the opaque nature of the immigration policies. How the federal policies of Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) influence international student graduates’ trajectories in Canada is explored in chapter 6. It reveals how two mechanisms – the national
occupational classification (NOC) codes and the labour market impact assessments (LMIA) – invented by the state, structure the transition of this (im)migrant cohort seeking Canadian permanent residency.

Chapter 7 examines the labour market strategies that participants employ in order to maneuver through the challenges associated with finding skilled employment. It centres on the processes of resumé ‘whitening’ and ethno-racial networking and the role that each play in the dissimilar outcomes between the two groups of participants - Black Caribbean and South/Southeast Asian international student graduates - in this research. It also grapples with the effectiveness of resumé ‘whitening’ as a labour market mechanism and critiques the complexities of the power relations that exist in networks. The chapter also raises issues of the activation of social capital and field alignment in labour market outcomes.

Finally, chapter 8 brings into focus race and racialization, and how these processes structure the transition and labour market trajectory of international student graduates in Canada. The chapter outlines the processes contributing to the outcomes of international student graduates who seek employment in predominantly white spaces or regions outside the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Areas (GTHA) as well as those who remained in the GTHA. It also discusses the notion of “fit” which I argue is a discourse used as a covert form of racism and which participants encounter in the labour market.

Chapter 9 of the thesis summarizes the significant findings identified and includes my contribution to the production of existing knowledge. It also suggests improving the transition process and itemizes areas for future research.
Chapter 2: Historicizing Canada’s Immigration Policy and Practice: A Brief Review

2.1 Introduction

Undertaking a study which focus on the transition of student migrants in Canada necessitates that I review the existing literature and policies on the ‘integration’ of other immigrant cohorts. This chapter historicizes the relevant literature on immigration policy and its implications for immigrants in Canada as a background for the research I am proposing. Through an historical overview/periodization of Canada’s immigration policies, it discusses state policies, processes that shape and structure immigration to Canada, and the problems relating to racialization in the institution of labour and Canadian society at large. This is followed by a discussion on the transition of immigrant professionals into the Canadian labour market and problems associated with the old points system. I then explore the global “race for talent” and immigration regimes or what I theorize as a new kind of knowledge colonialism. Finally, I describe in more detail the three economic immigration programs/point-based systems: the Canadian Experience Class, Express Entry System and the Provincial Nominee Programs that are relevant to my proposed research.

2.2 Canada’s Immigration Policies and the Admission of Immigrants, 1867 – 1960s

Historically, Canada has utilized racist and exclusionary policies and processes to discourage and control the flow of racialized immigrants that come to its shores (Chen, 2004; Calliste, 1993; 1993/4; Ng 1991, Man, 2007; Guo, 2010; Palmer 1980). Canada’s immigration policies and practice have also been shaped by social (race, gender, class and sex), political, economic, and geographic contingencies (Aguiar & Marten, 2011; Satzewich, 1991; 1988:289-297; Calliste, 19993/94; 2000; Guo, 2010; Man 2004; Sharma, 2006). From the Confederation of Canada in 1867 to the 1960s, these contingencies influenced policies and therefore determined which racial groups were thought of (and represented) using binary opposites of ‘desirable’ or ‘undesirable’ subjects in Canada’s social formation (Aguiar & Marten, 2011; Guo, 2009: Li, 2003; Palmer, 1980:139). Throughout the same period, eligibility and admissibility of immigrants to Canada were premised on racial heritage and
country of origin (Dua, 2007a; Guo, 2009; Knowles, 1997; Man, 2004; 2007). Those of White ancestry originating from Western Europe, the United States and other parts of the British Empire were constructed as possessing good ‘Christian’ morals and thus were more desired to settle different regions of Canada (Chen, 2004; Calliste, 1991; 1993/4; Knowles, 1997; Palmer 1980). Consequently, the latter years of the 19th century witnessed a colossal influx of Europeans who settled in and contributed to the development of major centres in Ontario and Québec and the frontiers of Western Canada (Jones & Dyer, 1987; Knowles, 1997).

By and large, Canada, through its immigration policies and practices, included (or at least permitted entry to) non-White immigrants because of the nation’s desire for a what has been termed a ‘reserve army’ that could provide a cheap labour force that was needed to satisfy Canada’s economic imperatives and labour demand across various sectors (Backhouse, 1996; Guo, 2009, Calliste, 1993/4; 2000; Palmer, 1980) at different periods between 1867-1967. Simultaneously, Canada enacted a string of legislations and Orders-in-Council that prohibited non-White immigrants of various communities – Blacks from the Caribbean/people of African heritage, Chinese and South Asians - from entering the country (Man, 2007; Dua, 2007a; 2007b). In the latter part of the nineteenth century, Canada recruited Chinese labourers to facilitate the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) that connects the Western and Prairie provinces to the burgeoning heartland of Central Canada (Dua, 2007a; 2007b; Dyck 2008; Knowles, 1997; Man, 2007). With the completion of the CPR, Canada did not have any use for this ‘reserve army’ and so the state in 1886 imposed a head tax valued at $10 which subsequently proliferated to $500 (Dua 2007a; 2007b; Man, 2007). These measures would definitely have an impact in reducing the number of immigrants because $500 back then would place access to Canada far beyond the reach of many individuals. Calliste (1991; 1993; 2000), Johnson (2012), and Walker (2012) have observed that immigration legislation and Orders-in-Council were utilized in order to regulate and/or stem the influx and proportion of racialized/non-White men and women from the Caribbean - immigrants who came to Canada to participate in various sectors of the economy - to join the domestic scheme, the railways industry, shipyards, steel and coal mines. Between the period 1900 and 1932, women from Jamaica and the French Antilles of Guadeloupe
travelled via schooners to work as domestics – performing childcare and homemaking services to middle/upper class families in Quebec and Ontario (Calliste, 1993/4:134-135). Whereas Blacks from the Caribbean and the southern United States were contracted to work as sleeping car porters in a racially split labour market of the Canadian Pacific Railways (CPR) and Canadian National Railways (CNR) (Bonachich et al., 2008; Calliste, 2000; 1995; Walker, 2012). Others were employed or eked out a living in the shipyards of Collingwood, Ontario, the steel plants/coke ovens in Sydney, Nova Scotia and other cities throughout Atlantic Canada (Calliste, 1993:89). Despite receiving positive reviews from employers, women were increasingly susceptible to deportations during periods of economic contraction. Canadian immigration officials were of the view that they were risks who might become encumbrances on the public purse (Calliste, 1993; 1993/4:136-143). During the financial ‘meltdown’ or economic uncertainty of 1913 to 1915, this economic argument was utilized to rationalize the termination and deportation of Caribbean domestics (Calliste, 1993). At the various ports of entry, attempts by Blacks to purchase a passage to Canada were disavowed by immigration officials (Calliste, 1993/4). This was later coupled with other legislation (for example, the Immigration Act, 1910 and the Immigration Act, 1952) that discouraged the immigration of racialized nurses, sleeping car porters and other non-Whites from the British Caribbean (Calliste, 1993:90; 1993/4: 135-140; 1991).

As anti-racist scholars have maintained, these Canadian immigration policies were partly structured to satisfy the scarcity of labour, which raises questions about the politics of the White settler society. Historically, Asian and Black immigrant groups were not considered as “permanent assets” in Canada; they were instead perceived as a danger to the Canadian social fabric (Calliste, 1991:142; Dua 2007a; Palmer, 1980). The rising trepidation which resulted from the influx of immigrants was manifested in the pathologization of racialized immigrants. For example, the Chinese were perceived as “illiterate” individuals who conducted themselves in a manner that violated or was inconsistent with community norms, and displayed “moral turpitude”, as well as not maintaining proper hygiene practices (Palmer, 1980:139). Also, Black Caribbean women who participated in the domestic scheme were read and represented as being disruptive to the Canadian social fabric. The literature suggests that they were stereotyped with the following description: “immoral”, “bad” and having a propensity to
become “promiscuous” or single parents when in Canada (Calliste, 1991, 1993/4:134). And with no families here in Canada, the assumption was that they would become an unwanted financial cost their employers and the country (Calliste, 1991; 1993/4). These stereotypes were often used to validate their exclusion and removal from Canada as in the year 1911 (Calliste, 1994).

Furthermore, the traditional print media – Toronto’s Globe and Mail, Toronto Star, Victoria Daily Colonist, Canada Gazette and Calgary Herald - and the Canadian government, through their discourses and practices, portrayed Chinese, Japanese and South Asian immigrants as a pathogen to social harmony in Canada. To discourage the permanent settlement of immigrants and miscegenation between White women and non-White males (Chinese, Japanese and South Asians) in early 20th century Canada, the newspapers ran stories that sensationalized bitter outcomes of inter-marital unions. Dua (2007a) points to media reports which described, as a foreseeable disaster waiting to happen, the marriage between a Canadian/British young lady and her spouse of Indo-Canadian ancestry, a culture in which males were stereotyped as having more than one wife (polygamous unions). Chinese and Japanese, for their part, were often characterized as individuals who were either cruel or brutal towards their wives. The newspapers also accentuated various fallacies such as “perils”, “misery”, “anger” and “seclusion” purportedly gleaned from the journals of Asiatic travellers and emissaries that described the treatment of Japanese and Chinese men towards their wives (Dua, 2007a:456).

Furthermore, it was incumbent upon the Registrar of marriages to inform White women regarding the (real or imagined) outcomes that were associated with inter-racial unions prior to officiating the ceremony (Dua, 2007a). Accordingly, the marriage between a British or Canadian woman in Christendom and a man who identifies with another faith - for example, Islam or Hinduism – associated with social formations where polygamous relationships are practiced, risked being declared illegal if the Registrar failed to “educate” the women about the ‘perceived’ dangers. It was believed that these “Orientals” may be inclined to “compromise”, and bring into disrepute the Christian faith, and its associated moral codes and notions of progress (Chen, 2004; Palmer, 1980:139). As Palmer (1980:139) observed, even prominent leaders and male ecclesiastics throughout Alberta who publicly
supported the integration of Chinese immigrants into the Protestant Church were not fully convinced that they “could or should be assimilated”. The clergy were not persuaded that miscegenation or marital unions between Whites and Chinese was the preferred means through which assimilation should be achieved (Palmer, 1980). Also, Canadian state policies made it virtually impossible for Chinese men to immigrate with their families, as they were anticipated to reunite with their loved ones in their home country upon completing their tour of duties in Canada (Man, 2007: Palmer, 1980:140). Palmer (1980) contends that the 1911 population count of Chinese in Alberta stood at 1787 men and 20 women! Therefore, the construction of immigrants of colour in the early 20th century Canada raises serious moral questions around the stigmatization of immigrants in Canadian society.

Prior to 1967, representatives of the Canadian immigration department used a host of biological, ideological and racial assumptions to substantiate the inadmissibility of non-Whites. For example, immigration officials (both at home and abroad/ports of entry) believed that immigrants of African and Chinese/South Asian origins were “biologically and culturally incapable” of adjusting to the climate in Canada (Calliste, 1994:133; Dua, 2007a; Satzewich, 1991; Winks, 1971). As Calliste (1993/4) argues, the immigration department, in 1951, dismissed the application of a Barbadian-Canadian woman who submitted the relevant documents to sponsor her grand-daughter to Canada. The explanation given was that people from tropical climates are not able to tolerate long the frigid temperatures in Canada. In that same year, Walter Harris, then Minister with responsibility for the Immigration and Citizenship portfolio, opined that Caribbean Blacks were incapable of surviving the cold temperatures and wintry blizzards that characterized Canadian climatic conditions between the winter solstice and the spring equinox (Calliste, 1993/4; Knowles, 1997; Winks 1971:26). Non-White immigrant groups were also constructed to be intellectually, “mentally, physically” and “socially” inferior to their White counterparts (Calliste, 1994:133; Dua, 2007a, Satzewich, 1991). In 1955, another immigration official remarked that individuals of African heritage “vegetate to a lower standard of living” and therefore find it difficult to assimilate in the Canadian society (Calliste, 1994:133).

Canadian immigration policies between the post-war industrial and baby boomer years (1950-1962) granted selective admission to nursing professionals based on their country of origin. A
juxtaposition of the differential treatment of Black Caribbean nursing professionals and their White counterparts from Europe (and the rest of the British Empire) reveals the gendered racism that characterized these immigration policies (Calliste, 1993/4, Johnson, 2012). Throughout this period, White nurses and nursing assistants were granted permanent legal status upon entry to Canada, whereas their Black Caribbean peers were not extended similar privileges based on arguments of their general (in)admissibility. The Immigration Act included an “exceptional merit” provision which discriminated against prospective immigrants of African heritage (Calliste, 1991; 1993/4; Walker, 2012:31). Accordingly, Canadian permanent legal status was only bestowed upon Caribbean nursing professionals whose qualifications surpassed that of Whites (Calliste, 1993:95). Calliste (1994) also contends that Black Caribbean nursing professionals were only granted admission if their prospective bosses were “conscious” of the perceived racial and cultural stereotypes associated with the women African ancestry (Calliste, 1993/4). It is also theoretically important to note that a scarcity of nurses in 1956-1965 witnessed Canada relaxing this immigration policy, albeit for a relatively small influx of Caribbean nursing assistants. However, most immigrants in the cohort that addressed this Canadian shortage in nursing did not receive landed status in Canada (Calliste, 1993). In 1956, the provincial Registered Nurses Association stipulated that these nurses upgrade their skills but owing to the huge demand and relatively small number of preceptorships, only a few could acquire the professional certification needed to practice. Professional closure coupled with the scarcity of nurses also made Black nurses susceptible to exploitation in their health profession (Gieryn, 1983; Nestel, 2004:299-300; Witz, 1992).

This history also brings to the fore the racial segmentation and gendered racism and other daily occurrence of racism that typically characterized work in the nursing profession in this period and which persists in contemporary Canada (Calliste, 2000; Das Gupta, 1996a; 1996b; Essed, 1991; 2007; Modibo, 2004; Nestel, 2004; Witz, 1992). Black nurses were predominantly employed on contracts that ultimately pigeonholed them in hospital wards caring for patients with mental disorders and a host of chronic diseases (Calliste, 1993:95). Their positions in the lower tier of the labour force were associated with their dark skin colour/pigmentation (Das Gupta, 1996b). While in 1957, state policy
permitted Caribbean nursing students who lacked the relevant professional certification and had an optimal standard of practice to work in Canadian provinces (Calliste, 1993; 1993/4), research underscores their vulnerability as a reserve labour force. Calliste (1993) notes that the number of Caribbean nurses and nursing assistants that acquired permanent resident status remained relatively low in the period 1950-1965. Even with the rising demand for nurses, the figures for both categories for nurses and nursing assistants remain low compared to the numbers for the White European counterparts (Calliste, 1993:96).

The perception and definition of the ‘desired’ immigrant is also revealed through an episodic examination of immigration to Canada. Knowles (1997) and Guo (2009:39) classified the historical immigration trends in Canada’s social formation into four discrete eras. For Guo (2009:39) and Knowles (1997), these trends commenced with what was considered a period of “open’ migration”. This refers to the years between 1867 and 1895, a time in which the Canadian state principally admitted White immigrants from England and the United States (Guo, 2009:39). The following period of migration was bounded by the years of the wheat boom (1896-1914), a period in which droves of Europeans settlers came to Canada. The third era of immigration (between 1915 and 1967) witnessed the passage of numerous bigoted or xenophobic state policies that regulated, if not thwarted, the surge of non-White immigrants to Canada. The more recent era extends from 1967 to contemporary times with family class sponsorship and entrepreneurial class and immigrants as well as point-based sponsorship programs aimed at attracting skilled/professional immigrants and talent (Guo, 2009:37; Li, 2003; Knowles, 1997:143-151; Simmons & Plaza, 2006; Simmons, 1998:93).

It is worth asking: what are the socio-political changes accounting for Canada’s shift from a racist to a more progressive immigration system? To put it another way, what social changes occurred between the period in which overt racist immigration policies and the implementation of the points system in Canada? This requires a brief recapitulation of the global transformations that occurred immediate post-war industrial years, circa 1945 to the 1960s. Owing to the enormous costs associated with World War II, Britain, at the end of the war, found it financially unsustainable and challenging to direct the affairs of the larger colonies (Dyck, 1993; 2008; Knowles 1997; McIntyre, 1998). The
difficulties resulting from this culminated in the process of decolonization throughout the British Empire; Britain transferred political and administrative decision-making powers to the larger colonies who were now expected to manage their own affairs (McIntyre, 1998). Arguably, most were now newly independent (and democratized) states in the West with membership at the United Nations, and as such were anticipated to reflect the principles of human rights, democracy, and ‘equality’ and fairness. In addition, the 1960s not only witnessed a turn towards democracy but also the global ascendance of pressure groups, for example, the Civil Rights Movement in the US, the Quiet Revolution in Canada, and feminist groups, etc. (Barnett, 1993; Dyck, 1993; 2008; Miles, 1996; Seljak, 1996). Through protests and other visceral forms of civil disobedience, these pressure groups tapped into and translated the agitations of the marginalized and oppressed, contested the state and called for more equitable policies to address different forms of injustices across the social divisions, for example, race, gender and so on (Dyck, 2008).

It is within this period (1967 to be precise) that a Liberal political administration introduced what has been called the ‘progressive’ points system in Canadian immigration policy (Saunders, 2017; Knowles, 1997:151). Despite being subjected to numerous revisions, the points system as a mechanism for the selection of immigrants appears to represent a departure from state policies that emphasized the criteria of race, religion and country of origin and a move to regulations that permit entry on the basis merit - that is, the categories of education, skills, resources and the potential to economically contribute in Canada (Bauder, 2006:53; Guo, 2009; 2010; Man, 2007; 2004; Modibo, 2004; Saunders, 2017; Tepperman, 2016). Other than Europeans, immigrants from countries in the South now began to be recognized as an ‘ideal’ labour source (Guo, 2009; Knowles, 1997). Consequently, they were invited in record numbers to satisfy the high demand for labour in various sectors of the economy (Saunders, 2017; Tepperman, 2016). This phenomenon also coincides with the rebuilding of the Western Europe economies under the of the US Marshall Plan (Tepperman, 2016).
2.3 The Immigrant Labour Market and Transition into Canada: The Points System

Given the gender and race issues discussed at length above, the Canadian economic immigration scheme for immigrant professionals (i.e. the points system) that invokes a discourse of ‘points’ needs to be unpacked. The system awards numerical points to prospective immigrants based on their work experience, language proficiency and level of education. “Points” in the immigration regulations simply refer to different numerical values. My critique of this regime is the Canadian state’s insistence on a “neutral” discourse of points. Stipulating immigration on a merit-based system - whether the antiquated points system (Li, 2003b:41) or the more ‘up-scaled’ version in the Express Entry System - invokes a discourse that collapses the lives and skills of immigrants into a numerical score. While a points system is an improvement on previous policy, several questions can be raised about its implementation. For example, how did the Canadian government(s) arrive at the numerical values assigned for each factor (for example, level of education, experience, Canadian work experience, etc.) in the point system(s)? What kind of evaluative mechanism or barometer is involved in the process? Further, how does one equitably assign a numerical value to the education, years of prior experience or even Canadian experience?

I will suggest in the next chapter on theoretical perspectives that the points system is perhaps the least problem facing skilled immigrants and that it is only one segment of an interrelated set of regulatory mechanisms that should be made transparent to applicants to these programs. For example, the presence of regulatory bodies for self-regulating professions is another significant process that structures the ‘integration’ and occupational mobility of immigrant professionals (Bourgeault et al., 2016; El-Hashemy, 2017; Man, 2004). Self-regulated professions with regulatory bodies – for example, law and medicine – have been shown to establish certification processes and other closure mechanisms which immigrant professionals find very arduous to navigate. Consequently, physicians and other internationally educated professionals in medicine encounter difficulties integrating into their occupational field upon immigrating to Canada (Adams, Livingstone and Sawchuk, 2016; Bauder, 2003; 2006:90-101; Man, 2004; Mensah 2010; Mickleborough & Peters, 2015).
Although my research will not focus on these professions, it is worth pointing out how the regulations established by these governing professional institutions had punitive consequences for internationally trained immigrants, especially in medicine (El-Hashemy, 2017; Man, 2004). Research has shown that even if internationally educated physicians are successful in passing the relevant evaluative exams that are proctored by the College of Family Physicians and the Medical Council of Canada, there exists an extremely limited number of spaces in medical residency across the country for internationally educated physicians (El-Hashemy; 2017; Man, 2004). This severely limits their chances of obtaining a medical license to practice medicine in Canada. Although labour market data in 1999 shows that the government has increased the number of spaces in medical schools, this initiative was not harmonized with a corresponding increase in the availability of medical residencies in which are required for practice (Man, 2004). The paucity of medical residency placements means that immigrants are competing for perhaps 75 available medical residency spaces, of which only 10% are awarded to internationally trained professionals. El-Hashemy’s (2017) study further reveals that only approximately 2% of the internationally educated physicians from particular countries are able to re-enter medicinal practice upon immigrating to Canada. The cost associated with re-certification for immigrant professionals is quite inflated in comparison to what graduates from Canadian institutions pay. Data from the early 2000s indicate that accreditation agencies levy high service charges (Bauder, 2003:703; Guo, 2009). As well, the process is lengthy – lasting a maximum of 10 years – as regulatory agencies often require immigrants to write a series of exams and/or satisfy other time/regulatory specific criteria. Immigrants are de-professionalized and deskilled in the process or forced to choose other careers, including precarious forms of employment (Bauder, 2003; Chen, 2004; El-Hashemy, 2017; Guo, 2009:46; Flynn, 1999; Man, 2004; Zong, 2004).

Racialized immigrants and immigrant professionals also experience the devaluation of their knowledge and prior experience in the sections of the skilled Canadian labour market that are only semi- or unregulated and this limits their chances of securing employment in the top two segments of the labour market. This is the segment of the labour market that I will be focusing on. For example, internationally educated professionals in Canada’s most western province (British Columbia) have had
their credentials devalued upon receiving the results of evaluative assessments from respective licensing agencies (Basran & Zong, 1998; Bauder, 2006; 2003; Zong, 2004). Further, South Asians immigrating to Vancouver had their graduate level qualifications evaluated as equivalent to only Canadian grade 12 qualifications, while their undergraduate degrees were rated to grade 10 standards (Bauder, 2003: 703). Zong (2007; 2004:7) reveals that approximately 70 percent of immigrant professionals in six Canadian centres – Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Saskatoon, Toronto and Ottawa – faced a similar situation. Their lack of Canadian experience also means that immigrant professionals have little or no chances of securing opportunities in the primary segments of the labour market (Basran & Zong, 1998; Bauder, 2006). Instead, they are shunted to the secondary sector where they are often compelled to take on precarious and low paying jobs (Adamuti-Trache, Anisef & Sweet, 2013; Bourgeault et al., 2016; Li, 2003a; Man, 2004; Zong, 2004). As scholars also observe, the difficulties associated with the labour market integration process sees immigrant professionals participating in employment “for which they are overtrained, resulting in a downward occupational mobility” (Basran & Zong: 1998:11,15; Zong, 2004). For specific immigrant communities in Canada – most notably, the Indo-Canadian and Chinese from Hong Kong and the mainland - re-entry into their fields of professional practice range between 18 (Basran & Zong, 1998) and 20 percent (Guo, 2009). Creese and Wiebe (2012), Guo (2009; 2010) and Mojab (1991) add that these unfavourable outcomes in entering the labour market often bring about negative emotions on the part of the immigrants: frustration, melancholy and anger. Here, the codified/structural inequities in the Canadian labour market become explicit as regulatory bodies are signalling to immigrant professionals that education/expertise obtained in the South (their home country) is inferior to that gained in institutions in the North (Canada).

Studies comparing the economic earnings of Canadian-born and visible minority-immigrants indicate that the latter, because of the inferior value appended to “foreign” credentials, earn significantly less of the two groups (Li, 2000; 2001a; Reitz, 2001; Pendakur & Pendakur, 1996). When compared with Canadians racialized as White, the credentials of the visible minority-immigrants are not only devalued but “carry a penalty” (Li, 2001a:23). Reitz (2001) and Zong (2004:1, 10) also
attributes the low earnings to a devaluation of their skills which are not fully appreciated in the Canadian labour market.

### 2.4 The Global Race for Talent and Competitive Immigration Regimes

#### 2.4.1 A New Approach to Colonizing Knowledge?

To this point, I have focused on immigration by highly skilled workers. But the bigger picture is that generally, (im)migration across international boundaries is classified into three categories (Baglay, 2012; Shachar, 2006:148). In Canada, immigration programs include humanitarian migration (refugees), family reunification, and economic (or skilled/knowledge) migration (Baglay, 2012). Humanitarian migration examines the granting of “temporary” or long-term safety to individuals who are fleeing their homelands because of persecution or other forms of infringement that deny their fundamental human rights (Shachar, 2006:148). The family sponsorship (or the largest) category grants immigrants the rights, within the ambit of the immigration regulations (reduced by the Harper government), to sponsor immediate family members (for example, parents, spouse, children, siblings, etc.) from foreign countries/their homelands to join them in the host country where they acquire permanent legal status upon arrival (Shachar, 2006). Finally, as presented in detail above, economic/skilled migration policies generally permit the movement of people from poorer to more economically advanced countries based on their level of education, skills/expertise, resources and their capacity to invest in the economy of the host country. In Canada, the specification for categories of family sponsorship and refugees are delineated in federal laws. That is, adjudication in matters related to both classes is managed federally, whereas the selection of immigrants in the economic class differs significantly in different provincial jurisdictions. Immigrant selection for the economic class creates at least a “two-tiered system” as aspirants conventionally enter Canada on federal schemes - for example, the federal skilled worker program (FSWP), the federal skilled trades program (FSTP), the CEC, business immigrants and live-in caregiver program, or via the provincial/territorial nominee programs (PTNPs) (Aguiar & Marten, 2011; Baglay, 2012:124). Of the three groups, individuals are predominantly admitted from the economic class because their skills and talent can be harnessed

Scholars (Anderssen & Guo, 2009; Saunders; 2017; Shachar, 2006; Tepperman, 2016) have lauded the Canadian points system as an immigrant selection strategy to be valorized. However, a critical approach would suggest that it represents a new kind of “knowledge colonialism”. It can be argued to be “knowledge colonialism” because the Canadian state uses its immigration policies, mechanisms and related discourse to penetrate the educated class/professionals or the untapped potential of poorer nations for the benefit of Northern societies – a process known as “brain drain”. The discourse and policy surrounding the alignment of skills and immigration policies in the Western world had its genesis in the industrial era of the 1960s (Pottie-Sherman, 2013; Shachar, 2006:170).

As it relates to the Canadian context, the search for “skills” as expressed in Canada’s immigration policy is not a novel occurrence. Instead, this fondness for skills originated in the United States about the same time as in Canada (Shachar, 2006:170). In affixing his signature to the 1965 revised version of the Immigration and Nationality Act 1952 – which initially restricted entry to people emigrating to the United States from the Eastern hemisphere - former US President Lyndon B. Johnson signalled that America was now open to qualified immigrants (in selected professional and technical fields) from farther abroad than Europe. Foreign nationals who desired to settle permanently would be “admitted on the basis of their skills” (Shachar, 2006:170). However, it should be noted that Canada, in 1967, was actually the first of the four Western OECD nations (the others being the US, New Zealand and Australia) to develop a “selective immigration” scheme that permits permanent entry to internationally educated/and professional immigrants. Known simply as the ‘points system’, it was developed in order to make the immigration policy reflective of national/economic realities in Canada. Arguably from a critical perspective, this federally administered immigration policy established and determined the admissibility of each economic immigrant based on a set of dividing practices (Anderssen & Guo, 2009; Foucault, 1977) that include differentially valuing “level of education, language ability [or proficiency], age, [type of] occupation, work experience” and ability to adapt to Canada (Shachar, 2006:171-176; Pottie-Sherman, 2013: 558). Under this system, each applicant is assigned cumulative
scores for each corresponding category identified above. In the Canadian context, the government has the latitude to periodically manoeuvre this immigration apparatus by lowering or raising the threshold of points required for admission (Shachar, 2006:171-176). By the year 2001, the Canadian state had implemented the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA) that prioritizes the “selective admission” of skilled workers for permanent legal status. The assumption is that this immigration stream consists of foreign nationals who are most eligible to contribute to Canada's economic, cultural and social growth (Man, 2004:135).

Studies on youth transition into Canada indicate that immigrants from South-east Asia do better in that kind of transition process than those from the Caribbean (Aydemir & Skuterud, 2005; Aydemir & Sweetman, 2007; Gilmore, 2008; Finne & Mueller, 2010). Immigrants to Canada have higher education attainments than non-immigrants; however, there exists a disparity between these various immigrant groups in terms of access to higher education. Arguably, the difference in the level of participation between both immigrant groups would be reflected in the labour market outcomes. But research undertaken on the transition of Canadian immigrants and internationally educated professionals also indicates that lack of experience in the labour market, possession of foreign credentials, and lack of official language proficiency (among other cultural norms identified above) have relegated particular ethno-racial groups to low paying, part-time and menial jobs (Adamuti-Trache *et al.*; 2013; Bauder, 2006:99-101; Li, 2003a; Man, 2004; Man & Preston, 1999; Ng, 1981).

It is also imperative to link and situate the discussion of skills and the immigration ‘points system’ within the context of higher education and Canada’s national economic conditions that prevailed in the 1960s. Canada’s points-based system developed in the decade when there were on-going debates on the need to increase participation rates in higher education (Dennison & Gallagher, 1986; Donald, 1997). It was argued that there existed in Canada’s economy a “skill gap” because of a university that put much emphasis on liberal and arts education and not enough on job preparation. According to this discourse, universities across Canada’s most populous subnational jurisdictions - Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, and to some extent Alberta – did not provide students with the specific training that would prepare them take up skilled positions in the rapidly changing economy in 1965 (Fisher *et al.*, 2013).
Simultaneously, these provincial governments were also concerned about the projected increase in population. In Ontario, for example, elementary enrollment data indicated that enrollments had increased by approximately 500,000 more than in 1946 (to 1,250,000) and was further anticipated to reach 2,000,000 by the period 1982/1983 (Davis, 1965:10, cited in Skolnik, 2010). The complex nature of these contingencies prompted then Education Minister William (Bill) Davis to table and pass legislation in Ontario that established a distinct sector of the higher education system from universities known as the College of Applied Arts and Technology (CAATs) (Hogan & Trotter, 2013; Skolnik, 2010). The Ontario government, via its *Vocational and Training Act 1960*, also secured federal funding that allowed it to revamp the secondary school curriculum, steer students into vocational programs and erect facilities that provided vocational education. The college sector expanded for two reasons: 1) to address the “skills shortage” in Canada by focusing on careers and skills training that are technically and vocationally oriented (Skolnik, 2010); 2) to democratize or massify access to the post-secondary studies in Ontario. For Trow (1973), the post-secondary education system is democratized when enrollment rates range between 16% and 50% of the population. In Ontario, this phenomenon was initially observed in the 1960s post-secondary as enrollments between the 18-24 age cohort exceeded 15% (Clark *et al.*, 2009:23). In the contemporary context, post-secondary education funding has been on the decline and so institutions now seek international students to make up the shortfall (Drewes, 2008).

With globalization in the past three decades, the deepening integration of the world’s economic system has contributed to competitive immigration regimes, primarily between immigration-receiving states for skilled/economic migrants such as Canada. This competitive policy environment creates a situation whereby selected countries are now engaged in a “global race for talent” (Shachar, 2006:152-153). Individual countries no longer use immigration schemes or policies to exclusively realize specific domestic/national and economic priorities. Instead, immigrant-receiving countries are reorienting (or have reoriented) such policies and are now engaged in inter-jurisdictional competition. As stated above, each country makes cyclic “adjustments and refinements” to their current immigration regulations for the purpose of outpacing their “international competitor[s]” (Shachar, 2006:183).
Conventionally, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and to a lesser degree, the United States are known as the trend setters in the recruitment of skilled/economic (foreign-born) migrants. Nonetheless, Shachar (2006) and Pottie-Sherman (2012) point out that these countries have also increasingly engaged the practice of imitating the partial/whole-scale adopting of (or even surpassing) immigration policies from each other in order to lure the ‘star’ immigrants in different professional fields across the globe. This is exemplified in Australia’s point system (1973) which mirrors Canada’s immigration system. Like Canada, the Australian immigration scheme targets skilled immigrants, has similar admission criteria and was initially geared towards realizing nationalistic and economic goals (Shachar, 2006:173; 2013; Pottie-Sherman, 2012). By 1991, New Zealand followed suit with a points system that was somewhat modelled from these two countries. Unlike these other Anglo-Saxon countries, New Zealand’s economic immigration policy includes an international focus in which it stresses the importance of retaining skilled immigrants who work or are employed or have had previous employment experience in the host country (Shachar, 2006; 2013; Pottie-Sherman, 2012).

Associated with these competitive immigration regimes is what Shachar (2013:91; 2006:176) calls “talent-for-citizenship-exchange”. Immigrant-receiving nations, in an attempt to compete with other jurisdictions and attract the “best and brightest” in the world, offer these individuals (and their families) the option of settling permanently in the respective host country. For example, Canada offers permanent legal status to its skilled immigrants in order to compete with the United States where skilled immigrants are susceptible to the changing visa requirements and other form of labour insecurities (Shachar, 2006; Pottie-Sherman, 2012). By 2003, immigrant eligibility for Canadian citizenship increased with the implementation of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IPRA) (Man, 2007). Since then, Australia and New Zealand have followed suit with similar legislation and have rationalized their policies in order to outshine Canada2. Like Canada and Australia, New Zealand made it possible for skilled migrants and their spouses to gain bonus points (Shachar, 2006:179-183). In contrast to other countries, New Zealand broadened its search for talent by not only attracting

---

2 See Shachar 2006 further details on immigration policies in Australia and Canada.
migrants from abroad but also seeking to recruit international student migrants already in the country or who had participated in the labour market (Shachar, 2006; Pottie-Sherman, 2012). But New Zealand’s most audacious policy initiative came in 2003 when it resorted to a more aggressive measure of recruiting talent. That country introduced a ‘talent visa’ that allows employers in various industries to directly recruit immigrants to satisfy labour shortages and provide them with a pathway to citizenship (Shachar, 2006:181; Pottie-Sherman, 2012).

Since the early 2000s, several countries in the European Union – for example, Germany, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Netherlands, France and Norway - began participating in this global competition for economic/skilled immigrants. Each country within the European Union has mirrored the selective admission policies in other jurisdictions or has developed their own unique program (Shachar, 2006:186-199). For example, Germany, in 2005, ended its policies that emphasized a zero-population growth and has now embraced a points system that attracts skilled workers, especially from Asia (Shachar, 2006:188-191; 2013). Although these selective immigration policies have historically been used to exploit poorer nations via a process of brain drain from Third World countries (such as China and India), these countries, in a postcolonial world, have recently been engaged in a strategy of counter-penetration. As Altbach (1993; 2009) and Mok (2007) have noted, so-called developing states in like China and others in Southeast Asia have been slowly developing policies to encourage the return migration of skilled professionals in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) to their home countries. In the next section, I discuss the economic immigration programs that offer (im)migrants and international student graduates a pathway to permanent legal citizenship in Canada: the Canadian Experience Class, the Express Entry and the Provincial and Territorial Nominee Programs.

---

3 Given the Britain’s decision to exit the European Union (Brexit), I imagine that the decision will have several implications for the economic immigrants.
2.5 Canada’s Two-Step Immigration System

2.5.1 Canadian Experience Class (2008-2015)

So far, I have argued that in a ‘race for talent’, different OECD nations have prioritized the recruitment of skilled migrants who have participated or are currently participating in the labour market of the host country as opposed to attracting those from without. This two-step system of immigration was first implemented in New Zealand (Shachar, 2006; 2013; Williams et al., 2015) and is so named because it first recruited or attracted temporary migrants and then provided them with a legal route to permanent legal status. Shachar (2006:179-183) contends that the perceived triumphs of the New Zealand experiment have influenced Canada’s decision (in the early 2000s) to channel money and resources into pilot programs that attract foreign students to Canada’s higher educational institutions, and encourage to them to participate in the labour force on a three-year post-graduation work permit (PWGP) (2005) – which allows them to circulate in the labour market upon completing their studies (Williams et al., 2015:14). By 2008, this program morphed into the Canadian Experience Class (CEC) – a federal immigration scheme that is a fusion of the point system and an employer-led strategy (Williams et al., 2015). In addition to satisfying Canada’s general admissibility requirements, international student graduates on a PGWP are expected to demonstrate language proficiency and to accumulate at least one year’s worth of ‘skilled’ experience over a 24 month period before applying to the CEC (Canada Gazette, 2008: 1932-1937; Government of Canada, 2014). By 2015, Harper-led policy changed this 24-month period, extending it to 36 months (CIC, 2015). Skilled work experience under the CEC refers to jobs that are categorized under the Canadian National Occupational Classification (NOC) as managerial (NOC skill type 0), professional (NOC skill type A), or technical and skilled trades (NOC skill type B) (Government of Canada, 2014). The CEC is also quite distinct from other federal economic immigration programs (for example, the FSWP and the FSTP) as it stresses the idea that international student graduates ought to obtain general work experience in Canada before they submit their applications for landed immigrant status.

The triumphs associated with economic immigration programs in Canada have resulted in increased temporary to permanent residents in Canada (Baglay, 2012; Williams et al., 2015). In 2013,
the Canadian government pledged to increase the number of permanent residents admitted under this immigration stream from 2500 in 2009 to maximum of 10,000 (Williams et al., 2015). However, this optimism came to an abrupt end in May 2014 as the Canadian state capped the number to 8000, subsuming it under the Express Entry system in the following year (IRCC, 2015). This raises the question of why the government brought the CEC to an abrupt end and then launched a new tracking system. Why did they not just expand the CEC program as opposed to starting a new system for international student graduates? Why is there an insistence on the part of the Canadian state that international student graduates (who are educated in Canada) need to work in Canada first prior to obtaining permanent resident status?

2.5.2 The Canadian Express Entry System: 2015 – Present

In January 2015, when Canada established what it refers to as the Express Entry System, it described a comprehensive scheme that would administer “how people with skilled work experience apply to immigrate to Canada” (CIC, 2015). At this point, temporary migrants or foreign nationals, who include international student graduates already in Canada, satisfying the criteria of this federally-administered sponsorship immigration program (the Express Entry System) became eligible to be considered for Canadian permanent residence.

At the heart of this immigration management scheme is the desire to establish a robust relationship between economic immigration and the Canadian labour market. Applicants desiring to immigrate to Canada are expected to satisfy eligibility requirements under one of the three federal economic immigration programs (CEC, FSWEP and FSTP) that are pronged beneath the Express Entry System as shown in Figure 1.1 (Chapter 1). Next, the applicant(s) is(are) required to complete an Express Entry profile (IRCC, 2016). Upon submitting the pertinent information, the data is ‘pooled’ with that of other applicants and managed by what is known as the comprehensive ranking system (CRS). The CRS computes and ranks each applicant’s profile (in the Express Entry System) based on several factors inputted to produce a score out of a maximum of 1200 points (CIC, 2016). The CRS also uses a four-part formula to score each candidate – whether he/she is applying as a single applicant or an
applicant in a spousal union/with a common-law partner. For single applicants and those in a conjugal union/common-law relationship, respectively, the categories and maximum points awarded in this merit system are as follows:

1) Skills and experience which includes those human core capital and demographic factors – of age, level of education, official languages proficiency and Canadian work experience - that Canada sees as being integral to the “economic success of immigrants once in Canada”. In this category, the system awards a maximum of 500 and 400 points to single or married/common law union applicants;

2) Spouse or common law factors which include spouse’s level of education, official language proficiency and work experience in Canada. Applicants with a spouse may become eligible for 40 points this category;

3) Skills transferability factors (maximum 100 points) that places a premium on Canadian education and proficiency in English/French;

4) Additional points (maximum 600 points) that may either be secured through one of the provincial nominee programs or job offers supported favourably by a labour market impact assessment (LMIA) that “determines that the position could not be filled by an equally qualified Canadian” (CIC, 2016; Williams et al., 2015:12). This raises questions around hidden forms of discrimination that may exist in the points system. An applicant may also receive points if he or she is able to demonstrate that they will be able to adapt to life in Canada. For example, the applicant may be awarded points, albeit minuscule, if they have a sibling who has Canadian citizenship or permanent resident status (CIC, 2016). The applicant may also be awarded up to 200 points if he/she obtain an arranged employment in a senior management occupation (Skill 00), whereas as those applicants in other tiers of managerial or supervisory level (Skill 0), in a highly skilled (Skill A) or skilled (Skill B) profession or technical position are eligible to receive 50 points (CIC, 2016). In view of the history provided earlier in this chapter, I am interested in how discrimination (structural or otherwise) influence the immigrant’s transition to permanent resident status in Canada and their labour market prospects in Canada.
Applicants who are fortunate enough to be ranked amongst top candidates in the periodic applicant Express Entry rounds then receive an invitation to submit an online application for permanent residency status (CIC, 2016). For my analysis, this raise questions about the idea of the “ideal” or successful immigrant given Canada’s history of immigration policy. Who is the successful immigrant under this program? And what does success look like? Further, what kind of challenges does he or she encounter and what does it this trajectory suggest about Canada and these immigration policies?

2.5.3 The Provincial and Territorial Nominee Programs (PTNPs) and ‘Skilled’ Workers

PTNPs are based on a federal-provincial arrangement which encourages provincial and territorial jurisdictions that may experience more labour shortages to assume more autonomy in the recruiting and selecting of prospective skilled immigrants or talent, an area historically dominated by their federal counterpart. The relationship between federal and provincial governments reflects the shared legal powers between two equal but autonomous levels of government in immigration that are enshrined in the Canadian constitution (Carter, 2012; Dyck, 2005). As Nakache and D’Aoust (2012:164) observed, this arrangement delegates the provincial/territorial governments to be responsible for tailoring programs to satisfy the needs of their respective economies. Therefore, subnational jurisdictions across Canada implement specific guidelines or criteria to regulate and determine the prospective skilled worker/applicant it wishes to ‘select’ for permanent residency. At the federal level, the national government established rules which ensures that the applicant satisfies security clearance and does not pose any health risks nor past behaviours that contravene the criminal code (IRCC, 2018). The federal government also has a centralized immigration department, the Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), which is responsible for the processing and granting of permanent residence.

Initiated in the western provinces (British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba) in 1998, PTNPs gained currency towards turn of the second millennium and eventually formed the crux of immigration policies in select regions of Anglophone Canada: New Brunswick and Newfoundland (1999), Prince Edward Island and Yukon Territories (2001), Alberta and Nova Scotia (2002); Ontario
(2007) and the Northwest Territories (2009) (Baglay, 2012:126; Nakache & D’Aoust, 2012). Thus, there exist across the provinces numerous PNPs selection streams where nominees/applicants are expected to satisfy conditions on a pass/failure basis. The general admissions criteria across these jurisdictions can be grouped into either a business or (skilled) worker-related stream (Baglay, 2012:126). At the onset of the integrated federal-provincial economic immigration schemes, the CIC (now IRCC) insisted on and placed immigration quotas recruited via PNPs in Saskatchewan and British Columbia but became less rigid as the program extended across the different regions. Through new and re-negotiated immigration accords, the IRCC increased the autonomy granted to subnational jurisdictions vis-à-vis the establishment of quotas. Provinces that renegotiated agreements with the federal government include Manitoba (2003), Newfoundland and Labrador (2006), Alberta (2007) and Nova Scotia (2007) (Nakache & D’Aoust, 2012). This was done to better align the economic immigration programs to satisfy the economic needs in the respective Canadian jurisdictions.

While the PTNP is used to target immigrants, it varies across Canada in terms of how it facilitates the entry of skilled immigrants to permanent residency status. Canadian employers have also utilized this economic immigration program to recruit “low-skilled” employees to satisfy permanent and seasonal labour demand in the economy (Nakache & D’Aoust, 2012:158). PTNPs are also assigned to facilitate the transition of skilled workers to permanent residency status, while in general there exist limited opportunities for the permanent incorporation of low skilled workers into Canada. As per Canada’s national occupational classification (NOC) codes, the term “low skilled” is used in reference to employees who are engaged in labour arrangements where the duties performed do not require formal education and little or no training (Government of Canada, 2018). These “low skilled” applicants are essentially temporary foreign workers (TFWs) who are invited to Canada to “fill specific shortages in the labour market” and serve the purpose of addressing the “employers current needs” (Nakache & D’Aoust, 2012:158). Generally, the TFW receives a work permit which allows the individual an average of four years participation in Canada’s labour market. Though their contracts are renewable, these migrant workers are anticipated to exit the country upon competing their employment and endure a wait period of six years before returning for another tour of duty in Canada (Nakache &
D’Aoust, 2012). This treatment of “skilled” workers represents a stark departure from the work permit offered to low skilled labourers such as seasonal agricultural workers (SAWP), where work is obtained typically ranging from six weeks to eight months in length (Walia, 2010). Thus, arguably, the PTNPs reinforce one of the ways in which Canadian state policies perpetuate the marginalization of low skilled temporary migrant workers.

This immigration regulation scheme is antagonistic towards familial unions. Although, it claims to facilitate the transition of temporary foreign workers to Canadian permanent residency, it only does so in theory. As Nakache & D’Aoust (2012:163) observe, PTNPs also do not offer a work permit to wives, husbands or common law partners of low skilled TFWs. The skilled economic immigration program only contemplates spouses as potential permanent residents in a conjugal or common-law relationship where the principal applicant is deemed as a skilled or highly skilled worker. Consequently, the spouse of skilled workers can apply for an open work permit (Nakache & D’Aoust, 2012:163). As the name suggests, the government document authorizes or stipulates that the applicant is not obligated to a specific employer within Canada but has the privilege of working across several industries (Choudry & Smith, 2016).

It is also imperative to note that not all the provincial/territorial economic immigration programs in Canada have semi-skilled or low skilled groupings that allow the integration of temporary foreign workers. Only Alberta, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Prince Edward Island, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon do this (Government of Canada, 2018c). Scholars (Carter, 2012; Nakache & D’Aoust, 2012:170) observe that Manitoba is the sole province that offers somewhat of a limited opportunity for the transition of low-skilled and semi-skilled workers into Canadian permanent resident status. Specifically, in Manitoba, the ‘employee direct’ stream of the MPNP is quite flexible in terms of national occupational classification (NOC) codes stipulations, and therefore permits semi-skilled or low skilled TFWs to apply for Canadian permanent legal status (Carter, 212:183). However, the TFW’s successful transition is contingent upon whether he or she satisfies the following: the ability to obtain fulltime and stable employment with an employer in the province, demonstrates language proficiency in either or Canada’s official languages, has the relevant expertise for the prospective job or sector;
and demonstrates the “intent and ability” to permanent reside in the province (Nakache & D’Aoust, 2012:170). The exception is in Ontario where the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP) flatly excludes the temporary foreign worker (OINP, 2017). The OINP consists of three streams from which it nominates individuals: the Employer/Job offer, Human Capital, and Business class (Baglay, 2012; OINP, 2017). These streams are all geared towards the recruitment of highly-skilled individuals which include individuals, foreign workers and international students and investors.

From where do the discourses of “highly-skilled”, ‘skilled’ and ‘low skilled’ immigrant emanate? Answering these questions necessitates a brief examination of the historical and contextual processes that led to the systematization and description of occupations as embedded in Canadian immigration policy. Although this history is traceable to population censuses in the Roman Empire, Alexandrin (1966:531) locates the practice of documenting the descriptions of occupation in the initial years of the colonial project in North America. As early as 1665, census data in New France used tables to provide a visual representation of the trades and professions in which the working population participated (Alexandrin, 1966:531). He also maintained that the same practice was mirrored in census data in Lower Canada (Québec) (Alexandrin, 1966). In addition, the census data collected in Lower Canada placed emphasis on documenting and disseminating industries and sources of labour supply. However, contemporary occupational classification systems emerged from a series of International Labour Organizations (ILO) conferences between 1923 and 1947. During this period, the occupational classification system valorized the “principles of qualification (Alexandrin, 1966:541), and so ILO guidelines insisted that labour statisticians compile data on what appeared to be the most pressing issues of labour relations at that time (Jansen, 2017:84). Thus, occupational classification systems were arranged in terms of “industry and occupation, employment wages, cost of living family studies and industrial disputes” (Jansen, 2017: 84). By 1954, the ILO’s International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) guidelines, which piloted the arrangement of occupations in the pre-War II period, centered its focus on the need to “investigate the structure, or the layout of the system” (Alexadrin, 1966: 541). It is in this historical context that the ISCO system identifies “translatability” as being the paramount characteristic when discussing occupations and jobs’ types in national
occupational classification systems (Alexandrin, 1966:542). For Alexandrin, the notion of translatability examines the task(s) or duties to be performed, the “purpose” for which the task must be done, the resources necessary to accomplish assigned duties as well as the "education and training" particular employee requires to effectively perform in a given job (1966:542-543).

Given this brief history, what is the historical significance of the national occupational systems to Canada? In reflecting the ILO’s conventions, the United States, in 1939, published what became known as the United States Dictionary of Occupational Titles⁴ (US DOT). This document not only provided a catalogue of the occupations in the US labour market but also a breakdown and description of the jobs and the skills required to complete the associated tasks. By the 1960s, US DOT had far-reaching influence in the US; it was broadly accessed and used by employment agencies. Canada, up until 1965, relied on using this tool, which served as the barometer for analyzing and describing the jobs in different industries in the economy (Jansen, 2017:81-82). Like the US, the Canadian Department of Manpower and Immigration and the Bureau of Statistics, in 1966, formulated the Canadian Classification and Dictionary of Occupations (CCDO) (Meltz, 1968), first published in 1971 (Jansen, 2017). The CCDO later morphed into the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) in 1980 and subsequent versions of the national occupational classification in 1991, 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016 to 2016 (Jansen, 2017:85-86)⁵.

My sources suggest that the discourse of regarding the aforementioned categories as “skills” was rooted in Canada’s immigration practices since the 1970’s. As Abboud (2013) contends, by the 1970’s, the Canadian state established immigration policies (the points system) that target “highly-skilled” and skilled workers across different occupational fields. In 1966, Canada, through its White Paper on Immigration, signalled its intention to harmonize immigration and economic policies with labour market polices (Gabriel, 2015:32). And although Canada’s economic immigrants (and not those belonging to the family or humanitarian classes) might not have always satisfied specific economic

---

⁴ The US DOT stemmed from the implementation of the Wagner-Peyser Act 1933. The US DOT was designed to operate as a trustworthy source of occupational information in the United State (DOT, 1965 p.ix).

⁵ See Jansen (2017) and Alexandrin (1966) for a more comprehensive analysis of the national occupational systems in Canada.
needs, the national occupational system only gave consideration to this class of immigrants, which through the points system were intended to enter the country on the basis of their educational merit and labour market readiness (Abboud, 2013:16). Another source of this ranking by skill is entrenched in the institutionalization of the Non-Immigrant Employment Authorization Program (NIEAP) of 1973, which not only introduced but also put into practice the use of the term “temporary foreign worker” (Bird, 2018:101-102; Sharma, 2006:97; 2001; 2000).

The introduction NIEAP regulation rationalized the assumption that there exists in the Canadian economy certain kinds of work in which Canadian residents are disinclined to participate. Therefore, the seemingly race-neutral solution was to recruit temporary foreign labour or migrant workers to fill these labour deficiencies (Bird, 2018:101-102; McLaughlin, 2010; Sharma, 2006; 2000; 2001). On the significance of the NIEAP, Walia (2010:72) analyzes the implementation of this immigration mechanism as a tool to admit a proliferation of labourers (usually from peripheralized groups) “as ‘unfree’ wage workers” vis-à-vis those who are not immobilized in the labour market. My reading of Nakache and D’Aoust (2012:158) confirms the assumptions – such as those expressed in Sharma (2001; 2006; 2012) and Walia (2010) – that native-born Canadians are reluctant to participate in low-paying farm work programs (the SAWP) and live-in-caregiver jobs (LCP), and that this discrimination persists in Canada’s temporary foreign worker (TFW) program. Further, those assumptions or widely ‘accepted’ positions have been updated or re-articulated and expressed along a continuum/terrain of skills (for example, highly skilled, semi-skilled and low-skilled jobs) in an economy (Nakache & D’Aoust, 2012) that has increasingly become dependent on the labour of TFWs in sectors other than those listed above.

As Nakache and D’Aoust (2012) suggest, the notion of skills is such that TFWs participating in skilled jobs that “Canadians are willing to perform” are not considered for residency status while TFWs spend two to six years working low skilled and “dirty jobs”. Ontario Immigration policy does not contemplate low skilled TFWs as individuals “deserving” of permanent legal status (Nakache & D’Aoust, 2012:159). Dauvergne (2014:87) and Nakache and D’Aoust (2012:159) contend that Canada’s persistent modification of its immigration policies based on a continuum of skills exemplifies
how Canada simultaneously uses its state policies to address political economic objectives and the “national need” as well as a political tool to legitimize “migration statuses”. This help us to understand and contextualize the difficulties and relative lack of permanent citizenship available to migrant workers historically incorporated in other federally operated programs - for example the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP) and the Seasonal Agricultural Program (Aguiar & Marten, 2011; McLaughlin, 2010; Sharma, 2006; Walia, 2010; Satezwich, 1991) - and why there has existed limited permanent migration opportunities for low-skilled migrant workers transitioning via the PTNPs.

My reaction to the apparent justification of these policies as “neutral” is questionable when seen through an anti-racist lens; it suggests that racialized migrants may be defined as suitable to perform only low skilled labour. Thus, the policies are not really neutral, and is a cursory feature rooted in Canada’s past. As detailed above, other than being contingent and disposable labourers, non-Whites - in particular, Chinese men between 1880 and 1920 - were constructed as subjects who are enthusiastic to perform “low skilled” jobs that their White counterparts are reluctant to engage in (Palmer, 1980). Labelled as “sojourners”, their temporariness in the Canadian Frontiers was used to deny them access to capital. This thwarted their desires or barred them from entering entrepreneurial activities such as cattle ranching and other large-scale agricultural activities (Palmer, 1980:139). Consequently, Chinese men were pigeonholed into the working class across major cities in Alberta where they were overwhelmingly represented in menial jobs such as “market gardener”, “domestic servant” or domestic services in the hotel industry as described in Palmer’s (1980:139) work. Likewise, the perceived suitability for Blacks for low-skilled labour is also traceable to the initial West Indian domestic schemes and the segmented labour force in the railway industry (Calliste, 1993/4; 2000) characterized by economic exploitation and gendered racism. For example, Black domestics and sleeping car porters were compensated at a lower rate than their White counterparts in the domestic scheme and the railway industry respectively (Calliste 1993;1993/4:132; 2000; Walker, 1985). Arguably, portering bears resemblance to domestic work labour during plantation slavery; whereas labour in the domestic scheme has been theorized as a vocation that is informed by stereotypical notions of the ‘Mammy’ figure - a Black woman who parades a smiling and happy persona while caring
for the mistresses’ children, albeit to the neglect of hers’ (Calliste 2000; 1995; Stasiulis & Bakan, 2005). Walker (1985) also contends that racist and sexist ideologies which suggest that Blacks are fundamentally fit for employment in low status occupations are entrenched in historical constructions of slavery. As he further adds, “these traditions… have resulted in a prescribed economic position for blacks… which fixed them at the lowest level of the social class hierarchy. Their colour was a label for announcing their inferior position” (Walker, 1985:34). The idea that current immigration policy has vestiges of the low status and remuneration that reinforced social relationships established by White supremacy during slavery and the plantation system, coercively fuelled by Western capitalism, are not immediately apparent unless one takes an anti-racist/postcolonial approach, which I will expand on in the next chapter.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the historically racist and exclusionary policies that have influenced the influx of immigrants to Canada. Between the years of the Canadian confederation (1867) and the 1960s, eligibility and permanent admissibility was determined on the basis of one’s racial ancestry. Arguably, the undesirability of non-White immigrants in the Canadian social fabric was sustained through a dialectics of discourse which portray the negatives of immigrants and positives of maintaining a racialized white majority in Canada (Calliste, 1993; 1993/4; 1995; Dua, 2007a). Generally, racialized subjects were not embraced as ‘desirable’ immigrants – whether they be Chinese railway workers, South Asians, Black Caribbean domestics and Black American sleeping car porters - in the wider Canadian society but rather they were seen to belong to a reserve army of labourers. Prior to the 1960s, the desirability of immigrants racialized as non-Whites in Canada was also influenced by the process of political economy and gender. These racialized bodies were called upon to satisfy labour demands but were expelled from Canada during periods of suboptimal economic growth. As such, a plethora of cultural and biological stereotypes and discourses were accessed and deployed to depict racialized immigrant groups of men and women - for example, Black Caribbean women and Asian men - as being incapable of aspiring to Canadian ‘moral’ and ‘ethical’ codes.
Furthermore, the latter part of the 1960s witnessed Canada introducing seemingly “neutral” merit-based immigration reform meant to displace the overtly racist nature that characterized the former policies that restricted the entry of (im)migrants arriving from distant shores. Arguably, these “closure” tactics are still employed in self-regulating professions such as medicine where “foreign: credentials from many countries are not accepted. For unregulated professions, employers may make the same assessment of “foreign” credentials. The “merit based” nature of the new points policies has formed a part of the latter generation of policies used to attract or retained skilled immigrants and international student graduates who decide to join the Canadian family upon completing two or more years of postsecondary education. However, the eligibility for permanent residency promised in the points system needs to be understood within the history reviewed here. It would be remarkable if the points system was without any apparent flaws, in view of the fact that other institutions such as professional regulatory bodies and employers have been shown to employ closure methods or discourse that work to exclude “foreigners”. Arguably, the word “international” avoids the stigma of the word “foreign”. Also, the participants in my study will be graduate of Canadian postsecondary institutions. However, these attempts to “change the discourse” and the process need to be assessed using theoretical perspectives that place immigration and work with critical historical frames.
Chapter 3: Theorizing Postgraduate Experiences of International Student Graduates

3.1 Introduction

The Canadian federal government takes pride in revealing official data and figures via publications on its website and newsletters, including the number of ‘skilled’ applicants selected for permanent residence. But this kind of discourse hides the applicants behind these numbers. My approach aims to centre race but also make visible and analyze the processes that characterize the trajectory of applicants of different ages, sex and race who decide to immigrate to Canada. To make sense of such data, it is necessary to select a theoretical lens that will facilitate an examination of the inner workings of the transition system that considers ageism, sexism and racism in the analysis. Therefore, in this study beginning with the lived experiences and complex realities of international student graduates originating from the Caribbean and South/Southeast Asia, I employ various theoretical approaches to interpret and understand their trajectories in Canada’s labour market-immigration nexus. My research draws from various theoretical frameworks (treated individually) including anti-racist/postcolonial perspectives, a critique of neoliberalism (racing neoliberalism), and conceptualizations of social capital and social closure. Terminology is also an issue in citing this theoretical literature, since historical and contemporary anti-racist authors use the terms “racialization” and “racism” interchangeably, even though there is concern that reproducing “race” reinforces the idea that such categories exist based on phenotypical differences. While scientists have debunked the idea, Miles (1989), in particular, argues for the use of the term ‘racialization’ instead of the term ‘racism, and I have partly adopted this this concept except where literature, cited uses the word ‘racism’ prior to this debate in the literature. Also ‘anti-racism’ is the accepted term to describe the field used by many scholars. In different places throughout the thesis, I have used the word “racism” deliberately to emphasize the structural significance of the of the discrimination. I shall clarify these debates and my position in this chapter.

3.2 Anti-racist/Postcolonial Worldview: A Personal Glimpse (Ontology)

Anchored in my worldview is an anti-racist/postcolonial perspective. As a Black hyphenated-Canadian male, I have interpreted my lived realities through an anti-racist/postcolonial prism that
centres race and the experience of bodies in Canada. Adopting the term “Black” has been associated with both accepting the racial categories assigned by Eurocentric writers and essentializing them as well as reclaiming them as positive rather than negatively constructed categories in a binary Black-White division. In my own case, I embrace this identity and the associated experiences as they help to inform my worldview.

“Racialization” helps me to make sense of the world around me; however, it does not acknowledge the racialized individual as an embodied knower (Dei, 2009; 2016). As a racialized individual, I have seen, and experience things associated with race and the trauma associated with racial discrimination. Although Canada prides itself on upholding the values of multiculturalism, my experience in different spaces of work and academia as well as the injustices meted out to non-White bodies have caused me to question the liberal meanings of ‘equality’ or the superficial and symbolic realities associated with concept (Dei, 2009; 2016; Srivastava, 2012). In capitalist society, I have seen how the ideals of meritocracy in different quarters of the society do not always recognize the non-White individual. As a labourer, I have personally witnessed how the establishment and reproduction of racial hierarchies structure the mobility of non-White bodies in my past places of employment. Although I consider it a privilege to be attending a prestigious Canadian postsecondary institution, I am cognizant that I am also being ‘raced’, despite possessing other social identities (age, gender, class, etc.). I am also conscious that my status does not exclude me from the realities of the cultural and racial stereotypes and stigmas that have been mapped unto the bodies of Black men in the Canadian landscape. And I am constantly being appraised in terms of how I integrate into different spaces in Canada (Fanon, 1967:36). These assumptions have also influenced how I negotiate and interact with different institutions in the Canadian landscape. And as Razack (2013) and Fanon (1967) maintain, we have to commence with perceptions and treatment of non-White bodies in predominantly White society and institutions of power to understand the experience of the racialized individual. Thus, these lived realities have reinforced within me the notion that race has always been and still is an organizing mechanism that structures the place, experiences, and outcomes individuals (Omi & Winant, 1986).
3.3 Anti-racist/Post-Colonial Perspectives

3.3.1 Anti-racist Assumptions

Anti-racist theories are critical perspectives that centre racialization as the fundamental lens through which other social difference or categories of oppression (for example, sex, gender, class, age, language, etc.) are examined (Dei, 1995:14; 1996; Calliste, 2000). In other words, they place emphasis on centering racialization while recognizing that this category of oppression is interwoven in an intersectional way with multiple other forms - sexism, classism and ableism (Dei, 2007; 1996, Calliste, 1996:363). Calliste (1996:363) contends that anti-racist assumptions critique the “role that state and societal institutions,” including the labour market “plays in the production and reproduction” of inequalities across the social divisions of race, gender and class. This theoretical perspective not only speaks to the “centrality of race” (Calliste, Dei & Belkhir, 1995:7) but also its salience in terms of the lived/daily realities (Dei, 1997; Omi & Winant, 1986). “Race” operates as the “point of entry through which” a multiplicity of social difference “can and must be understood” (Calliste, et al., 1995:8; Omi & Winant, 1986). As Dei (1995:14) contends, it is difficult to comprehend “the social effects of race and racism without a simultaneous knowledge of how race is mediated with other” categories of oppression.

Anti-racist scholars point out that the ideology of ‘race’ and racism had its genesis in the confluence of seventeenth century Western European expansion and colonialism. The contact between inhabitants of both ‘worlds’ was salient to the social engineering process that led to the “development [of race]” and racial categories in the colonized spaces (Banton, 1977:13). European colonizers interrogated the distinct biological and phenotypical appearance of the people whom they stumbled upon in the Americas (Omi & Winant, 1986:58; Banton, 1977:13). In citing Gossett (1965:13), Omi and Winant argue (1986:58) that the colonizers from Western Europe interrogated the humanity and civility of natives in the ‘New World’ and determined whether each “rationally distinct” group possessed “redeemable souls” (Omi & Winant, 1986:58). European constructions of people in these native spaces were constructed as sub-humans and contrasted with how Europeans viewed themselves as children of God who were born free. Indigenous peoples on the African continent were
seen as souls that needed to be saved by the Christianizing efforts of ecclesiastical emissaries (Omi & Winant, 1986: 58; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999) as part of a worldwide slave trade. In North America, Indigenous peoples faced genocide.

Anti-racist discourse also understands that the notion of Western racial oppression is concerned with the dominance of Western epistemologies. An epoch of intellectual history and reasoning was also fuelled by scholars who espoused their disdain and infectious racialization of non-White subjects (Goldberg, 1993). Europeans positioned themselves as having superior epistemologies which stemmed from the Enlightenment. The evangelists and proselytizers of this movement in the ‘New World’ arrogated to themselves the authority of re-naming and classifying knowledge which allowed them to ‘other’ people in colonial spaces. Guided by the notion of empiricism proposed by the Western European Enlightenment, the colonizers “misappropriated” and “experimented” with Indigenous peoples and thrived on the disavowal of all aspects of Indigeneity and Indigenous life in the newly colonized spaces. As Tuhiwai Smith (1999:68) puts it, “Indigenous ways of knowing were excluded and marginalized”.

Furthermore, the dominance of Western epistemologies supplanted native knowledge systems. By the 18th century, Anglo-French society embraced discourses which gave birth to the phrase ‘civilization’. These were used to advance the colonizing mission which facilitated the construction of the ‘other’ using binary representations - the constructions of the ‘other’ and notions of - what it means to be ‘European’ (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Tuhiwai Smith (1999) emphasizes that those colonizing epistemologies operate as a mechanism which categorizes “people and bodies” and is not limited to how knowledge is organized (p.68). Colonizers distinctly perceived themselves as ‘civilized’ and Indigenous as ‘uncivilized’, savages or even barbarians (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999:66). Using concepts developed in psychology other disciplines, the ‘civilized’ cultures communicated “far-reaching and dehumanizing understanding” in relation to Indigenous peoples (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999:66). This allowed colonizers to establish different taxonomies in all aspects of life, including the appearance of Europeans in relation to Indigenous communities which they claimed to have ‘discovered’ (Barot &

Barot and Bird (2001:607) contend that imagined corporeal and biological traits (clearly lacking in objectivity) were associated with European modernism, and were mapped to ideologies of racial difference and racial discourse for the purposes of communicating and establishing binaries of “superiority and inferiority”. These historical practices that reflect the ‘scientific’ rationales that prevailed from the fifteenth to mid twentieth centuries have also influenced the incorporation of immigrants across different labour industries in Canada’s development as a White settler colony (Calliste, 2000; 1993; Stasulis & Bakan, 2005). As reviewed in Chapter 2, for example, Calliste (2000) situates the low remuneration rates doled out to sleeping car porters and their perceived ‘suitability’ for exploitative labour regimes, subservient positions, and exploitation within a historical context of plantation slavery. Heir (2007) adds that notions of strength and ‘desirability’ were only mapped to non-White bodies for the expedient purpose of capital accumulation. In my undertaking of this study of immigrant racialized people entering the labour market, I see this critical approach as essential in looking for reproduction of exploitation. For example, the contemporary points system, on the surface, seems more “objective” than what preceded it, but my research is framed by a paradigm that will question such assumption, centering racialization and exploring the construction of other differences.

In anti-racist thought, European epistemologies and knowledge production not only classified humans but also introduced a racial tyrannical order that has become an inherent and far-reaching ‘organizing’ principle in Western Societies through a process of racialization (Gilroy, 1993; Omi & Winant, 1993:3). European expansionism and the drive for capital accumulation thrived from and deployed a disciplining mechanism that normalized the process of control, cultural penetration and genocide that was visited upon the bodies of those racialized as non-Whites in the Americas (Dei, 1996; Gilroy, 1993; Goldberg, 1993). Ideologies of race also legitimized coercive labour regimes and exploitative regimes (for example, African slavery and indentureship), and the overt and systemic discrimination against Blacks, Asians and other non-White groups in continental North America (Calliste, 2000; Das Gupta, 1996a; 1996b; Dei, 1996; Omi & Winant, 1986: 58; Razack, 2002). For
more than five centuries the concept has been utilized as a tool or mechanism for ordering society
(OMI & WINANT, 1993). Given historical processes and meaning associated with concept and ideology,
OMI and WINANT see race as a “fundamental principle of social organization and identity formation...
[The] society is so thoroughly racialized that to be without a racial identity is to be in danger of having
no identity at all. To be raceless is akin to being genderless” (1993:5). Hence, Mensah (2010:12)
defines race as a social construct that speaks to the ‘othering’ or grouping of individuals based on their
phenotypical and other distinct physical features. It is the “othering” of individuals that emanate from

3.3.2 What is the New Racism?

The postmodern turn in the 1970s witnessed an intellectual shift away from overt
conceptualizations of race and racial ordering of humans that prevailed in Western modernism. Anti-
racist scholars (Miles, 1993:72; 1989:62-66) point out that the identification of a ‘new’ racism also
suggests the existence and practice of an ‘old racism’ (Barker, 1981; Leach, 2005; Miles, 1993:72;
1989:62-66). This old racism was characterized by the derivatives of racial inferiority and practices of
the Western European modernism as described above. Goldberg (1993) argues that new racism
represents a departure from these overtly racist and exclusionary practices linked to genetic, biological
or phenotypical features towards those premised instead on “cultural” practices (Goldberg, 1993; Pon,
2009:61). Initially surfacing in the writings of scholars who engaged in the critical analysis of state
policies and practices of the New Right in Britain (particularly, the Margaret Thatcher-led Conservative
administration), ‘new’ anti-racists see “race as culture” (Barker, 1981:25; Goldberg, 1993:70; Miles,
groups, religion, group habits, norms, customs which consists of the typical style of behaviour, dress,
literature, cuisine, music, literature and art”. Writing in the United States (US) context, Leach also
(2005:433-434) identifies the new racism as a paradigm shift in contemporary discourse and practice
that critiqued the “de jure racial equality” enshrined in the state and institutional policies.
Couched in the new racism/racialization is a language of cultural difference which represents a mirage of racial equality. From my perspective, the discourse of race and how we use it to speak about people and assign meanings to different groups of people transcends time. When racialization is codified in cultural terms (discourse), it is difficult for us to decipher or distinguish between the ‘old’ and ‘new’ racism. In other words, “culturizing” makes it possible for institutions to discriminate without being reproached for the portrayal of such (perceived) racism (Goldberg, 1993). I expect to find evidence of such processes in my research. Intertwined in “race as culture”, are discourses, policies and practices that feed into narratives that promote the ideals of tolerance, patriotism, multiculturalism, diversity and nationhood. In so doing, the process discriminates against different assemblages without insinuating or making a direct appeal to ‘race’ or genetic superiority; it does so without using the word ‘race’ (Barker, 1981; Goldberg, 1993:73, Miles & Torres, 2007; Miles, 1989; 1982; Leach, 2005:434; Pon, 2009). There also exists a concerted effort amongst countries that realized de jure equality to adopt a new rhetoric and “avoid the old fashioned definitions of race” (Barker, 1981:25). Barker argues that the new racism discourse emerged from the conscious efforts of the Tories (especially the New Right) in Britain who were in search for a more influential conceptualizations of race that eclipsed older understandings of the term, which by then had been coloured with notions of Hitlerism (Barker, 1981:25). The new racism instead accessed and utilized a narrative of “cultural difference” which achieved the same objectives that older concepts did. As Wetherell and Potter (1992:137) contend: “Cultural discourse, therefore, now assumes the same task as ‘race’. It becomes a naturally occurring difference” that is perceived in terms of “traditional practices, attitudes, values and civilizations.”

In the ‘new racism’, race as culture also invokes interpretations of nationalism and racial difference. This is relevant to the insistence that racialized international students must obtain “Canadian” experience before entering the Canadian labour market, even in technological fields that have a global reach. As such, this discourse is used to map racialized groups to the different nation states. As Barker posits, “It is a theory linking race and nation” (1981:22). In referencing public debates that characterized British immigration in 1978, Barker (1981) and Goldberg (1993) contend that Thatcher echoed the racist and anti-immigrant sentiments of her countrymen and women who shared
the perception that the culture of immigrants would destroy their homogenous White culture in Britain. Goldberg (1993:73) suggests that Thatcher identified and tapped into the trepidation of “native British citizens who perceived that they were being swamped by people [from the Commonwealth and Pakistan] with a different culture.” These discourses are being played out in the extreme in US President Donald Trump’s justification of the building a wall to keep out Mexicans and others from the Global South, similar statements surface in Canada. Although in the case of Canada, the biological or inferior assumptions associated with the old racism/racialization are not summoned, Goldberg (1993) points to the racism in Thatcher’s attempt to deal with Britain’s perceived fear of a non-White immigrant cohort. The use of a non-racist language, or what Barker (1981:23) calls a “pseudo-biological culturalism”, becomes a new lens through which nations perceive and explain human nature. Barker (1981) further claims that humans are genetically wired to “to defend our way of life, traditions and customs against outsiders, not because they are inferior, but because outsiders are part of different cultures than our own (p. 23–24). Thus, by summoning a non-racist narrative, ‘new’ racism questions the place of immigrants racialized as non-White desiring to enter Britain, and thereby legitimizes their exclusion from the social formation. Referring to people in cultural terms and not biological terms makes for an “easier” conversation in hiring in the workplace. Thus, this kind of racialization is subtle in its appearance, whenever utilized. In this research, I expect that the use of “new racist” language will become apparent in the labour market (for example, in the hiring process) and in discourse that characterizes the immigration process.

On the subtleness of the ‘new’ racism, scholars (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Leach, 2005) also have maintained that in apparent colour-blindness, privilege remains uninterrogated. For Bonilla-Silva (2014), White privileging, that is supported through a discourse of colour-blindness, is most important and downplays the significance of racism/racialization in general. Propped up by notions of liberalism (for example, freedom and equality) these racial attitudes, racial inequality and institutional practices, are parcelled and repackaged, not based on overt notions of biological inferiority, but through covert or “non-racial” languages and discourse. These covert expressions of racism/racialization are difficult to detected but are often reflected in institutional practices and policies in the United States (and
Bonilla-Silva (2014:1) sees as the enigma of racism. The obfuscation legitimizes colour-blindness so that Whites (and institutions of power) can claim “they don’t see any colour but people” (Bonilla-Silva, 2014:1). But Leach (2005:439) repudiates “de jure” assumptions of racial and societal equality supported by new racism. In citing Balibar (1991) and Omi and Winant (1986), Leach contends that the repeal of racist state policies in the US (and I would add Canada) did not effectively end racial discrimination. Instead, the implementation of covert colour-blind state policies makes it possible for institutions of power to “formally deny racial discrimination as a continuing source of societal inequality” (Leach, 2005:439). In this research, I will explore how the apparent colour-blind mechanism of the points to be obtained for various reasons (age, language ability, employer needs) affects skilled migrants.

Canadian scholars have also critiqued the integrity of multiculturalism – purported liberal pluralism - as imperialism. Multiculturalism portrays Canada as a harmonious society where difference becomes insignificant (Dei, 1996;1997; James & Davis, 2012; Lopez, 2015; Srivastava, 2012). However, critical race and anti-racist scholars like Dei (2007:59), Lopez (2016; 2015:5-6), Srivastava (2007:297-301) and Warburton (2007:283) challenge liberal understandings of equality, diversity and reform, and interrogate/disrupt issues relating to domination, systemic racialization, and the marginalization of groups by hegemonic power structures of the society in order to realize institutional change. Anti-racist theory maintains that “state and societal institutions contain and manage” subaltern groups (Calliste, 2000:148). These institutions do not, of their own volition, seek to address the root causes associated with systemic racialization, ageism and male dominance in the absence of mounting contestations (Calliste, 2000: 148). Individuals, groups and/or organizations employ different strategies to combat the “(re)production and persistence of power and privileges that emerge as a result of race, racial prejudice and its intersection with other social categories (Dei, 1995; 1996, 2007: 59). I will explore the strategies that racialized international student graduates used to circumvent such obstacles when joining the labour market.

On ‘new racism’, Miles questions the analytical significance of race, as it ‘reifies’ and reproduces the processes associated with the old racism. Miles (1989) distinguishes the ideology of race from

48
‘race’ using racialization as a more suitable lens through which we can theorize difference in contemporary contexts. A more contemporary term, taking into account multiple oppression, is “minoritization,” which can replace sexism, ageism and racism. Historicizing the emergence of the term ‘race,’ Miles (1989:73-74) questions debates that associate race and racism, since they serve to preserve the “idea of ‘race’” (or the term ‘race’), which symbolizes and signifies a scientific legitimacy of racial typologies. Miles (1989) famously dismisses ‘race’ as having no biological basis as discovered by scientists. This is what he refers to as the “problematic” of racism (1989:72; 1982:30). And so, he makes it clear that the term ‘race’ should be placed in a “dustbin of useless analytical terms” (Miles, 1989:72). Advocating instead the use of the term ‘racialization’, he explains that signifying phenotypical features is “also a means to effect exclusionary practices, with the result that patterns and structures of material inequity between populations are so differentiated are created” (Miles, 1989:72). This then becomes inappropriately “reified in legislation” (Miles, 1989:74). And so, recognizing ‘race’ has a long pre-history he posits employing racialization, which he defines as:

those instances where social relations between people have been structured by the signification of human biological characteristics in such a way as to define and construct differentiated social collectivities…. The concept therefore refers to a process of categorisation, a representational process of defining the Other (usually, but not exclusively) somatically (Miles, 1989:75).

Thus, he emphasizes that the important part of the process is “dialectal”, in that both “self” and “other” are defined by the same criterion (1989:75), such as “Whites” distinct from “Blacks.”

Historically, Miles (1982) sees racial categorization of people as a phenomenon embedded in a British bourgeoisie worldview that speaks of a “superior white race”. Along with many other scholars, Miles (1982:75) has problematized the myth that this ruling class was endowed “with a biological capacity for invention, democracy and the spread of ‘civilisation’.” In his words, “the class made sense of the world, even if it was nonsense” (Miles, 1982:75). In Marxist terms, this social construction was cemented amongst the British ruling class and formed the basis for understanding and interpreting the “difference between groups of people in the world economic system dominated by the capitalist mode of production” (Miles, 1982:113-119). As a White settler colony, this ideology was imported to Canada. The construction not only operated as the lens through which one explains the “real difference between
the colonizer and the colonized”, but also “penetrated all aspects of British education and literary culture” (Miles, 1993; 1982). Miles (1989:76), in *Racism*, attributes the rise of racialization to the “historical emergence of the idea of ‘race’ and to its subsequent reproduction and application”.

Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993:11) challenge Miles’ definition of racialization as a socially constructed process, in which racism only occurs when the racial categorization is permeated with “negative validation” or appraisal. Their concern is that a consequence of this limited use of ‘racism’, is that the focus is only on “racial hierarchies” but not on policies and practices relating to or resulting from institutional and structural racism (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1993:11). But I do not find Anthias and Yuval-Davis’ (1993) interpretation to be a fair assessment of Miles (1989) because racialization acknowledges that the difference between racial groupings emerges from a process. This process moves away from the myth of a deficit within a minoritized individual, focusing instead on a process originating outside the individual. Also, the concept of racialization is superior to Anthias and Yuval-Davis’ treatment of racism because the literature supports distinction between the ideology and the practice of racism (Carmichael & Hamilton, Miles, 1989, 1968, Sivanand, 1973; 1985; cited in Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1993:12). In other words, when discussing racism, it is theoretically useful to separate “set of practices” and structures (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1993:12). Miles suggests that structural practices within societal institutions that lead to the marginalized of minority groups do not inevitably emerge from or contribute to racism (Miles, 1989 cited in Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1993:13). Instead, they may arise or can be linked to multiple processes including class (Miles, 1989; Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1993:13).

3.3.3 White Settler Nationalism

Canada has conventionally associated its distinctiveness (or exceptionalism) with the notion of the “Great White North” and its related imaginaries of sparsely populated and snowy terrestrial innocence, emptiness and wilderness (Baldwin, Cameron & Kobayashi, 2011, Darden & Fong, 2011). For Baldwin et al. (2011:1), the term is fictitious, as it intertwines “history, geography, aesthetics and science” into a nationalized fantasy that summons an allegory of nature’s wholesomeness that
underpins the “norms of racial purity”. But from a critical perspective, the presence or imagery of pristine, snowy and icy terrain situated in the Arctic latitudes not only represents a misapprehension of “Whiteness” in the Great White North (Canada) but also connotes a desire for a social formation in which all the inhabitants share a common value system and destiny (Baldwin et al., 2011). Critical race theorists have encouraged questioning of these normative understandings of “Whiteness” as they relate to the persistence of racialized social relations in Canada (Aguiar & Marten, 2011; Razack, 2013). Baldwin et al. (2011:1-15) point to a critical analysis of Canadian national identity from a historical, cultural and even geographical perspectives to centre processes/structures of ‘whiteness’, racism and other inequities that are obfuscated in the ‘Great White North’. In other words, we must rethink and problematize the perceived mythologies of exceptionalism and innocence which lie at the heart of this valorizing discourse of Canadian identity (Baldwin et al., 2011).

In the Canadian landscape, the discourse of White settler nationalism became entrenched in the idea of the nation-building project during the infancy of the Confederation period (Dua, 2007a). The “Fathers” of the Canadian Confederation communicated their intentions to reproduce a country that mirrored the White racial group that existed in Britain (Dua, 2007a:446). In 1867, Prime Minister John A. Macdonald passionately avowed that Canada was a “White man’s country” (Dua, 2007a: 446). The imposition of such hegemonic order emphasizes Whiteness as a cultural norm and national identity (Aguiar & Marten, 2011; Baldwin et al., 2011). White settler nationalism speaks to the legal practices and resulting discourses in Canada that directly or indirectly marginalize/inhibit the Native population from participating and contributing to the development of the emergent nation-state (Baldwin et al., 2011; Dua, 2007a). In its development as White Settler colony, Canada also utilized the state apparatus to invite White immigrants, predominantly from Western Europe, to expropriate and settle lands that were commandeered from Native communities, disrupted and penetrated their culture, and subjected them to further so-called civilizing efforts (Baldwin et al., 2011; Harris, 2011; Razack, 2013).

Moreover, like Indigenous peoples, other non-Whites have also experienced varying degrees of exclusion from policies that aimed to preserve “White Canada”. The construction of “Whiteness” or the White settler colony is associated with a sequence of racist, "exclusionary practices", “societal
practices,” and labour recruitment practices/policies and legislation that peripheralized, or treated as insignificant, individuals who did not belong to the White race (Aguiar & Marten, 2011: 141; Calliste, 1991; 1993/4; 2000; Dua, 2007a: 447). The erasure of non-White history positions Canada as a tolerant society in comparison to the United States with a “history of slavery and the historical legacy of segregation and lynching (Flynn, 2008:446). However, it is impossible for Canada to position itself as having an unblemished history, as the practice of slavery was very much present even if reduced in scale compared to its neighbour to the south (Cooper, 2006; Flynn, 2008:446). Tepperman (2016) notes that Mackenzie King, in a 1947 oration to the House of Commons, underscored his preference for an immigration policy primarily that recruited people from the British Isles or Northern Europe; entry for others was, as noted in Chapter 2, regulated by political or economic factors or they were barred because of their racial origins. The use of exclusionary discourse and the implementations of legislations/regulations that have inhibited the participation of non-White racial groups in societal and state institutions (or ‘write’ the presence of non-Whites out of the state) lingers in 21st century Canada (Boutilier, 2019; Lau, 2019). Whiteness as a cultural norm in Canada revolves not only around state policies and race/race relations but is also structured by the processes of gender, sex, cultural stereotypes and political economy (Aguiar & Marten, 2011; Calliste 1993; 1993/4). The existence of a points system could be argued to address this history. However, a critical approach is necessary regarding current policy and practice regarding immigration in view of this history, Thus, anti-racist and postcolonial theoretical perspectives are well suited to my study.

The idea of innocence connoted by Whiteness also warrants further unpacking. Razack (2013) picks out the salience of Indigenous and other non-White bodies in the White settler state and connects this to the perpetuation of the colonial project. She further contends that the White settler society emphasizes the thievery of Indigenous lands and that supremacy is at the centre of the asymmetrical relationship that exists between the dominant and subaltern groups in the colonial project. Efforts to

---

6 For a more expansive history on the practice of slavery in Canada, see Afua Cooper’s (2006) The hanging of Angelique: The untold story of Canadian slavery and the burning of Old Montreal.
disrupt/de-centre the White settler discourse must consider the idea that Indigenous and non-Whites alike experience various forms of violence, marginalization and atrocities that result from the implementation state policies or the lack thereof (Razack, 2013). Therefore racism, whether in the past or contemporary times, is a traumatic experience. Dei, Karumanchery and Karumanchery-Luik (2004) note that the daily experience of the oppressed is marred by incidents of racial violence or injustice. For Dei et al. (2004), these forms of injustices or racial violence, instigated by the oppressor, cause non-Whites to experience ongoing episodes of trauma. Dei et al. (2004:129) identify three probable individual/collective behavioural patterns that gauge whether or not an injury on the part of the individual has been perpetuated. Individuals upon whom racial violence are visited often experience emotions of being trapped, “surprise, and exposure to the point of exhaustion” (Dei et al., 2004:129). The oppressed are also pathologized for resorting to hostile/defensive mechanisms when responding to violence brought on by the oppressor and risks being typecast as “bad”, “aggressive” and “angry” individuals, while others are regarded as being “too sensitive” (Dei et al., 2004:129). In contrast, those who opt for a passive defence mechanism may experience emotions relating to fear, bad-temper and gloom/melancholy. Thus, exploring the racism and responses and strategies employed by immigrants of colour integrating into the labour market are an important part of my research.

Space and racialization/race are also important in White settler nationalism discourse, as they raise questions of belonging and exclusions in the Great White North. Arguably, non-White bodies within this space (e.g. the Great White North) are read and treated differently from White bodies (Adelson, 2005; Aguiar & Marten, 2010/2011; 2011; Bonds & Inwood, 2016:715-722; Fanon, 1967:173; Hackworth, 2016; Razack, 2000; 2002; 2007; 2012). First, contact between White explorers and Indigenous populations (Lutz, 2009) took place in a colonizing world where racializing notions already existed, that is, before the arrival of coloured non-Indigenous bodies (Aguiar & Marten, 2010/2011). Fanon (1967:36-37) reminds us that racialized bodies from the Francophone Caribbean were assessed on the basis of their ability to “integrate” in France. As Fanon (1967:36) argues, “since the Negro is appraised in terms of the extent of his [or her] assimilation, it is also understandable why the newcomer expresses himself only in French.” Bauder (2006) makes similar arguments in the
contemporary context pointing to how immigrants interface with different Canadian institutions (for example, the labour market) and are appraised on the basis of their adaptability to cultural norms and Razack (2002: 2012) has emphasized that non-Whites continue to experience the (un)intended consequences of labour and state policies.

In citing Miles (1989:74), Creese (2009:193) suggests that racialization speaks to the societal meanings that are associated with the “perceived phenotypical and/cultural differences” of individuals from different groups in society. However, the process of racialization clearly varies across different geographic spatialities and temporal scales and is structured by power dynamics and “cultural imaginaries” that result in the differing constructions of race across “different historical and national contexts” (Acker; 2006; Creese, 2009:193; Ignatiev, 2009; Kibria et al., 2014). The term does not only comprise individuals who belong to peripheralized or racial groups that are “othered” but also includes those who belong to ethnic majority groups (whether they be racialized as White or otherwise) because the discourse and understandings that mediate how we think about racial identity also vary across histories/time and national contexts (Acker, 2009; Giles, 1992; Ignatiev, 2009). For example, Giles (1992), Ignatiev (2009) and Kibria et al. (2014) demonstrate how changes in conceptions of Whiteness contribute to the incorporation of non-Whites – Portuguese and Italians - into the dominant White majority that has also cemented Whiteness as the position of power and privilege in North America. Thus, I chose to invite international students in my study who studied and looked for work in different cities in Ontario.

The concept of racialization is also utilized by scholars to illuminate racial patterns of employment and inequities that exist in the different sectors of the economy (Creese, 2009; Block & Galabuzi, 2011; Galabuzi, 2006; Teelucksingh & Galabuzi, 2007). In contrast to individuals who are Canadian-born and racialized as White, immigrants and women, especially racialized women, are disproportionately underrepresented in better paying and secure forms of employment (Creese, 2009; Gilmore, 2008; Galabuzi, 2006). Creese (2009:193-194) also maintains that “racialization processes” are connected to the complexities of the “histories of colonization” across various contexts, “gender, sexuality and class relations”. Historically, immigrants – of Black and Asian ancestry – are read as threats not only
to race relations but also to the labour market (Calliste, 1991; 2000; Dua, 2007a; 2007b). Thus, they are in my study. From this perspective, the body is a site that is laden with political and cultural meanings (Brand, 2005). The body as a site is not only controlled by individuals who personify or embody it; rather the meanings ascribed to it are also “constructed, occupied [and pathologized] by other embodiments” (Brand, 2001: 38). Cooper (2000) argues that the “subjectivities or knowledge produced about Black (and other racialized) subjects” in Canada has to be “situated in the context of the White settler colony” discourse (p. 39). As such, the Black body is historically associated with socio-cultural stereotypes or traits relating to “resistance”, “transgression”, “moral decadence” “violence” (Brand, 2001:35-36), and “laziness” (Calliste, 1993), while Asian bodies are constructed as exhibiting ‘passivity’ and ‘docility’ (Bonacich et al., 2008; Stasiulis & Bakan, 2005). Both the capitalist class and the Canadian state have historically appropriated cultural stereotypes to justify suitability and position of certain (im)migrants or racialized groups in the labour market (Calliste, 2000; Stasiulis & Bakan, 2005). These constructions also speak to the socio-historic exclusion of racialized bodies – and now increasing fear of ‘brown’ bodies and Muslims (Islamophobia) in Canada (Marlino, 2007; Maloney, 2017; Tunney, 2019). Taken together with racialization, racism also speaks to the way in which these bodies are singled out for discrimination and systemic racism.

Kang et al. (2016) and Oreopoulus (2011) assert that racialization in North American labour markets gets manifested in the form of resumé ‘whitening’. My interpretation of Kang et al. (2006) and Oreopoulus (2011) suggest that resumé ‘whitening’ is the ‘massaging’, ‘doctoring’, ‘fiddling’ or ‘sanitization’ of the resumé by racialized individuals in order to make it more acceptable for the recruiting company. By and large, applicants with anglicized names are 39% more likely to have an employer follow-up with them as opposed to an immigrant who has a blend of English first names and Pakistani, Indian, Chinese surnames or individuals with ethnic-sounding names (Oreopolous, 2011:160). Likewise, applicants possessing Canadian education, expertise or experience and English-sounding names tend to be favoured with higher rates of callbacks from prospective employers (Oreopolous, 2011). To counter or lessen the likelihood of being marginalized in the labour market, Kang et al. (2016: 470) aver that applicants of non-White heritage should “change how they present
themselves – especially in relation to racial cues” prior to submitting a job application. Job applicants (belonging to racially minoritized groups) make calculated or strategic decisions to “conceal or dial back racial cues” on résumé/applications to improve their number of prospective interviews, and by extension, their labour market opportunities/outcomes (Kang et al., 2016:470).

Finally, different communities/spaces/neighbourhoods such as the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area in Canada are racially coded and residence may possibly impact one’s job prospects (Hulchanski, 2010:1-2). Space speaks to the physical address and neighbourhoods in which applicants who are former international student graduates reside, whereas race encompasses ethnic background, language, accents or possible ties to ethnic associations. For example, (im)migrants to Canada – who include international students of varying racial backgrounds – may settle in racialized neighbourhoods in the GTA (Hulchanski, 2010:11) and immigrants in this space (i.e. White settler society) have a distinctly different experience from that of their White counterparts. Therefore, an antiracist/postcolonial theoretical perspective is uniquely appropriate for my research. Investigating the experiences of international student graduates requires an approach that theorizes difference and incorporates the different aspects of their identities – for example, race, space and class (Crenshaw, 1991; 2010; 1989; Gilbert, 1993; Razack, 2003). Class refers to the socio-economic status to which international student graduates belong, and it intersects with the category of race as do gender and age. Race, class and space feed into each other as well as other categories – and influence labour market entry and outcomes for international student graduates in Canada; thus my postcolonial framework will help to inform questions that I will raise in interviews.

3.3.4 Intersectionality

Although I have chosen, following Dei (1995; 1996; 1997; 2007), to centre race/racialization, my research acknowledges that there exist multiple dimensions of oppression. Critical scholars insist that different social categories of oppression are inextricably associated with each other and therefore should not be examined separately (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991). Studies examining the intricacies of race and gender in the lives of individuals, have fuelled other inquiries on intersectional oppression
(Collins, 2000). Developed by Crenshaw, this perspective centres attention on our political and social differences and identifies processes which are often hidden. Thus, individuals encounter not only race and class stigmas but also stigmas associated with gender, age, ethnicity, etc. (Calliste, 1991; Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991; 2010; Dua, 2007b; Gilbert, 1993; Gunaratnam 2003; Ng, 1993, 1991; 1986). In the Canadian context, Ng (1991) maintains that it is difficult to achieve a comprehensive explanation of race/racialization relations without paying attention to various social identities or differences which historically have and continues to structure the development of the Canadian state. She contends that notions of gender, class and race/ethnicity are crucial to understanding the processes that mediate the ‘incorporation’ of racialized men and women, including Irish and Scottish immigrant setters in Atlantic Canada (Ng, 1991). For example, she illustrates how male and female participation in the private and public spheres were radically restructured when these immigrants left their homeland and entered Canada (Ng, 1991:17). As indicated in Chapter 2, notions of race, gender, and sexist ideologies informed the policies that structured the ‘integration’ of racialized minorities in Canada (Calliste 1991; 1993/4). Anti-racist feminist scholars have also problematized the experiences of racially oppressed middle-class immigrant women, illustrating how their lived experience differs significantly from that of their White counterparts of similar social status (Bannerji, 1995; Dua, 1992). The intersections of race with several dimensions of gender – “femininity, sexuality, family, marriage and work” – produce a different experience for women belonging to both racial groups (Dua, 2007b:175).

Gunaratnam (2003), in Researching ‘Race’ and Ethnicity, illuminates the intersection of race and age from a cross-cultural interview which she conducted with an Afro-Caribbean man in a nursing hospice. Gunaratnam fielded a few questions to the researcher which, when he tries to answer, produced what she termed “insecurities of meaning” (2003:139-140) between the young South Asian woman and the elderly Black Caribbean man whom she expected would respond from a fatherly standpoint. As Gunaratnam (2003) explains, insecurities of meaning can be linked to the “subjective” and “social differences” that transpire during interactions between a research interviewer and participant (p.139). Reflecting on the interview process, Gunaratman (2003) realizes that her interview
question posed to the participant was not only invasive but reveals multiple forms of oppression; he was much older than the researcher (i.e. the South Asian woman), had restricted mobility and belonged to a stigmatized group. These many observations in the contemporary literature show that an intersectional analysis can be fruitful for a study on the transition of student migrants in Canada. I expect that participants will encounter multiple forms of oppression often referred to as a “double” or in some cases “triple whammy” while navigating the labour market and the immigration system.

3.4 Racing Neoliberalism

3.4.1 What is neoliberalism?

In my examination of the transition of international student graduates to the Canadian labour market, it is impossible to ignore the influence of neoliberal discourse and policy. Neoliberalism speaks to the influence or enforcement of markets and market principles in the different aspects of society (Olssen & Peters, 2002). As the antithesis of the Keynesian welfare state which sees the state as the principal mechanism for the redistribution of wealth, neoliberalism refers to the return to classical economics that stresses the importance of individual freedom (Peck and Tickell, 2002). But this individual freedom is not political or civic – it instead is achieved through the enforcement of market principles and “competitiveness” in all institutions and spheres of human activity (Harvey, 2005; Olssen & Peters, 2002; Peck and Tickell, 2002:380). Under this neoliberal paradigm, the state is anticipated to increasingly assume a minimalist role. Wikan (2015:6) contends that the global diffusion of neoliberalism dismantles or disembeds the welfare state and curtails the “redistributive taxation associated with Keynesianism”. For neoliberal proponents, the collection of taxes for the purpose of funding welfare programs tramples on personal freedoms; the assumption is that it does not incentivize the rational individual to generate wealth or pursue self-interest. Likewise, these policies are read as a state trespass on individual property rights (Wikan, 2015:4). However, while neoliberal policies champion market ideals, they also insist that the state enforce the rule of law and implement a regulatory mechanism to protect individual freedoms, property rights and an economic environment that facilitate investments (Harvey, 2005; Peck & Tickell, 2002; Springer, 2002).
The rise of neoliberal discourse occurred within the context of the perceived failure of Keynesian capitalism in the 1970s. Characterized by stagflation – which is the twin processes of high unemployment and high inflation rates – it was evident to neoliberal proponents that regulation of market capitalism had failed and could not produce the intended “growth” (Harvey, 2005:12; Peck & Tickell, 2002). Influenced by the free market economic discourse espoused by intellectualists in the 1970s, then Britain’s Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and US President Ronald Reagan, early evangelists and pioneers of the neoliberal state, transformed their countries (Peck & Tickell, 2002:381; Springer, 2010: 1026-1027: Swarts. 2013). By the 1980s, Reagan’s administration mirrored the privatization policies implemented under the Thatcher government, in a process reflecting TINA – “there is no alternative” discourse (Peck & Tickell, 2002; Weis, 2005). This phenomenon is responsible for cementing unregulated capitalism in the global capitalist order (Harvey, 2005). Both political figures were able to corral state power behind marketization and deregulation policies (Harvey, 2005).

An analysis of neoliberalism requires that we examine how the process unfolds across different spaces. My interpretation of Peck and Tickell (2002) suggests that these policies diffused across space through intergovernmental organizations – more specifically Bretton Woods institutions – for example, the International Money Fund (IMF), Work Bank and World Trade Organization (WTO) (formerly the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) – first in the United States and then more broadly. This was implemented in compliance with IMF structural adjustment policies (SAPs), by which highly indebted states in the South were and still required to reorient their economies to reflect the principles of privatization, efficiency, currency devaluation, free trade, amongst other stipulations (Springer, 2010). The World Bank provides loans needed to bring ‘economic stability’ to the domestic economy (Wikan, 2005). Scholars have also outlined the unfolding of neoliberal austerity and discourse in the Caribbean (Canterbury, 2007; Freeman, 2007; Mezahav, 2001; Miller, 1992; Mullings, 1998; 1999; 2004; 2009; Sheller, 2009; Timms, 2006; Weis, 2005). Their work illuminates the initial contestations to these policies, particularly from the left, which espoused democratic statism, as well as the compliance and consequences on women, the family, the public sector and private labour force.
Whereas Caribbean and developing states were subjected to SAPs, Canada was not. This begs the question: what accounts for the prevailing neoliberal discourse in Canada? To answer, I turn to the political sphere. Canadian political figures have invoked these economic discourses of efficiency and trade liberalization on the campaign trail, and once in office, these inform policies (Clark, 2002; MacLellan, 2009; Swarts, 2013). For example, Canada’s decision to liberalize trade policies via the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA7) precipitated the flexibilization of labour, or the movement of Canadian manufacturing jobs to cheap sources (Singh, 2002). Arguably, this transformed the Ontario economy to a service-oriented sector in which workers increasingly compete for the same jobs. Harvey (2005:39) contends that neoliberal governments had to “manufacture consent” via the electoral process polls or what he calls “common sense” (Harvey, 2005:39). The neoliberal notion of “common sense”, as expressed by Harvey (2005), does not necessarily refers to “the truth” but rather has (potential) distortions thereof, which are often “misleading, obfuscating or disguising real problems under cultural prejudice” (p. 39). He prefers “critical engagement” with the societal issues (Harvey, 2005:39) and adds that the neoliberal project is a “hegemonic mode of discourse” that required a rejection of Keynesianism by government (i.e. consent) to take hold on some societies (Harvey, 2005:2-3).

In addition, the contrasting manners in which neoliberal discourses are taken up across space describe what Springer (2010:1031) and Ong (2007) (using technology in a Foucauldian discourse sense) interpret as “hybridized ‘mobile technology’”. As Springer (2010:1031) contends, neoliberalism has morphed from a “political project” into an “ideological construct”. This transformation, Springer (2010) argues, explains why “neoliberalization in one setting is necessarily understood as unfolding quite differently than neoliberalization in another geographical location” (p.1030). Wikan (2015) concurs with this notion of contextual specificities of the economic doctrine. Just as I have argued for race and space above, Wikan (2015) reveals that neoliberalism differs across space, as its policies

7 At the time of writing, this trilateral free trade agreement will be succeeded by the United States- Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) or the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) as it is known in Canada. The parties have arrived at an agreement in principle; however, the deal awaits ratification by the federal legislature in each member state. See Meredith MacLeod (2018, Nov 30). "What's in a name? Canada goes with CUSMA for new trade deal". CTV News.
tend to reflect the shape of the respective society. From a critical perspective, however, similar epistemic outcomes, demonstrate that neoliberalism produces common developmental disparities across the many spaces where its policies have been implemented (Springer, 2010; Wikan, 2015).

What does this have to do with my research, especially my centering of racialization? Contemporary neoliberalism also considers competition and precarity which are mapped to race. Herod (2018) discusses neoliberalism in terms of the changing organization of work and “protections” which are disappearing, and slowly being substituted with flexible, “precarious work”. These processes will likely affect international student graduates seeking jobs in Canada. Herod (2018) contends that workers in the twentieth century are given no choice but to participate in precarious work, which is characteristic of the neoliberal labour force. These precarious jobs are “part-time and short-term” in nature and defined by little or no protection from unions or the state (Herod, 2018:56, 86). Unlike standard work, precarious work is characterized as casual in nature, “low-paying”, lacking in safety protections, job security and benefits (Herod, 2018:88). Standing (2014) also contends that immigrants are incorporated into this precarity as the movement of transnational capital and global capitalist production seeks workers who can provide a cheap labour supply. Bonacich et al. (2008) and Bourgeault et al. (2016) also examine the racialization of global labour which moves racialized bodies as a cheap source of labour that is easily exploited. Workers in this labour force are expected to be flexible in order to meet global demands (Arnold and Bongiovi, 2012; Bonacich et al., 2008; Herod, 2018; Kalleberg & Hewison, 2013). Employees must demonstrate the willingness to work in an environment where the labour arrangements and wages are easily altered to ensure efficiency and productivity in the firm (Ofreno, 2010 cited in Arnold & Bongiovi, 2012).

3.4.2 What is ‘Racing’ Neoliberalism?

Studies on neoliberalism have begun to be concerned with racialization and its role as a fundamental organizing principle for societies (Inwood, 2015; Roberts & Mahtani, 2010). The work of Theodore (2007:252-253) suggests that neoliberal reforms have eroded labour protections and encouraged the rise of labour participation in the “informal economy” (or literally, the ‘Black Market’)
where labour power is predominantly supplied by non-White "illegal immigrants". Wilson (2006) demonstrates that neoliberal policies are responsible for the economic disenfranchisement of Blacks in ghettos in cities across the US Rust Belt. However, Roberts and Mahtani (2010) criticize both Theodore (2007) and Wilson’s (2006) mainstream interpretations of neoliberalism and race. Invoking Harvey’s (2005) notion of “common-sense”, Roberts and Mahtani (2010) and Inwood (2010) demonstrate how the political and capitalist classes tap into neoliberal discourse to implement policies that replicate racism. Because Theodore and Wilson employ “race” as a “fixed category”, their critics believe that mainstream neoliberalism scholarship traditionally illuminates the implications of neoliberal regulations, while projecting its consequences onto racialized bodies (Roberts & Mahtani, 2010:250). Roberts and Mahtani (2010:250) also contend that the prior literature offers an inadequate explanation of the neoliberalism. For them, the earlier literature on race and neoliberalism portrays the racial consequences or the “socio-economic process” of the neoliberal orthodoxy, while placing a minuscule amount of emphasis on “the ways in which the concept modifies the way it [race neoliberalism] is experienced or understood in society” (Roberts & Mahtani, 2010:250). Instead, Roberts and Mahtani (2010:248-250) advocate an interpretation that sees both processes as being “mutually constitutive.” They support a paradigmatic shift in inquiries that stress the salience of “racing neoliberalism”, not neoliberalism and race as separate entities (Roberts and Mahtani, 2010:248-250).

Roberts and Mahtani (2010) also suggest that investigations into neoliberalism are often concerned with racial consequences stemming from the insistence and implementation of neoliberal regulations and discourse, whereas “racing” neoliberalism would understand processes of racialization and “racism” that are entrenched in “the neoliberal project” (p.250). This approach, Roberts and Mahtani (2010) argue, would best elucidate “neoliberalism as a facet of a racist society that works to” simultaneously reinforce “the racial structure of society, while also modifying the processes of racialization” (p.250).

Bonacich et al. (2008) also pick upon on the embeddedness of the racialization process in capitalism. Bonacich et al. (2008), in ‘Racialization of Global Labor’, situates the contemporary global capital expansion within a “global system of White supremacy” that not only exploits but is also in an
incessant search for labour power of non-White bodies (p.1). For Bonacich et al. (2008), the capitalist system "is maintained and structured within a global system" in which the racially accentuated pecking order distinctively exploits an individual or groups of labourers on the basis of their "gendered and racialized" identities or locations (p.1). The dominant position and power relations generally wielded by the White racialized groups in the labour system offer them more privileges in the global labour system in contrast to non-Whites who are considered to occupy a "subordinate" position - and is therefore engaged in labour activities typically with inferior working conditions, a greater degree of exploitations and so on (Bonacich, et al., 2008:1).

Inwood’s (2015) work also locates the embeddedness of race in the neoliberal ascendancy. Historicizing the role of race in the United States, he reveals its significance preserving and reproducing ideologies of Whiteness during the period of economic transformation that occurred in the 1970s. He achieves this by mapping the genesis of neoliberal discourses in the US not only to the compromise between capital and labour classes but also the ‘wit’ of the political capitalist class who exploit, for their advantage, the racial tensions spilling over into the Civil Rights period (Inwood, 2015). Because racializing discourse (for example, colour-blindness) characterizes neoliberal doctrine and thus depoliticizes the discourse, this will make it challenging for me, in my study, to identify it as overt racism associated with white supremacy as Inwood (2015) points out. This neoliberal "racial fix", according to Inwood (2015:415) employs a “coded” and “abstract” (or covert) turn of phrase which provides a new discourse to discuss racist ideologies, in his words, which "nonetheless has the same effect as an overt expression of the historical past". In citing Giroux (2005), Davis (2007:349) has added that this kind of discourse obfuscates race to the point where it is perceived as an "unimportant" issue that nevertheless structures society. Davis (2007:349) also maintains that economic paradigms are all “saturated with race” by employing “capitalism to hide racial (and other) inequalities by relocating racially economic disadvantage and reassigning identity-based biases to the private and personal spheres”. However, this raises questions about neoliberal discourse. If neoliberalism promotes free market ideals of efficiency, competition amongst individuals (and states), and the individual, then social identities should be insignificant. It is an economic paradigm that rewards the rational and meritocratic
individual. However, if racial inequities are found, this shows the importance of a racial lens through which to examine and expose the manifestations of new racism within neoliberalism. Thus, I also expect to find the embeddedness of race and neoliberal important concepts for my study.

3.5 Conceptualizing Social Capital

The term capital is an important theoretical concept on the terrain of social science. Conventional theorizing of the term place emphasis on monetary value, skills or labour but in the Marxian tradition and analysis, capital is interpreted as the “means of exploitation and dominance” (Marx & Engels, 1953:51 cited in Bourdieu, 2003). Bourdieu (1986; 1984) sees it as mechanism for class reproduction. On the notion of capital, Bourdieu (1986) maintains that capital exists in three forms across any given society. In his chapter, “The Forms of Capital”, he identifies the three types of capital – economic, cultural and social - which he argues are the basis of reproducing existing class structures in capitalist societies (Bourdieu, 1986). It can therefore be a useful theoretical perspective for a critical scholar examining integration of student migrants into the labour market. Each form or a combination of two or more forms of capital operates akin to a lens, which when used to examine the society, helps us to understand and interpret and understand class (and potentially intersections with race and gender) organization and reproduction elucidating how Western capitalist societies are organized.

Economic capital speaks to the fixed assets and monetary resources procured by the individual or groups of individuals, whereas cultural capital describes the knowledge, skills and expertise that individuals achieve in society. The participants in my research can be seen as acquiring “physical, behavioural and organizational” resources which generally take on a “symbolic meaning and value” (Bourdieu, 1986 cited in Bauder, 2006:37). As it relates to cultural capital, Bourdieu (1986) further subdivides the concept into three distinct forms of capital: embodied, objectified and institutionalized. Embodied cultural capital covers one’s “disposition”, appearance, accents, “sense of style” and the gamut of “unwritten rules of social engagement and behaviour” that are commonly shared amongst individuals within a social grouping (Bourdieu, 1977:18; Bourdieu, 2002:28). Institutionalized capital covers the acquisition of different forms of credentials such as those attained by international students.
Objectified forms of capital refer to material possession, for example, of art (Bourdieu, 1986; Bauder, 2006:37). Social capital, on the other hand, refers to the form of capital which encompasses the formation of social networks, and one’s membership within a particular social group (Bourdieu, 1986). These concepts are all useful for my research.

Bourdieu (1986) argues that the benefits accrued from the formation of networks and relationships facilitate the conditions necessary to appropriate other forms of capital. He sees social capital as the “aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (Bourdieu, 1986:248). Isin (1997) and Bauder (2003) further suggest that the affiliations or membership within a group rest on the basis of a shared or common social identity, experience, behaviour, occupational standings and/or status. By virtue of having shared membership in a network, individuals in this cohesive unit not only form relationships but also provide support for each other (Bourdieu, 1986). This is realized in terms of the “helping hand”, “string-pulling” and other tangible or intangible benefits that the individual accumulated from being a social group (Bourdieu, 1986:27). As Bourdieu (1986:249) asserts, “the profits which accrue from the membership in a group are the basis of the solidarity”. Put another way, the formation of social relationships leverages one’s position in the group. Theoretically, networks drawn on by international student graduates attempting to integrate into the Canadian labour market can be seen through this lens.

Individuals belonging to different assemblages have the “competence” that is necessary to access resources which allows them to convert one form of capital to another in order to replicate their social standing (Bourdieu, 1984:2). This is what Bourdieu (1984) refers to as distinction - the institutional process through which difference is achieved, brokered and represented. For Bauder (2003:318-319), this understanding of capital places emphasis on “human agency”. In capitalist societies, the individual’s decisions (and, even reactions) are not merely structured and guided by market dynamics (that is, the so-called determinants of supply and demand). Bauder’s (2003:318) interpretation of Bourdieu (1984) would suggest that people have realized how the society works and embraced different kinds of resources that they can use to distinguish themselves from marginalized
individuals who do not possess the same forms of capital. Access to capital also leads people to “elevate their status and congeal their privileges” (Bauder, 2003:318). Thus, distinction is another concept useful for my study.

Social capital theory also points to how network actors possess the capacity to mobilize resources that lead to labour market access in North America. Bauder (2005) and George and Chaze (2009a) discuss social capital as the “employment-related” derivatives that immigrants may realize as part of participating in ethnocultural networks in Canada. Both studies acknowledge the significant role that social capital plays in shaping the employment prospects and realities of immigrants. According to Bauder (2005), Indo-Canadian family-class immigrants in Vancouver, British Columbia, employ mechanisms such as “mobilization of ethnicity-based networks” to circumvent challenges associated with labour market integration (p. 92). Members within ethnic networks facilitate employment sessions geared at ‘orientating’ South Asian immigrants to norms that are valued and celebrated in the Canadian labour market (Bauder, 2005). Likewise, George and Chaze (2009a) contend that South Asian women in Toronto realized job opportunities which resulted from the availability of resources that pre-existed their arrival. These resources exist in the form of official and unofficial settlement organizations, families, spouses and friends who assist in facilitating their integration into different spaces of work (George & Chaze, 2009a). In the US context, Joassart-Marcelli (2014) discusses the contrasting, yet instrumental role of familial and other network compositions in influencing the labour market segregation and rates of remuneration of recent Mexican immigrants in Los Angeles, California. In my research, I will compare these power relations in the lives of both South/Southeast Asian international student graduates and Black Caribbeans, exploring the networks they use as they transition into the labour market.

Waldinger (1993:7) conceptualizes social capital as the “distinctive sociocultural resources” that immigrants deploy to improve their economic outcomes. He maintains that immigrants are “social outsiders” belonging to cultural or racial assemblages or origins, onto whom the dominant groups have mapped a “deficit” (Waldinger, 1993:7). Overcoming or circumventing these discriminatory practices or structural barriers that are experienced requires that members of racially or ethnically distinct
populations access and adapt their resources and other kinds of self-help strategies that distinguish their communities. Individuals belonging to an ethno-racial network realize “maximal advantage” from resources which are perceived as “the property of the entire group” (Waldinger, 1993:6). Scholars have also observed that ethnic-racial networks lead to the establishment of immigrants into “niche” or “economic enclaves” (Bauder, 2006; Mensah, 2010; Waldinger, 1993). These environments facilitate the entry of successive waves of immigrants and also operate as space which facilitates the flow of “information and support” that are crucial to co-ethnics seeking employment or other opportunities (Waldinger, 1993:6).

Similarly, Lin postulates that social capital is realized as “investments in social relations with expected returns” (1999a:30; 1999b). Persons who participate in networks may forge transactional connections with others occupying positions of influence – who have access to (or can appropriate) the knowledge and expertise that will benefit them (Lin, 1999a; 1999b). Individuals with robust social capital who align themselves with or have connections to associates who are positioned in occupational hierarchies of different professions or sectors and thus increase their chances of deriving assistance in navigating and securing labour market opportunities (Lin, 1999a). Generally, persons in occupational hierarchies utilize their “social ties” (social capital) to “exert influence” on agents in an organization who have power in the relevant areas of decision making or access to other reservoirs of power. Portes (1995:12) concurs that strategic membership in networks enables particular individuals to “mobilize” resources “on demand”. The converse is also true. Persons without access to social capital are susceptible to exclusion from employment opportunities (Galabuzi, 2006). I will examine these processes in the careers of Black Caribbean and South/Southeast Asian international student graduates.

While access to social capital, in the form of informal networks, has been shown to be fruitful in facilitating the integration of immigrants (Bauder, 2005; George & Chaze, 2009b; Lamba; 2003), these assemblages can lead to deskilling (Creese & Wiebe, 2012; Man, 2004; Mojab, 1999) and are also notorious for exploitation (Bauder, 2006; Mensah, 2010). Anthias (2007:793-794) also distinguishes between two kinds of social capital: “positively advantaged” and “negatively advantaged”. For Anthias
(2007), the positively advantaged social capital is generally associated with individuals belonging to “hierarchically advantaged groups” such as White Canadian-born university and college graduates from established families. Generally, these individuals have the capacity (or access to resources and power) and social networks to erect boundaries that “increase their advantage”. By virtue of occupying the dominant position, members belonging to this group limit access to resources and chances available to those occupying a disenfranchised or marginalized status or identity. Networks are rarely considered to be positive for immigrants (Anthias, 2007) because cohesive relationships in ethnic enclaves or diasporas discourage ‘assimilation’ into the wider society. These are relevant to my research and I will examine these processes in the lives of international student graduates.

3.6 Conceptualizations of Closure Theory and Race

Closure theorists also contend that there exist boundaries and demarcations across different professional fields in the labour market (Gieryn, 1983; Nestel, 2004; Witz, 1992). Nestel (2004), in particular, uses an anti-racist approach to consider how race shapes the experiences and outcomes of racialized immigrant midwives in Ontario. While experiences of racism and gendered racism are historically and temporally distinguishable, they have been entrenched in “labour markets and other societal institutions” and take on various forms across different locales and settings (Essed 1991).

Historically, as I have argued, ideological discourse or assumptions about racially specific groups - as an antithesis to their counterparts racialized as White - have been used to justify practices of marginality or exclusion and the position of (im)migrants of colour in the labour force (Calliste, 2000). And so subaltern assemblages in society have a greater chance of being excluded from prestigious professional work that more attractive and desirable; “othered’ populations are more often embraced in work or occupations that are less attractive and where the workers’ skills are devalued (Bolaria & Li, 1988; Calliste, 2000). It is not clear the extent to which these processes will operate in the careers of international student graduates I recruit, since the sectors in which they work tend not to be closed professions such as medicine and law. A full investigation of those sectors would require investigation of the relevant licensing boards regulating those professions.
Building on Ruth Frankenberg’s (1993) notion that the “social geographies of race are constructed rather than naturally occurring”, Nestel (2004:293) demonstrates that gendered and racialized processes of exclusion and marginality are in midwifery the resultant effect of calculated and intentional decisions or choices in “social and professional landscapes” in which Whiteness is the prevailing racial identity. Nestel (2004:293) further contends that the “exclusionary policies and attitudes” and the daily experiences of marginality in societal and regulatory institutions are endorsed or ratified from a “position of knowledge” and not from a “racially bounded space of ignorance”. Institutional inequities and the social geographies of race are theorized as manufactured because they mediate/determine not only racial interactions but also the entry of racialized (im)migrants into particular closed occupations (Nestel, 2004). For example, the establishment of registration fees by a central body responsible for regulating a profession contributes to the stratification and exclusion of individuals by that particular profession.

Although my interviewees will not be pursuing these “closed” professions, it may be possible to see traces of these processes in the experiences of international students who aspire to the upper rungs of the labour market in engineering and business. Unlike traditional labour market segmentation theorists who emphasize the role of economics (Edwards, 1979; Gordon, Edwards & Reich, 1982 cited in Calliste, 2000), anti-racist scholars cite White class privilege or constructed social geographies of race as the process that results in racial exclusion in Canada as I have outlined above (Calliste, 2000; Nestel, 2004; Inwood, 2015). In other words, it can be argued that White class privilege or ‘manufactured’ social geographies of race produce racial boundaries in the professions that generally exclude (im)migrants/people of colour from the top segment of the labour market or the upper tier of the occupational hierarchy across different social fields. It is very well documented that race and gender have been pertinent to “class formation in Canada” (Omi & Winant, 1983; Roediger, 1991; cited in Calliste 2000:146; Stasiulis & Bakan, 2005:75-76). And so, Calliste (2000:146) postulates that the intermingling of “racism, gendered racism” and one’s “(im)migrant status with class exploitation in the segmented labour market is not unintentional. Gendered racism refers to the interlocking way in which notions of masculinity or femininity (gender) and race play out in different social institutions.
(Calliste, 2000). Thus, although the credentials obtained by participants in my study may not formally entitle holders to particular occupations, processes of inclusion and exclusion may be visible as informally applied by employers.

In contrast to the ‘occupational’ professionalism associated with self-regulatory bodies of law and medicine, Evetts (2003) argues that the level of professional autonomy in the fields of business and engineering are organizationally or structurally weaker. Evetts classifies these occupational fields as having what she refers to as “‘organizational’ professionalism” (2011:404; 2004). My interpretation of Evetts (2011) work suggests that these occupations have now become a part of business organizations. As such these professions have been saturated or permeated by the value added discourse of capitalism. It has been argued that to the extent that ‘professionals’ are lacking autonomy in institutions, these occupations have increasingly been abandoning the values of “partnership, collegiality, discretion and trust” for “managerialism” or new public management, “bureaucracy, standardization, assessment and performance reviews” or audit culture (Evetts, 2011:407). Relevant to this argument, Evetts (2011) also notes that changing occupational values and discourse are accompanied by a challenge to the “control of work” and also influence the professional identity and regulatory responsibilities associated with the occupations (p. 407). As it appears, “professionalism” as “third logic” (Freidson, 2001) is challenged in organizational professionalism where it “is now organizationally defined and includes the logic of the organization and the market: managerialism and commercialism (Evetts, 2011:407).

The oppressions (of race, gender, ethnicity, and class) experienced by immigrant professionals in regulatory bodies (and might I add, bodies with ‘organizational’ professionalism) cannot be exclusively examined in isolation but must rather be situated in a broader context (Bourgeault et al., 2016:299). Despite the usefulness of the “professional closure model" in elucidating the “dynamics" of inclusion and exclusion within occupations (e.g. in Nestel’s work), Bourgeault et al. (2016:307), and Neiterman and Bourgeault (2015) maintain that it often provides limited explanation for the broader processes (e.g. political and economic, globalization, post/colonialism, and relations between the
professions and other societal organizations) affecting or influencing, for example, the ‘integration’ of immigrants and health professionals in Canada.

Like Bourgeault et al. (2016) and Neiterman and Bourgeault (2015), El-Hashemy (2017) also illustrates that interlocking nature of the institutions that govern the professions have been found to have problems in assessing the credentials of immigrant professionals, particularly, physicians. In other words, structural oppressions confronting immigrants are not only experienced at the cultural or social level but are rather seamlessly interwoven in or cut across the occupational structure inside and outside regulatory bodies (Foster, 2008b:1; 2009:186; Bourgeault et al., 2016:298-300). Bourgeault et al. (2016) contend that structural oppressions that determine the entry of immigrant professionals into occupations are interconnected at the micro-, meso- and macro- scales. And so, even if it is possible to “see” it, one cannot surgically remove a particular kind of oppression from the occupational structure in self-regulated professions because of the interconnectedness with other societal institutions. Arguably, the governing institution in a self-regulated profession may not choose to enforce closure resulting in a particular social oppression, but this does not mean that the professional fields which have ‘organizational’ professionalism will do the same. Arguably, ‘organizational’ professions have bought into the discourse and practice of neoliberalism (Evetts, 2011:407), and so individuals in these occupational fields may encounter oppressions along the social divisions of race, class, gender, ethnicity and so on. Therefore, an interlocking analysis is important to understanding the intricacies of the ‘integration’ and transition process for student migrants (Bourgeault et al., 2016) whether they aim for self-regulating or organizational professional work.

3.7 Conceptualizing the Postgraduate Transition of International Student Graduates into Canada’s Labour Market-Immigration Nexus

I will use the various anti-racist/postcolonial theoretical perspectives described in this chapter to help interpret the postgraduate trajectories of non-White international student graduates in their labour market-immigration transition as well as considerations of intersectionality. As I have indicated, the anti-racist considers that there exist two kinds of racism: the old racism and the new racism. Because
'new racism' flies under the radar of cultural parlance and does not appeal to biology, it often evades mainstream (White) detection of the production of racism and racist ideologies (Goldberg, 1993; Miles, 1989). Consequently, this may make it difficult to identify the language and discourse that structure the marginal experiences racially marginalized international student graduates in Canadian state polices. 'New racism' also employs a non-racial or colour-blind language, as well as covert and subtle discourses, and thereby leaves privilege uninterrogated (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). So, an enquiry into the postgraduate trajectory of international students immigrating to Canada requires a closer examination of language and discourse in order to disambiguate how the new racism informs (and is built into) economic immigration policies and how it intersects with other oppressions. It can also help to identify and explicate the production of racist languages and practices, albeit covert, that international student graduates may encounter in hiring practices and overall labour market navigation in Canada. An anti-racist/postcolonial perspective centres race, thereby using it as the lens or prism through which I will be able to view other social identities/characteristics – gender, cultural background and space – of the Black Caribbean and South/Southeast Asian participants. This theoretical context will call attention the reproduction of racist and other exclusionary processes (in the state and labour market) such as policies that structure and perpetuate the 'incorporation' and 'integration' of racialized bodies in Canada (Calliste, 2000; Dua, 2007). Thus, anti-racist/postcolonial perspectives not only emphasize a perpetuation of colonial processes but also situate and interrogate the experience of racialized bodies into Canada (Dei, 1996; Dua, 2007; Razack, 2013). The anti-racism and anti/postcolonial perspectives interlock in their explanation of power and race (Dei, 1996; Calliste, 2000).

Racing neoliberalism may complement the anti-racist/postcolonial perspectives I am using (Dei 1995; Calliste, 2000; Calliste et al., 1995; Omi and Winant, 1993). To extrapolate a deeper understanding of racialization, I plan to apply the concept of racing neoliberalism to examine how race and neoliberalism (or global capitalist expansion) are intertwined in the labour market outcomes of postgraduates (Bonacich et al., 2008; Inwood, 2015; Roberts & Mahtani, 2010). Whereas an anti-racist/postcolonial frame teases out processes of racialization, it falls silent on strategies that racialized immigrants use to avoid institutional barriers that confront them in the labour market.
I also draw both briefly on social capital theory as I explore networking and relationship-building as important mechanisms in the labour market. It is also important to note that the popular use of the concept of social capital as taken from Bourdieu (1986) inserts an economic explanation for the processes of power relations and race (in the form of economic violence), but I have developed the idea of racing neoliberalism as the best way to integrate my theoretical framework to consider economics, race and professional processes.

I also find the conceptualization of social closure to be fruitful for this research as it aids with theorizing on professions and power relations. However, boundary theory is not a macro-theory like others used in this study. But the extent to that the occupations pursued by international student graduates are professions, this theory can be used to identify and clarify the micro-processes by which macro-sociological processes described in anti/postcolonial and anti-racist theory are realized.

3.8 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter reviews the conceptual frames that are most relevant for interpreting the postgraduation trajectory of international student graduates from the Caribbean and South/Southeast Asia. The lens includes anti-racist/postcolonial perspectives, critiques of neoliberalism, social capital theory and applications of closure theory. The next chapter discusses the methods that are employed in my investigation of the lived experiences of international student graduates in their postgraduation phase.
Chapter 4: Exploring the Lived Postgraduate Trajectory of International Student Graduates: The Methodological Process

4.1 Introduction:

“Well, I have not applied to an immigration program as yet. It is a bit personal, and I can’t share it now.”
- Bhushan Kumar’s interview, December 10, 2017

“So, this is where I will have to stop you. ... My immigration situation is probably a little bit different from students belonging to other cultural backgrounds, and I don’t want to discuss that with you.”
- Gurratan Singh’s interview, February 18, 2018

An exploration of international student graduates’ labour market-immigration trajectories in Canada necessitates that I probe their lived experiences navigating the labour market and state institutions, particularly, the immigration system as well as key informants who work within the system. As such, it requires methods which facilitate a space that permits international student graduates to provide the narratives that bring us into their experiences. This chapter introduces the methodological issues and methods employed throughout my exploratory study that examines the postgraduate transition of 18 student migrants originating from the Caribbean and South/Southeast Asia. I outline the procedures I considered in selecting the participants and accessing the sites of study. I then detail the methods employed in gathering the field data. Next are details of the data analyses. How my positionality/reflective politics bear on the research process forms the penultimate section. At the end of the chapter, I briefly outline my ethical approach.

4.2 Recruiting and Accessing Key Informants and Participants for the Study.
4.2.1 Recruiting Key Informants and International Student Graduates

The data for the research was primarily gathered from 18 international student graduates who pursued postsecondary studies in Ontario, along with other key informants and secondary data. I initiated the process by contacting key informants who would have the “bigger picture” of the story reviewed in Chapter 2 to participate in my research (See Table 4.1, p.75). In keeping with the guidelines of the University of Toronto Research Ethics Board (REB), I sent a letter via email to my first potential participant, whose pseudonym is Sebastian Salerno, requesting his permission to participate in the study (See Appendix A1 for a copy of the letter sent to government officials, immigration officials and other experts). In the Winter of 2015, I had met this immigration lawyer at a
scholarly conference hosted at a Canadian university. During the conference, which commemorated of the 60th anniversary Black Caribbean women's participation in the second West Indian Domestic Scheme, I introduced my research proposal to the lawyer, who expressed an interest in being a participant in the study. Letters and emails were also sent to four other key informants in the study, all of whom enthusiastically agreed to participate. These include another immigration lawyer (whose pseudonym is David Ngozi), an immigration consultant (Corinne Lipinski), a human resource professional (Duncan Sands) and a federal politician (Janine Kinder-Morgan). I met Ngozi through Andrew, an acquaintance in the legal community, who graciously connected us via email communication. As to key informant Corinne Lipinski, I also stumbled on her name while turning the pages of the ethnic newspapers for an immigration consultant who works with the different racial communities in Toronto. To capture the input of the various stakeholders on the transition of international students, I contacted three Members of Parliament (MPs) and three Ontario Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) who have, at one point or another, been involved in immigration policy in the capacity of cabinet minister, parliamentary secretary or opposition critic. Of the six individuals, Kinder-Morgan was the only politician who indicated a willingness to participate. Finally, I met Duncan Sands at career fair that was hosted in Toronto.

Table 4.1 – Key Informants' Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
<th>Location in Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sebastian Salerno</td>
<td>Immigration Lawyer</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corinne Lipinski</td>
<td>Immigration Consultant</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Ngozi</td>
<td>Immigration Lawyer</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duncan Sands</td>
<td>Human Resource Personnel (Recruiter)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janine Kinder-Morgan</td>
<td>Federal Politician</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ottawa, ON</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Salerno, who is based in Toronto, Ontario, has more than 20 years of experience in Canadian immigration policy and practice. He has also championed and successfully defended human rights and (im)migrant’s rights of permanent residence in landmark cases before the Supreme Court of
Canada. Key informant Corinne Lipinski also works in Toronto. Possessing close to two decades of immigration practice at the federal and provincial levels, she provides professional advice to migrants, family class sponsorship, refugees, migrants facing deportations and those in the economic investor class. David Ngozi has been practicing immigration law in the province of Ontario for the past 25 years. Ngozi also provides professional advice to various groups of (im)migrants, international student graduates, and refugees as well as applicants facing deportation orders. Key informant Duncan Sands has approximately 10 years of experience working in the human resource sector. He recruits immigrants and international students in a Toronto business processing outsourcing firm and two other marketing companies in Canada. Key informant Janine Kinder-Morgan is a federal politician with eight years experience working on immigration committee and immigration matters within and without the House of Commons.

Key informants are akin to “natural observers” within their society or community of practice (Marshall, 1996; Tremblay, 1957:693). Key informants usually provide information that helps the researcher to make sense of what is happening within a particular society or social arena (O’Leary, 2014; Tremblay, 1957). The key informants above were recruited because the positions they hold allow them to inform my research on immigration and transition process in Canada. The immigration lawyers and consultant selected for this study are well known in the media and for their professional and charitable involvement with communities of immigrants in the boroughs of Toronto. Immigration lawyers and consultant are important to this study because the nature of their professional practice and their proximity to the clients provide them with firsthand experiences with how international student graduates negotiate their legal processes. Also, the lawyers’ and immigration consultant’s interpretations of immigration law helped to inform my critical analysis of the relevant regulatory processes. Human resource professionals are also an important interface with international student graduates who are seeking employment. The federal politician was selected because of her experience and years of involvement in immigration matters at the federal level, whether through contribution to policy committees or vigorous debate in the House of Commons.
International student graduates from public universities and colleges across Southern Ontario were invited to participate in the research. Recruitment posters were placed in clubs and societies in these institutions. I also posted the call for participants in selected diasporic and community organizations (for example, churches, mosques, temples and other religious organizations/cultural gatherings within the Caribbean and South/Southeast Asian communities across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA). Program administrators at various public institutions also advertised the call for participants on my behalf through the online platform SurveyMonkey to recent international student graduates. While a few Caribbean participants expressed an earlier interest to participate, access to the majority of participants was not realized without a challenge. For example, international student graduates, upon completing their programs, generally relinquish ties with personnel in their programs. Thus, establishing direct connection with these individuals would not have been possible had it not been for the benevolence of my cousin Patrice in Phoenix, Arizona and an acquaintance Claton who resides in the Dutch Caribbean nation of Curaçao. Being international student graduates of institutions in Southern Ontario, both individuals served as resources in connecting me with a network of participants who had completed postsecondary studies in London and Toronto but who now have been fanned out across Ontario and the beyond. I also forwarded via email a copy of the recruitment poster and a detailed description of the proposed study to the prospective participants. (See Appendix A3 for a copy of the email script sent to the participants).

4.2.2 Description of Participants: International Student Graduates

Table 4.2 (p.78) provides an overview of the backgrounds of the Caribbean and South/Southeast Asian participants involved in the research. Nine – three male and six female - participants are international student graduates from the Anglophone Caribbean who had attended colleges and universities in Toronto, and London, Ontario where they acquired postsecondary credentials ranging from two to four years in length. Three of the six females completed graduate programs lasting two years in length, one pursued a four-year undergraduate program, one participated in a college
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Pseudonyms</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Postsecondary Institution Attended in Southern Ontario</th>
<th>Level of Study</th>
<th>Program Length</th>
<th>City &amp; Province of Residence⁸</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>Chevon-Marie Naipaul</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Trinidad &amp; Tobago</td>
<td>Western University</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sudbury, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bernadette Berry</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>York University</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dimple Cooke</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>University of Toronto</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mississauga, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hortense Clue</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>St. Kitts</td>
<td>Western University</td>
<td>Undergrad</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lydia Merchant</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>Fanshawe College</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Brampton ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nyesha Jackson</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>Fanshawe College (And another unnamed institution)</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dartmouth, NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kirk Johnson</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>Fanshawe College</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dartmouth, NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jerome Bradshaw</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>Seneca College</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mississauga, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zacchaeus Gittens</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Barbados</td>
<td>Western University</td>
<td>Undergrad</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Cambridge, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South/ Southeast Asia</td>
<td>Giang (Daisy) Phang</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>OISE/University of Toronto</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Huang (Hilene) Ngo</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>Schulich School of Business, York University</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imelda Aquino</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Schulich School of Business, York University</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pranavi Suthakaran</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>York University</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sacchin Ventakaraman</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Schulich School of Business, York University</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Saskatoon, SK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gurratan Singh</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Schulich School of Business, York University</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Navdeep Bains</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Seneca College</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bhushan Kumar</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Fanshawe College</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Brampton, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Khosing Phy</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>Queens University OISE/University of Toronto</td>
<td>Undergrad Graduate</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁸ Indicate the city and province in which international student graduates now resides, and not the location of the postsecondary institutions.
program lasting three years, and another female participant enrolled in a one-year course college course (in addition to completing a second one-year course in Nova Scotia). Two of the three male participants pursued a three-year college course and the other has a four-year undergraduate degree. Table 4.2 (p.78) also indicates that nine South/Southeast Asian participants - four female and five male – also pursued educational qualifications. Four female and two male participants completed two-year graduate programs, whereas another two male graduates completed programs lasting three years in college. Another male completed a four-year and a two-year program at two separate universities in Southern Ontario. Besides the above-mentioned descriptions, Table 4.2 (p.78) also includes the participants’ countries of origin, and city of residence.

Chevon-Marie Naipaul, the sole participant originating from Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, finished a graduate degree in engineering at Western University (London, Ontario) and now works in Sudbury’s oil and gas industry. Bernadette Berry left Jamaica to take up graduate studies in the field of social science at York University in Toronto and is currently employed in communications with a Toronto-based organization which focuses on treatment and prevention of HIV/AIDS. Dimple Cooke left Jamaica to pursue postgraduate education in an engineering discipline at the University of Toronto (St. George campus). She, like the other Caribbean participants, encountered discriminatory racial practices in the labour market but eventually obtained professional employment in Mississauga, Ontario. Hortense Clue, another young Black woman from St. Kitts and Nevis, made the trek to Western University in London, Ontario to pursue an undergraduate degree. Lydia Merchant from Jamaica obtained a college diploma at Fanshawe College and now resides in Brampton, Ontario. Like Merchant, Nyesha Jackson attended Fanshawe College where she pursued a one-year college program. She then relocated to Halifax-Dartmouth in Nova Scotia where she obtained a second one-year certificate. Kirk Johnson, another Black Caribbean participant, also obtained a college diploma from Fanshawe College. Like Jackson, he later moved to and settled in the same Maritime Canadian city. Jerome Bradshaw, another male participant of Jamaican origin, holds a Seneca College (York Campus) advanced diploma. He currently resides in the city of Mississauga, Ontario. Rounding off the group of Caribbean participants is Zacchaeus Gittens. The
sole participant of Barbadian heritage, Gittens completed a four-year undergraduate degree at Western University and now resides in Cambridge, Ontario.

By comparison with the nine Caribbeans, of which only three completed graduate degrees – four females and two males, or two-thirds completed graduate degrees amongst the South/Southeast Asian participants in my study. Giang (Daisy) Phang holds a graduate degree from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). Huang (Hilene) Ngo and Imelda Aquino have graduate degrees from the Schulich School of Business at York University (Toronto). International student graduates of Vietnamese and Filipina backgrounds respectively, both Ngo and Aquino, reside in the city of Toronto. Next is Pranavi Suthakaran who left Bangladesh for York University. Suthakaran pursued a two-year social science graduate degree at York University in Toronto. There are four Indo-Canadian participants of who left India to study at the Schulich School of Business at York University (Keele campus) in Toronto. These include Sacchin Ventakaraman, Gurratan Singh, Navdeep Bains and Bhushan Kumar. Since completing his studies, Ventakaraman has left Toronto for his new home in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Singh, who completed his course of studies, has remained in Toronto. Bains attended Seneca College (Newnham campus) where he pursued a three-year course and works in the city of Markham. Kumar similarly is a Fanshawe College (London) alumnus with a three-year credential. Singh, Bains and Kumar all identify with the Sikh faith and at the time of the interview, were dressed in their turbans\(^9\) and Karas\(^10\), which I learned are symbols worn by individuals who identify with this religious group. And finally, Khoshing Phy left Cambodia for Ontario to obtain an undergraduate at Queens University before pursuing graduate studies at the University of Toronto.

---

\(^9\) The turban is the religious head covering worn by individuals who practice the Sikh religion.

\(^10\) This refers to the iron bracelet worn by males practising the Sikh faith. Together the Turban and the Kara are two of the five religious ornaments typically worn by conservative followers of the religion.
4.3 Data Collection: Methods

4.3.1 Semi-structured interviews with International Students and Key Informants

I choose semi-structured interviews that collected career details, and not questionnaires, because of their conversational and in-depth characteristics which permitted me, the researcher, the possibility of understanding patterns in the career trajectories of participants (Luttrell, 2010:266). I find this method fruitful to the process as it helps to balance the power dynamics between the researcher and the participant. It allows the participants to exert some influence over the process and thereby “actively shape the research process” (Luttrell, 2010:261). In other words, employing this method offers participants the latitude to make their own contribution to the study. As such, respondents may also (re)construct new discourses that tell their life stories (Luttrell: 2010:261). The dynamic of the conversation between researcher and participant provides opportunities for the researcher to follow the respondent’s lead and probe/explore tangents or become aware of nuances in the discussion that might have otherwise been excluded in a more controlled setting (Bernard 2011; Luttrell, 2010: 260).

I also chose to conduct individual semi-structured interviews, and not focus group discussions, as I am mindful of the emotional trauma to which immigrants are susceptible, especially when called upon to revisit those experiences. Therefore, semi-structured interviews permitted participants the safety and more liberty to express their thoughts and opinions on their experiences interfacing with the Canadian labour market or the immigration system in the absence of others (Bernard, 2011).

Between the periods September 2017 and July 2018, and October 2018 to December 2018, I conducted 18 qualitative, semi-structured interviews with international student graduates of colour. To represent the two cultural backgrounds, I purposively selected 9 participants each from the two regions for the study. Now fanned out across cities in northern and southern Ontario, and a few as far way as Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia, the group represents international student graduates who hold varying credentials - certificates, diplomas, advanced diplomas, undergraduate and graduate degrees - from postsecondary institutions (colleges and universities) across southern Ontario. The selected participants pursued and completed a minimum of two years of study have graduated between the years 2013 and 2017. Participants ages ranged of 26 to 43 years.
Each international student graduate interview was conducted face-to-face or by Skype and ranged between 30 and 96 minutes in length. To eliminate scheduling conflict between the researcher and the participants, I travelled to a few participant’s homes or met them in a public space, albeit not in close proximity to the listening ears of others. In instances where time-space barriers made it impossible for us to establish a mutually agreeable time or place to meet, 12 of 18 the face-to-face interviews were conducted over Skype. I also find this internet-based communication platform useful because of its advantages of compressing geographical space between the researcher and participant, because it eliminates the travel time and expenses associated with research process. Thus, it (Skype) was the preferred method of contact for most of the participants, especially those living in regions beyond the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA).

The semi-structured interviews were organized into topics to capture the labour market and immigration phases of the participant’s transition experiences in Canada. The questions posed covered several areas such as reasons for immigration, labour market challenges, job strategies, and challenges experienced while contemplating the immigration pathways to permanent resident status. (See Appendix B1, B2, B3 and B4 for interview questions posed to the participants and key informants). The data gathered from the interviews conducted with international student graduates helped to inform the policy-related questions that I had posed to the key informants in the research. These also helped me to prepare for the analytical portion of the dissertation, in a kind of iterative process. In instances where I used the Skype application through which to facilitate the interview, I was always mindful to retreat to an enclosed private room.

Data was collected from participants after I obtained their informed consent. The participants who I interviewed face-to-face were asked to affix their signature to the document which explained the terms and conditions of participation. For the participants whom I interviewed via Skype, informed consent was negotiated verbally. Prior to administering the semi-structured interviews, I emailed the consent forms, including the description of the research project. I also audio-recorded the conversations with each participant using a recording device, after which the content of each interview was transcribed and saved on storage media.
4.3.2 Key informants

Devers and Frankel (2000) speak of the importance of accessing key informants in the research process. The inclusion of key informants adds context to the research, as it allows the researcher to improve his or her comprehension of the “individuals or groups’ experience” and allows for theoretical and conceptual development throughout the research process. Researchers who intend on satisfying or achieving this objective also must choose or observed “information rich cases” (Devers & Frankel, 2000: 264). In other words, the researcher is encouraged to observe behaviours and interview (or interface with) those respondents whom he or she believes will furnish the researcher with the various standpoints that will address the problem or question that is the focus of inquiry.

As noted above, between October 2017 and January 2018, I conducted five semi-structured interviews with key informants in the cities of Toronto and Ottawa who are involved with immigration law, immigration consulting, human resources and policy. Each semi-structured interview occurred face-to-face at their offices and ranged between 40 and 71 minutes in length. Once we were able to establish mutually agreeable times, I journeyed via a combination of private and public transportation to their offices located either in Toronto’s downtown core or its sprawling suburbs to conduct the interviews. In the case of Kinder-Morgan, I used the Via Rail service from Toronto to Ottawa, Canada’s capital, for the interview. I posed questions to the key informants that would allow me to interpret the labour market and immigration challenges that international student graduates experience as they negotiate the postgraduate transition into Canada. Specifically, the interview questions sought answers to questions relating to hiring and selection process in the labour market, including the perceived inequalities, as well as the immigration system as policy and practice. The data gathered from the key informant interviews, especially on policy, also helped me to interpret and better understand the decisions, labour market outcomes and overall, the experience of international student graduates transitioning to Canadian permanent residence.

As per the University of Toronto Research Ethics Board (REB), I also obtained the written informed consent of the key informants involved in the study. The interviews conducted with key informants were also recorded and stored on an encrypted storage medium.
The key informants, and other participants alike, were informed that participation in the study was strictly voluntary. Nevertheless, each participant was given a CAN$10.00 Tim Horton’s gift card, enclosed with a card expressing my gratitude for engaging in the research exercise. The key informants were also presented with the same token of appreciation, though, two were reluctant to accept the tokens.

4.3.3 Secondary Data Sources

Secondary data sources were consulted for analysis of wording and gauging the context within which immigration policy and practice are undertaken and how immigrants are described in the Canadian context. The include government documents and online media reports. The government documents include but were not limited to Parliamentary Hansard and Committee Reports. Media reports were collected from the *Toronto Star, The Globe and Mail*, and *University Affairs* amongst other publications.

4.4 Organizing, Coding and Analysis of Data

In preparing to write the data chapters, my analysis included organizing several quotations from participants and key informants to be utilized to address the research quotations and to substantiate my reconstruction of ruling relations that are visible in the data documents. When preparing the chapters and the arguments set forth therein, I drew on these quotes as evidence for my arguments. Owing to the space limitations, I made an intellectual judgement regarding the level of detail in addressing the research questions that would appear in the dissertation. In other words, additional analysis is possible and associated quotations are reserved for and will be used in future publications.

The audio recording from each interview was manually transcribed into a Microsoft Word by me following the interview. It was a painstaking process to transcribe the interviews, but the snail’s pace at which I was able to transcribe worked well for me to become familiar with the data. I was able to replay the recorded conversations and familiarize myself with the stories and content in each transcript before moving to the next participant. I also used the few minutes following each interview
to document field notes of the non-verbal communication and other observations that were salient to
the interview process or the interaction between the participant and myself. This process was
repeated for each participant and key informant and then filed/saved to my storage medium under
the pseudonym assigned to each of the respondents.

Upon reading each data document in Microsoft Word, I highlighted (in colour) the various pieces
of evidence pointing to relations of ruling (Dorothy Smith, 1987) that emerged as I moved through the
transcripts. I made a list of the evidence supporting my theory of relations of ruling arising from the
data documents along with supporting quotes. The process was repeated for each interview that I
conducted throughout the research period. These were placed in a master document which I saved
in a Microsoft Word application. Although filled with much excitement and even happiness at
discovering these patterns, my combing through each data document was also accompanied by the
excessive tedium associated with coding processes.

To make visual sense of the data as a whole, I utilized the Microsoft program to construct a visual
representation of the postgraduate transition routes available to international student graduates (See
Figure 1.1 in chapter 1 and Appendix C1). This visual timeline commenced with the graduates’
enrollment in their postsecondary program and terminated with the acquisition of permanent resident
status showing the various key points in the transition process where the international student
graduate trajectory may be interrupted (See Appendix C1). This timeline represents the final-product
of multiple sketches (of which Appendix C2 and Appendix C3 are examples). I then mapped the
specific, multiple ruling relations identified in each data document along these points to indicate where
the international student graduate encountered one or more difficulties (or ‘seams’). The analysis
presented throughout Chapters 5-8 is driven from this analysis of transcript and field data. Mapping is
a technique consistent with Dorothy Smith’s (1987) institutional ethnography. It was this original visual
depiction of the transition routes of participants that helped me to pinpoint the points at which
participants continued or fell out the transition system. The process also aided with the selection of
evidence on research questions used to prepare the different chapters and subsections in the
dissertation.
4.5 Establishing Methodological Trustworthiness and Accuracy in the Research Process

To ensure trustworthiness and credibility in my research, I used two procedures – rich thick description and member checking (Brekhus, Galliher & Gubrium, 2005; Geertz, 1973:6; Ponterotto, 2006:539-541). Schultze and Avital (2001:3) contend that rich thick or dense description helps identify “meanings and significance of behaviours or events” observed or reported by participants. Schultze and Avital see this qualitative validation technique as a way of representing the human interaction or real-life experience in a manner that contemplates and reflects “the physical and social contexts” as well as the “actors’ intentionality” (2001:3). Rich thick description is useful in illuminating or bringing to the fore evidence of (power) relations in the lives or lived experience of the participants in the research process (Schultze & Avital, 2011:3). Although they do not use the same critical terms as Dorothy Smith (1987), I would argue that this validation technique, when deployed in qualitative inquiries, reveals the “social relationships” that are relevant to the critical analysis of a series of action (Berkhus et al., 2005; Schultze & Avital; 2011:3). Parenthetically, it stands in stark contrast to empirical studies which are geared towards establishing statistical analyses, hypotheses testing and correlations between variables based on a randomized selection of participants. In a nutshell, critical qualitative inquiries require not a thin but rather a detailed substantiation (Berkhus et al., 2005) that begins in lived experience (Smith, 1987).

The process of member checking is done to establish and increase the methodological precision, trustworthiness and the soundness of the data gathered from conducting the interviews (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Doyle, 2007; Rager, 2005). This process is generally undertaken to verify that the information recorded in the interview reflects what the participants intended to communicate to the researcher (Rager, 2005). Lincoln and Guba (1985) also contend that member checking determines accuracy and trustworthiness of data that occurs immediately following the interview and as well as in the data analysis phases of the research. The process provides opportunity for the participants to “agree or disagree with summaries” or finding that does not reflect “their views, feelings and experiences” (Harper & Cole, 2012). However, this is not the end of the process of analysis. In critical
ethnographic analysis, the “activation” of ruling texts is important (Smith, 1987). Therefore, the uptake of discourse referenced in key informant transcripts is important as well.

Throughout Chapters 5 to 8 of this dissertation, the findings are “grounded” in rich thick data. Rich thick data enhances understanding of participant’s challenges, especially the trauma of integrating in the labour market in a postcolonial racist society; the barriers or trauma encountered interfacing with the immigration system; and the general “rockiness” of the transition process to permanent residency in Canada. For some of the findings, especially in chapter 8, I present multiple interpretations or interpretations that are critical but compete with the centering of racism. I believe that this is important, since as Marx suggests, it demonstrates that I was well prepared to scrutinize my own critical analysis. I also employed member-checking at two points in the study. Immediately following the individual interviews, I prepared and emailed a copy of the transcribed data to each participant, and this permitted each individual with the opportunity to review the data they shared during the interview exchange. A few of the participants used the opportunity to correct a few sentences, while the others returned the transcript without any adjustments. Then, at various points in the data analysis phase, I reached out to individuals to clarify statements or difficulties I may have understanding what they intended to communicate in their interviews. For example, a part of the data analysis, I also constructed a mock-up of the probable points awarded to each individual who engaged with the Canadian Express Entry system. This necessitated that I circle back to briefly speak again with a few of the participants. My intention in this case was to present them with these hypothetical numbers to see how they might resemble or deviate from the actual points earned by individuals who have been processed via the Express Entry stream.

4.6 Positionality and Reflexivity

This research process I engaged in was characterized by a complex dynamic of power relations. My association with a prestigious Canadian institution proved to be advantageous in terms of negotiating access to the key informants, particularly with the immigration lawyers, immigration consultant, human resource personnel and the federal politician. My perceived status as a graduate
student, evidenced by the institutions’ logo on all forms of correspondence, I believe, gave me some leverage in the field; it allowed for relatively quick response from the key informants who were enthusiastic to participate in the process. However, the converse is also true; not all the international student graduates made a prompt response to my request via email to participate. Although I am an immigrant and a student, I realized that I could have easily been perceived as an ‘outsider,’ especially to those with whom I do not share the same or similar cultural or racial heritage. Nevertheless, the participants who replied to my request to participate did so without any undue influence from me. I owe them a debt of gratitude because without the willingness of the participants and key informants, I would have been denied the opportunity to gather the necessary data critical to execute the study.

Seeking answers to questions regrading the transition of international graduate students in Canada also necessitates that I identify with my own insights, biases and assumptions about the (im)migrant experience. A study of this magnitude required that I immersed myself in the historical and contemporary literature of Canadian immigration policies and race relations in Canada. Over the past decade, I have been privileged to have been afforded the opportunity to live and study in one of Canada’s most populous and multicultural cities, Toronto. Living here, I have experienced different social settings where I have witnessed firsthand accounts of foreign nationals who have and continue to experience the discriminatory practices of the state and other societal institutions. I was able to identify with participants. On the other hand, in each case I made it clear to participants that they had the right to terminate the conversations at any point throughout our exchange.

Positionality does not only refer to how the researcher presents himself or herself in the field but also to how he or she mediates the power relations that structure the research process (O’Leary, 2014). Both the researcher and the researched have the ability to exert some amount of control over the process (O’Leary, 2004). While I had the privilege of pre-selecting and itemizing the discussion topics, it is salient that the participant’s voice also gets represented in the research process (Luttrell 2010:261). And so, the respondents also used the opportunity to speak about things that are most important for them (Bernard, 2011; Luttrell, 2010; O’Leary, 2004). There was a confluence because I entered the field with my interests centred on immigration and equity, and the respondents and key
informants were more interested in speaking about the issues in the labour market which they see as the impediments to acquiring permanent resident status. The respondents, especially those who immigrated or intend to immigrate via the Express Entry route, were most interested in discussing access to skilled jobs as this determines whether the participant gets to initiate the application process for Canadian permanent residency.

Rapport building and informed consent were also significant to the research process. Prior to interviewing each respondent, when I engage the participant in “small talk” with participants, helpful data emerged as well as a sense that we felt comfortable talking. A case in point is my interaction with David Ngozi. While waiting to commence the interview, I observed an immigration law text, which he co-authored, on his desk. When I asked about obtaining a copy, I found it very useful while conducting the participant interviews, engaging in “small talk” about an issue such as past involvement in school or the wider community in which they reside was a good ice-breaker. It was helpful in getting past the initial awkwardness between us. It also facilitated an environment in which the participants felt comfortable to share their personal narratives and perspectives relating to topics for discussion. In other words, the process reassured each participant of their integral role in the research exercise (O’Leary, 2004).

Given the nature of this study as examining racialization in immigration, in my interpretation of texts and transcripts, I found I was often forced to grapple with “insecurities of meaning” (Gunaratnam, 2003:140) that resulted from differences across the multiple relevant identities of gender, race and ethnicity, and accents. As she argues, ‘insecurities of meaning’ provides the interviewer with prised intuition into the lived realities of the interviewees (Gunaratnam, 2003). Gunaratnam (2003), providing many examples, shows how racial and or gendered difference between the researcher and the participant contributes to the participant being open versus reserved or feeling less comfortable discussing culturally or gender specific issues with researcher. Having said that, I do not believe that being a Black male researcher limited my research efforts (except in my ability to recruit White international student graduates). In fact, my own experiences as an international student made me uniquely qualified to undertake such research and be accepted by Black participants.
Understandably, I had a contrasting experience facilitating a conversation with Asian participants. In general, the Caribbean Blacks appeared to be more at ease during the interviews and so the conversations were much more fluid. With the exception of Navdeep Bains, Imelda Aquino and Giang (Daisy) Phang, my conversations/interviews with South/Southeast Asian participants were slightly less fluid. Interview length influenced the amount of information that I received, as the interviews with Caribbean Blacks were much longer than those conducted with the South/Southeast Asians. Suffice to say the comfort in speaking in depth about all aspects of their transition is also reflected in the follow-up questions that I conducted with participants between the October 2018 and December 2018 via phone and Skype. Of the eight international student graduates who agreed to participate in the brief follow-up, six were from the Caribbean, whereas two were from South/Southeast Asia.

While it may be impossible to fully explain the processes accounting for the experiences described above, Gunaratnam’s (2003:1139-143) discussion of “insecurities of meanings” emphasizes that words, pauses (or even silences), cultural expressions and gesticulations have multiple interpretations in data analysis. To give an example from my research, referenced at the beginning of this Chapter, Bhushan Kumar and Gurratan Singh, two of the South Asian participants, seemed more reserved in terms of the depth of the information that they were inclined to share. Kumar and Singh, participants of Indo-Canadian descent, both expressed a reluctance to discuss certain specificities of their immigration process. When I inquired whether Kumar had applied for Canadian permanent residence, he briefly whispered that he “awaits a few documents” from his wife to initiate the process. However, after posing the same question two or three different ways, Kumar reported: “Well, I have not applied to [an] immigration program as yet. It is a bit personal, and I can’t share it now.” My conversation with Singh along the same lines of discussion elicited a similar response. In fact, the nature of the question caused Singh to ask for a change in the direction of the interview. With his arms raised and a high pitch in his voice, Singh asserted: “so this is where I would have to stop you. My situation is probably a little bit different from students [belonging to] other cultural backgrounds, and I don’t want to discuss that with you.” What contributed to this reticence and
unwillingness to discuss this topic? Kumar, as Gunaratnam (2003) suggested, may have had a number of reasons for avoiding the question as I was a stranger. For example, I recalled glancing at Kumar’s left index finger, and seeing a white gold wedding band. It could have been that Kumar returned to India where he got married. At my previous place of employment (in a call centre industry), my Indo-Canadian colleagues customarily returned to India to perform nuptials, whether they be arranged or otherwise. Oftentimes when these men emigrate to Canada, their future wives stay behind in India. It may be that Singh awaits his wife, or the opportunity to make a joint application for sponsorship with his wife. Likely here, I was facing a situation that speaks to the complexities of culture, religious practice and race. Besides, Kumar’s reticence in sharing such intimate details with an ‘outsider’ possibly has to do with the fact that I do not belong to his religious, cultural and racial backgrounds.

4.7 Ethical Concerns and Limitations

Being an immigrant, I was quite cognizant that the research allowed me to feel comfortable with other (im)migrants – a demographic that is quite vulnerable. I also recognize that issues to which I sought answers had the potential to evoke and cause participants to revisit past emotions of anger, anguish and melancholy that may have resulted from the labour market navigation and the immigration process (Flynn, 2011; Man, 2004). In fact, I am quite familiar with and have had more than an earfull of the stories of international student graduates and arriving (im)migrants originating from distant shores to pursue postsecondary studies, live and work in this country – Canada. Therefore, I strived in the research to lessen painful emotions on the part of respondents and treated them with a high level of deference, since my research would not be possible without their kindness. The subject of race had the potential to cause some discomfort for some participants, and so participants and key informants were reminded that they had the right to withdraw from the study, stop or interrupt the recording during the interview. Also, to reduce any foreseeable risks of harm or embarrassment, I assured each respondent that his or her anonymity and confidentiality would be protected at each stage of the research process, including the published reports. The same treatment was also applied.
to the key informants who participated in the study. In writing up the results, I considered how the specifics might potentially jeopardize the identity of the respondent, or existing and future relationship with their organization, or the wider communities of individuals with whom they interact. Thus, I assigned pseudonyms to each participant and key informant in the study.

I am well aware that the research on the transition of international student graduates could have offered a more robust debate had I included the perspective of student participants originating from a White racial background. However, my attempts to reach them through different media or strategies were futile. Program assistants at various postsecondary institutions also questioned whether or not I would be able to contact participants belong to this racial group. They informed me that White international graduates, unlike South/Southeast Asians and Caribbean Blacks, generally return to their countries of origin upon completing their studies. Finally, operating on a meagre student budget restricted the amount of travelling that I could have taken on to find individuals. Skype helped to overcome this problem.
Chapter 5. The Canadian “Points System” as Applied to International Student Graduates

5.1 Introduction
This data chapter explores the immigration challenges experienced by the student migrants (international student graduates) I interviewed in their transition from postsecondary education towards Canadian permanent resident status. These migrants, originating from the Caribbean and South/Southeast Asia, are graduates from postsecondary institutions in Ontario, Canada. The views of key informants such as immigration lawyers, an immigration consultant, a federal politician and a human resource recruiter help to contextualize their experiences, for example, by noting how the points decrease with applicant age and marital status. Together, these informants provide their own critique of key aspects of the “seamlessness” of the Canadian Express Entry and Provincial Nominee Programs. By citing specific cases and interactions with Canada’s immigration policy, this chapter centres the discussion on processes that structure the eligibility and permanent admission of (im)migrants; I begin by unpacking the discriminatory practices in the Express Entry, Canada’s flagship economic immigration program for ‘skilled’ workers. I specifically focus on the age-experience nexus, and some of the hidden problems behind the neutrality of the points system. This is then followed by a discussion about the protracted wait period for admission to Canada which includes “off-ramping” and the accompanying emotional and psychological pain experienced by student migrants. I close the chapter with a few suggestions that I believe will improve the points system, emphasizing that while a merit-based system is an improvement on previous policy, transparency can be improved in a number of ways.

5.2 Inequities in the Express Entry System
5.2.1 Ageism vs. Work ‘Experience’ in Canada’s Express Entry

My analysis of the points system reveals that the Canadian Express Entry is more favourable towards applicants in my study who are younger and single. The younger the applicant, the more points he or she is eligible to receive (See Table 5.1, p.94). The applicant also loses points as he or
Table 5.1 Eligible Points awarded by Age and Marital Status in the Express Entry’s Comprehensive Ranking System (CRS)\(^{11}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (in years)</th>
<th>Participant(s)</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Points Loss from Maximum</th>
<th>Participants(s)</th>
<th>Single</th>
<th>Points Loss from Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 18</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>95</td>
<td></td>
<td>Navdeep Bains, Hortense Clue, Zacchaeus Gittens, Bhushan Kumar, Khoshing Phy, Lydia Merchant</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 29</td>
<td>Nyesha Jackson, Kirk Johnson</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Navdeep Bains, Hortense Clue, Zacchaeus Gittens, Bhushan Kumar, Khoshing Phy, Lydia Merchant</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Bernadette Berry</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Sacchin Ventakaraman</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chevon-Marie Naipaul</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td>85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>94</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Imelda Aquino</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Sacchin Ventakaraman</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jerome Bradshaw, Dimple Cooke</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gurratan Singh</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Pranavi Suthakaran</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Huang (Hilene) Ngo</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>Giang (Daisy) Phang</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45+</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{11}\) The data in the table was constructed using the interview data gathered from individuals who applied to the points system. I first estimated the points based on interview data, then followed-up with the participants who confirmed and shared their actual points earned in each category.
she matures in age. Further, with two applicants of equal age, applicants who are married or in a common law union receive fewer points than single status applicants. For example, Nyesha Jackson and Kirk Johnson, respondents in a common-law union, would receive 10 points less than the maximum 110 points to which Navdeep Bains and other single status applicants in the 20-29 age cohort are entitled. Likewise, a married applicant, for example, Imelda Aquino, at age 34, if my assumptions are correct, would receive 8 points less than a single male applicant at the same age. It also important to note that the main points of disparity between the two cohorts of applicants in my study has to do with increasing age.

Presumably, the premium on youth has to do with the fact that younger applicants have more years of labour to contribute to the economy without a draw on subsidized health services. However, this pattern raises questions about the structure of the Express Entry system. Why is it that the system awards a lower number of points to younger and single applicants, assuming declines of five points per year even in the able-bodied years of 30-45? Also, why is marital status accompanied by decreased points? Does it have to do with an assumption that having children might be a burden on the state? I suggest that this not a “neutral” economic rationale as seen in Table 5.1 (p.94). From a critical perspective, how valid is it to assume that older married workers are less desirable? They will also have taxable incomes that will contribute to the Canadian economy. Younger immigrant workers are also perceived to be healthier and less reliant on the health care system (and the broader welfare state). Thus, they are assumed to be less likely to put a burden on the health care system. But is that accurate and fair? Likewise, this points system assumes that applicants with families will put a burden on state resources, while the Canadian-born may be actually rewarded for having children.

I also discovered by analyzing my data in this way that the points system in the Canadian Express Entry process is a flawed selection mechanism for immigrants because of the contradictions that result from age and experience. Geared towards the selection of ‘skilled’ immigrants, the merit-based immigration program invites applicants who are (im)migrants on the basis of age and work experience (amongst other criteria). However, a major inconsistency is that the “skill” that is supposed to be valued presumably increases with age and this is not taken into account. On the
matter of the category of age, the economic immigration program is so constructed that it is
unfavourable to applicants who are more mature in age and this clearly devalues foreign expertise to
the extent that it is correlated with age; the comprehensive ranking system (CRS) awards them
fewer points with increasing age regardless of increasing expertise. Increasing age immediately
renders them as undesirable bodies in Canada.

My data set illustrates how this way of calculating points is specifically disadvantageous to
student migrants who are seeking to maximize their points. For example, the ageism in the Express
Entry System is experienced in full by Giang (Daisy) Phang, a female student migrant. Originating
from Vietnam, Phang, because of her age, pointed out to me that the Express Entry “was not a good
system” for awarding “points for older people with years of work experience.” She was actually aware
of how the merit-based system penalizes individuals on the grounds of age. As she put it, “I was in my
late thirties when I came to school in Canada. So, I know I will be dinged when it comes to points for
my age.” The injustice here is that she is actually penalized for obtaining additional years of skill in the
form of postsecondary education in Ontario! Pranavi Suthakaran, another South/Southeast Asian
participant who eventually terminated her Express Entry application, pointed out that: “I am too old. I
am now 39 [years of age]. … [T]he program would not give me the maximum points available in the
age category.” Phang was only eligible for 17 out of the maximum 110 points since by the time she
completed her postsecondary education and two years of employment in Canada, she was 43 years
old. Whereas Suthakaran, a married woman and a few years younger, also withdrew her application
even though she was entitled to receive 50 points.

Table 5.2 (p.97) shows more detail how this way of allocating points in the Express Entry acts
as a deterrent for those pursing a graduate education. It does not facilitate a “seamless” transition for
Phang and Suthakaran, who eventually resorted to changing their applications to the Masters
Graduate stream of the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP), a paper-based economic
immigration program in the province of Ontario. The multiple negative consequences of this choice
will be revealed in a later section. Had Phang and Suthakaran stuck with their initial uninformed choice
to transition via the route of the Express Entry, the system would only have recognized a
Table 5.2 Points for Select Student Migrants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Max. Points</th>
<th>Giang (Daisy) Phang</th>
<th>Pranavi Suthakaran</th>
<th>Bernadette Berry</th>
<th>Navdeep Bains</th>
<th>Jerome Bradshaw</th>
<th>Chevon-Marie Naipaul</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CORE FACTORS (A)</strong></td>
<td>500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Education</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official Language</td>
<td>160</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- First official language</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Second official language proficiency</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Canadian Work Experience</strong></td>
<td>80</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spouse/Common Law (B)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse work experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian work experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skill Transferability Factor (C)</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Work Experience</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Additional Points (D)</strong></td>
<td>600</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibling in Canada (Citizen or Landed Resident)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCL….7 or higher on French language test……</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCL……</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-sec - two year</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-sec - three or more</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arranged Empl - NOC 00</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arranged Empl - NOC 0, A or B</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial or Territorial Nomination</td>
<td>600</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>336</strong></td>
<td><strong>349</strong></td>
<td><strong>507</strong></td>
<td><strong>487</strong></td>
<td><strong>460</strong></td>
<td><strong>470</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
maximum of three out of their 10 years of foreign expertise in the fields of education and microfinance respectively. This is equivalent to 25 out of a maximum 50 points (See Table 5.2, p.97 under Skill Transferability).

Indeed, when examining actual cases, the points system reveals an unfairness towards student migrants like Phang. The system robs Phang of points for age as she went to pursue postsecondary studies, along with her seven years of foreign work experience, and the time that she spends seeking work to meet the labour market requirement which is beyond her control. Had she transitioned initially on the Express Entry without losing few years studying, she would have been eligible for 55 points (Table 5.1, p.94) at age 39 as opposed to 17 points at age 43 (Table 5.2, p.97). Indeed, she was awarded 135 (from a maximum of 150) points for her graduate education but it is significant to note that the points lost are irretrievable. This case questions the “seamlessness” in the Express Entry stream. It is clear to Phang that she was penalized because of her age and for spending time to obtain a masters degree.

For Bernadette Berry and Navdeep Bains, the awarding of points by age against work experience not only demonstrates devaluation of the older, experienced student migrants but potentially a closure mechanism in the Express Entry system. Despite having approximately six years expertise in print and online journalism in her native Jamaica, the system awarded 50 points to Berry (25 points more than Phang for her 10 years)\textsuperscript{12} who applied for permanent residence at age 30. To Navdeep Bains who applied at age 25, the system awarded 110 points in the age criterion but zero for work experience, as he only worked in Canada (more will be said about this in a later chapter). While complex, these cases suggest that the current points system diminishes the value of the expertise of migrants, seemingly by via “neutral” calculations, in contradiction to the premise upon which they were invited to apply. Like the older generation of the points system (Bauder, 2006, Man, 2007; 2004), the

\textsuperscript{12} In the CRS, it appears that language proficiency is closely associated with foreign work experience. The system awards the applicant 50 points for foreign work experience if he/she scores an average of 7 each in the areas of reading, writing, listening and speaking of the Canadian language benchmark. It is worth noting that English is the official language of Jamaica, while Vietnam has a francophone colonial history.
Canadian Express Entry essentially strips some immigrants with relevant work experience of years as they age (including the time to graduate with their degrees/diplomas). This raises serious questions about adding international students to the Express Entry points system with respect to the valuing of (im)migrants’ expertise. How did its creators arrive at the value placed on ones’ expertise acquired over a period of several years? Could it be that policy makers are thinking about each person’s economic value, but not taking into account overseas expertise?

Key informants Corinne Lipinski and Janine Kinder-Morgan (pseudonyms) agree with participant Phang about the antithetical outcomes of age and work experience in the points system. Kinder-Morgan, a federal politician, suggests: “if you are over certain age, not only do you not get points, you also lose points.” Lipinski, an immigration consultant in Toronto, adds that “after 35 years of age, you are considered really old, and so you are not getting any points really.” Specifically, individuals between 35 and 45 years old are eligible to receive between 77 and 0 points respectively, whereas those between ages 20 and 34 receive typically between 110 and 83 Express Entry points (See Table 5.2, p.97). Both key informants also went on to critique the discriminatory nature of the policy. Kinder-Morgan, the federal politician, raised the unlikelihood of individuals in their 20s having 10 years of work experience. She continued: “I know that there are protégés out there, but I haven’t met them in my universe.” Lipinski argues that individuals between the ages of 35 and 45 years old are typically “at the height of their careers.” Generally, individuals in the latter age group would have made considerable human capital investments in themselves. But more important, a critical view of the data in Table 5.2 (p.97) points to what scholars have theorized as the “enigma” of racism or the re-articulation of overtly discriminatory historical immigration policies (Bonilla-Silva, 2014:1; Leach, 2015), albeit with more acceptable expressions as “neutral” numerical values. From my perspective, here is a glimpse of how the points system inner working makes transition to citizenship via the Express system not really “seamless” for specific (im)migrants. Such patterns are not surprising given Canada’s historically racist policies. In fact, my analysis leads to suspicion of a lack of transparency with covert alternatives or culturally acceptable expressions in policies. Such progressiveness does
not necessarily effectively bring an end to racial discriminations or other manifestations of social inequities (Leach, 2015:439).

The cases of Berry and Bains - specifically the number of points each received for age and experience - also shine light on a ‘hidden’ mechanism in the points system. The construction of the points system is such that age and experience are to some extent mutually exclusive categories. In other words, there is nobody in that space or age-experience nexus who scores high on both categories (See Table 5.2, p.97). This arrangement works to exclude (some) international student graduates or (im)migrants from obtaining Canadian permanent residence. The lower the number of points achieved in the age-experience nexus, the lower and less likely their chances of being invited to apply for permanent admission. This is because there is a cut-off of points to be accepted. Is there a hidden oppression based on social identity? While I have more to say about this later, at the very least my analysis questions the discourse of a “seamless” transition for international student graduates. It also interrogates the discourse of “ideal immigrant” being promoted by the program. The points system, I would argue, hides privilege that might be used to describe the individual and how this ideal immigrant is represented in the points system. Indeed, the individual is reduced to an economic value (Goldberg, 2012).

5.2.2 Problems Hiding Behind the Neutrality of the Points System

While the points system is championed for its built-in meritocracy (Tepperman, 2016), immigration lawyer Sebastian Salerno questions the significance of the meritocratic aspect of the Canadian Express Entry stream. For example, “possessing the established merit required by the economic immigration program”, he argues, does not equate to a seamless transition. The application for permanent residence does not guarantee an automatic selection or an invitation to apply (ITA) for Canadian permanent residence. On the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) website, each individual immigrating via the Express Entry stream is directed to submit a completed online profile into the comprehensive ranking system (CRS). This system evaluates and “ranks” the applicant in a ‘pool’ based on an aggregate number of points earned based on the migrant’s skills,
education, language proficiency, professional expertise amongst other criteria (Government of Canada, 2017). As of the time of writing, the system issues, on a bi-weekly basis, ITAs for permanent residency. Most participants in my study, based on their own experiences, contended that the Express Entry process represents an inequitable and an unmeritocratic mechanism for selecting skilled immigrants. Participant Salerno noted, “when you have the qualifications, it does not put you any further ahead in the queue. You are placed into a pool with other applicants and there are many good ones with a significantly higher number of points.” And so, he likens the process to “playing the lottery” because the points threshold required for selection fluctuates from one round of draw to the next. Participant Lipinski agrees that the draw from the pool is “unpredictable” and depends on the scores of other applicants in the pool. Consequently, the transition process for student migrants is one that is riddled with uncertainty. As Salerno put it, “merit and points do not get you into the promised land called Canada.”

The lack of assurance in transition coupled with the mystery of the fluctuating points system raises questions about the policymakers’ intent and purpose for using a so-called merit-based system. Why did the state opt for a points-based system which operates like a lottery in terms of selecting applicants? Why the use of points and numbers? This is in line with Bonilla-Silva’s (2014) argument that points to how institutions employ “colour-blind” discourse to understate the significance of racism. Because the process of immigrant selection in the Express Entry hinges on numerical values, the use of points masks the thought or appearance of discrimination on the basis of race, class, age or gender. Arguably, in ‘randomizing’ applicant selection, the details of the process become obfuscated. The use of points positions the state as being a fair player to all applicants, which makes it almost impossible for individuals to challenge their inadmissibility or exclusion on the grounds of age, race, gender or class. Arguably, the system shifts the burden onto the individual. Each individual then faces the possibility of protracted wait times as part of the applicant’s failure to be selected in bi-weekly draws. It has often been noted that under neoliberalism, the focus moves from the state to the individual (Swarts, 2013). In this case, the role of the IRCC as a state institution is hidden behind the individual.  

101
Omi and Winant (1993; 1994) warn against the subtleness of this new racism discourse which steers clear of locating the processes of discrimination in societal institutions.

I would propose further that the establishment of a “colour-blind” immigration program points to the normalization of exclusion that has come to characterize other contemporary state policies in Canada. Key informants drew attention to another exclusionary mechanism which commenced in 2011 with the institutionalization of the Super Visa for parents and grandparents, which also has far-reaching implications. Ideas informing these policies emanate from recommendations ostensibly aimed at reducing the “backlogs and wait times” in the immigration queue (Canada Parliament. House of Commons, 2012:10; 2015). Unlike “temporary resident visas,” this regulation claims to offer these individuals, who are traditionally sponsored in the family class, a “10-year multiple” admission, which permits them to spend a maximum of two years on each visit, while their sponsorship is being administered (Canada Parliament. House of Commons, 2012:11-14; 2015). But lawyer Ngozi contends that the intent of the policy is to exclude, discourage and ultimately “lower” the number of immigrants, especially the admission of “seniors” through the family class stream. This cohort of immigrants “put a strain on the pension system and other social services” in Canada and the goal is to ensure that such applicants are not guaranteed entry to Canada. A media report in The Toronto Star indicates that the program is dogged by a rejection rate of approximate 23 percent regardless of whether the sponsor secured medical insurance for the temporary visitor (Keung, 2012). Ensconced in the super visa system is what Ngozi refers to as the “downside” of a policy mechanism which seeks to discourage the pursuing of permanent residence by this cohort belonging to the family class. As he reasons, “if they [parents and grandparents] can come to visit, is it necessary to give them permanent resident status? In the long run, a lot of them will say, "it’s not worth it" to obtain landed status. Key informant Lipinski labels the policy as exclusionary because the state uses the regulation to impose its own “definition of who is considered ‘family’ members” in immigrant communities. And so, she argues, scale-back in the sponsorship of parents and grandparents “somewhat changes the definition of who becomes a legal permanent resident” in Canada. This, in turn, has implications for who individuals can sponsor.
Key informant Ngozi also argued that these exclusionary immigration policies have over time become normalized with the introduction of a selection mechanism that is devoid of phenotypical attributes. He noted that the Justin Trudeau Liberals, in their attempts to address public discontents and dissatisfaction within this system, re-opened the family class sponsorship to parents and grandparents in 2016, albeit within a randomized selection system that parallels the semi-randomized solution in the Express Entry. As of December 2016, applicants were expected to indicate their interests to sponsor their parents via the IRCC’s website. Key informant Lipinski notes “applicants are chosen from a lottery of 10,000 people”. Ngozi adds that the Liberals did not undertake radical policy reform to address these kinds of exclusionary measures which unfolded in a piecemeal or arbitrary fashion over a period of the previous seven to eight years under the Harper Conservatives. As Ngozi put it: “the [Liberals] were just going with the policies the general public was clamouring for, but not really doing anything different from the Harper Conservatives.” Arguably, they used the same mechanism for the immigrant selection process for parents and grandparents as they did for the Express Entry. That is, regulatory changes to the Express Entry stream make it appear fairer to international student graduates who complained under the previous government that the fixed cut-off scores for selection (which then ranged in the high 420s to the 800s) were unattainable for most applicants.

Another regulatory change made by the Harper government was offering a route to permanent residency more accessible contingent upon the individual obtaining a “high level or managerial job” (Government of Canada, 2017). Individuals who receive this arranged job offer are eligible to receive an extra 200 points. But this labour market impact assessment (LMIA), that might previously result in a score of 600 points, was now reduced to 50 points! At the same time, Express Entry applicants with a sibling in Canada can earn an additional 15 points (Government of Canada, 2017). I would argue that, based on interview data I collected, the transition process is not noticeably more seamless because the group does not stand to benefit significantly from these regulatory changes; they would not improve the overall score. None of the Express Entry interviewees has siblings who are Canadian permanent residents or citizens. Neither do any of the participants hold an arranged employment in
senior management, middle management or in a supervisory position. They could thus not take advantage of points awarded for those respective categories in the comprehensive ranking system (CRS). Nyesha Jackson was the sole participant from the group of 18 respondents who obtained an LMIA. And as will be demonstrated in chapter 6, while the number of points (50) associated with the LMIA is no longer attractive, the LMIA still seems to offer smooth transition to the permanent admissibility of student migrants; very few can arrange this government document. And so, while the regulatory changes may have improved opportunity for Jackson to transition via the PNP in Nova Scotia, it arguably did not fundamentally alter the problems inherent in the Express Entry program for international graduates. Politicians and interest groups remain vocal on state policies that appear less “welcoming” towards former international students who the state policies affect negatively (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Key informants and participants in my research also question the minuscule regulatory changes made over the past two to three years, pointing to the limited efficacy of the regulatory changes in facilitating the transition of student migrants to permanent residency.

5.2.3 The ‘Rat Race’ for Points in the Canadian Express Entry System

It also appears that Express Entry applicants are engaged in what feels like a ‘rat race’ for amassing points. Navdeep Bains’ experience provides some insight into how the competition for points plays out in the transition of student migrants applying through the Express Entry system. Because of the fierce competition that exists (via fluctuating points), it is imperative that student migrants look for ways to maximize their points. Otherwise, the individual risks delaying transition and permanent admission to Canada. When questioned about the purpose for his choice to re-write the language exam, Bains brought my attention to the importance of official language proficiency in the points system. Whereas student migrants may have sat and passed the language proficiency tests administered by the International English Language Testing System (IELTS)\textsuperscript{13}, the Canadian

\textsuperscript{13} The IELTS is one of four accepted language tests accepted by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). The others include the Canadian English Language Proficiency Index Program (CELPIP), the Test d’évaluation de français (TEF Canada), and the Test de connaissance du français (TCF Canada).
Language Benchmark (CLB) level measuring linguistic ability operates as the state’s tool for evaluating official language proficiency in the areas of reading, writing, speaking and listening (pictured in Appendix D). It establishes and converts the IELTS scores once they are entered by applicants into the comprehensive ranking system. This section of the merit-based system awards scores for CLB passes ranging from a minimum of 4 or 5 (IELTS 4.5 or 5.0) to a maximum of 10 (IELTS 9.0+ or the equivalent of 24 to 136 express entry points respectively). Realizing that a minimum of 7.0 on the IELTS was insufficient to raise his overall Express Entry score, Bains wrote the English language proficiency test three times which permitted him to achieve a maximum of 9.0 on the IELTS (CLB 9 or equivalence of 124 points) (See Table 5.2, p. 97). For him, there was no ‘seamlessness’ in the transition system, as re-writing tests to improve scores costs money which is difficult for most of these student migrants to find.

In general, the randomized selection of those achieving a floating points cut-off from week to week establishes a fierce competition between the different groups of (im)migrants who are left with limited opportunities to improve their scores. The application for each student migrant to Canada and prospective (im)migrants outside the country are placed in the ‘pool’ of the comprehensive system where they are ranked. As indicated with the case of Bains, possessing the minimum English language proficiency score, for example, somewhat limited his chances to immigrate which he was able to improve. But in general, there are not many ways for international student graduates to distinguish themselves in terms of the number of points each person is awarded by the points system. In essence, student migrants have little agency to improve the scores awarded for fixed variables such as education and age. Unlike other categories in the CRS, official language status is the only criterion that the individual can really improve.

Lipinski, my key informant in Canada’s immigration policy, views “the point system as a competition”. Lipinski recognizes that the limitations in the process are “largely responsible for screening out student migrants out of the immigration process”. As she contends, “you can’t really change your age, and you can’t change your education unless you go back to school.” She adds that for most applicants, “language proficiency is the only comprehensive ranking system (CRS) variable
that can be changed.” Individuals who have a perfect score in the language proficiency tests might be able to distinguish themselves from other applicants and increase the number of points awarded, albeit minimally. However, this does not necessarily bring participant Bains to a clear floating cut off. And so, Lipinski argues that language proficiency is a hindrance for many low-scoring student migrants who repeatedly sit the English language tests to “score the maximum points”. Had the immigration pathway been “seamless”, there would have been no need for applicants to engage in a constant search for points here and there. And so, I submit that the competition invokes neoliberal ideals of the rational, self-interested individual who seeks to use resources to leverage outcomes in the Express Entry system.

Respondents in my study who originated from English-speaking countries, in particular, questioned the purpose of the English language proficiency test. They see it as a discriminatory practice based on country of origin. It can be seen from Table 5.2 (p.97) that their scores ranged from 64 to 136 among six participants. Among the nine interviewees originating from the Anglophone Caribbean, seven declined to share their thoughts on the IRCC official language requirements. The other two were more vocal about the institutional inequity towards student migrants in the state regulations; simultaneously, among those originating from South/Southeast Asia, two of the interviewees weighed in on the matter.

Bernadette Berry, from Jamaica, perceives the regulation which requires her to demonstrate a good command of the (official) language as a discriminatory practice on the part of the state. When I raised the topic of the proficiency test, it became obvious that navigating the Express Entry had brought its own share of trauma on her. In registering her disapproval of the test, Berry sighed deeply, sharing how incensed she was about it. She explained: “even while I was writing the test, I was just cussing because can’t believe that I speak English and they wanted me to do an English test. I could not understand because [the discrimination] was just too blatant.” She made it clear that English, in her native Jamaica, is both the official language and language of instruction in the academy. Berry added that, in Canada, she spent two years pursuing a graduate level degree in the social sciences, writing numerous course papers, including a thesis and taught a writing course and proof-read essays,
all in one of Canada’s official languages. Berry did not see her pathway to Canadian permanent residence a ‘rosy’ transition but rather filled with unpleasant experiences. She still cannot fathom why the state required her to demonstrate mastery in the language she has been using all her social and professional life. And, indeed, she obtained 124 out of a possible 136 points. The only possible explanation we could think of for not exempting English speakers is that the government had opted for a “one-size-fits-all” policy, ignoring the participants’ skills.

My conversation with Chevon-Marie Naipaul on the language proficiency issue was similar to Berry’s but suggested that there was a process of “othering” of immigrants that occurs on the basis of their accents. Like Berry, Naipaul pursued graduate studies in Canada after completing her undergraduate degree in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago where English is the official language and language of instruction in the education system. Although less agitated by the need to demonstrate official language proficiency then Berry, Naipaul also acknowledges her position of speaking English with an accent (presumably superior, judging from her score of 136 points) and how that difference singles out the immigrant for discrimination:

If you are from [a country] where English is the second language, then no problem. But…. I am coming from an English-speaking country. I don’t even speak ‘Canadian’ English. I write and speak the Queen’s English and I still have to … do this exam. But I guess, it’s their criteria and …. [the examiner] wants to know that you can speak “English English” or “Canadian” English, I guess. But I don’t see it makes sense [that I have to write an English test]. It’s a criterion that you have to [satisfy] …. I [did] not [take] it for granted that I speak English…. I [prepared] for it. (October 15, 2017)

Naipaul clearly identifies an asymmetrical relationship here that is rooted in colonialism (which assists her in this case because she speaks “Queen’s English”).

In addition to the unequal colonial relations, Naipaul draws attention to how the IELTS derives its regulatory and administrative powers from the state and determines the parameters for acquiring so-called Canadian standard English in evaluating and assessing official language proficiency. She explained how this was manifested in the gate-keeping of language examiners who “other” (im)migrants by the way that they so carefully enunciate their words during the examinations. This exaggerated display of English competence seems to assume that the immigrant’s comprehension may be unacceptable or unsatisfactory. The “othering” that Naipaul herself encountered demonstrated
to her that the immigration system represented her as an (im)migrant or an individual with less than a
good command of the language that required numerical assessment. She felt constructed as an
individual whose use of English needed to be legitimized by the Canadian state. Her experience leads
to problematization of this regulation and practice which insists that native speakers of English be
successful on English proficiency tests prior to being permanently admitted into the Canadian social
formation. There is also a hidden assumption that people from countries where the spoken English
does not sound ‘Canadian’ enough are not proficient in the language. This brings up the question of
accents to the fore. Is it possible for examiners to render the English spoken by international student
graduates as unacceptable due to its accent? To the extent that the kind of English spoken is
assessed, it can be argued that the use of tests is sensitive to widespread disdain of “foreign accents”
as part of the construction of Whiteness, which is arguably unconscious racism in the Canadian
landscape. Within a wider critical lens, this connects to what England and Stiell (1997:211) identify as
“race/ethnicity” as a part of a fundamental “construction of Whiteness”. For example, domestic
employers in Toronto deliberately chose European domestics over Filipinas whose foreign accents, it
is believed, might taint their children’s pristine language (England & Steill, 1997). So, for Naipaul and
other (im)migrants sitting the IELTS, there is the possibility that it is their accents that remain
questionable and not their ability to comprehend, read, write or speak the language.

Bains, a graduate of Seneca College, and of Indo-Canadian heritage, finds the practice of asking
college graduates to demonstrate official language competence to be “all about economics.” While
Bains appreciates the basis of the state’s insistence on ensuring that (im)migrants are able to
demonstrate verbal and oral communication skills in either of Canada’s official languages, he
questions the process by which it is done. He feels that it is both a “dumb and unnecessary”
requirement. This is related to his observation that the IELTS is less rigorous compared to the depth
and breadth of the English language to which his college courses exposed him. Again, the transition
is not seamless. Bains believes the practice is a “money grab” for the entities that administer the test,
as he put it, “for us international students, the test is a joke. I did way harder English in school. So, do
I have to prove it?”. 
5.2.4 Is there an ‘Ideal’ Immigrant for Canadian Express Entry?

To furnish answers to the questions raised by participants above, I revisited the discourse deployed in my conversation with Corinne Lipinski as well as parliamentary Hansard, and The Globe and Mail to begin a Foucauldian inventory of the “ideal immigrant” that Government of Canada documents seek. Lipinski contends that the definition of the “desired immigrant” cohort in Canada “lies in the regulatory changes” that were initially authored by the Stephen Harper Conservatives and are slowly being revised by the Justin Trudeau Liberals in 2016. Debating the 2014 amendments to the Citizenship Act (Bill C-24), Chungsen Leung, the then Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism, proposed stiffer restrictions for individuals on “work visas” or “under temporary status” (Scheer, 2014:5774). Leung contended that the bill, in that form, disincentivized foreign students wishing to remain in Canada after completing their studies. Just as I have argued above, the then Liberal Opposition Critic, Kevin Lamoureux pointed out that the period spent in school on student visas will not be counted towards the 1095 days required to satisfy eligibility for Canadian citizenship (Scheer, 2014:5776). Was the intent of the bill to screen out or discourage student migrants from making the postgraduate transition?15

Discourses in newspapers also describe the kind of immigrant that the Government of Canada wishes to admit. Promising to improve the Canadian Express Entry regulations, then Federal Immigration Minister John McCallum, in the March 14th, 2016 edition of The Globe and Mail, described international students as “the most fertile source of immigrants” and as “ideal immigrants” to justify Canada’s need to recruit international students (Zilio & Chiose, 2016). Such student migrants receive their education in Canada and therefore have some amount of fluency in either or both official languages (as in the cases of my participants Bains, Phang and Suthakaran). In University Affairs, 14 Chungsen Leung explained that Bill C-24 (which became the Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act), “actually strengthens the value of Canadian citizenship”. He further perceived landed immigrant status as the initial process of acquiring Canadian citizenship (Hansard, 2014:5774-5778).

15 It should be noted that the same treatment is meted out to migrant farmworker pensioners who are denied Canada’s Old Age Security (OAS) because of what Service Canada flags as their “presence” in Canada which translates to mean the lack of continuity of residence for a year despite having worked in Canada seasonally for decades (Thomas, 2019). This suggests some implicit judgements about the worth of workers who are not able to maintain continuous employment in Canada for whatever reason.
McCallum is also quoted saying that “international students are the perfect candidates to become Canadian citizens” (MacDonald, 2016). Likewise, Lamoureux, in a CBC article, depicts international student graduates as being suitable workers to “fill jobs that would otherwise remain vacant” in sparsely populated areas of the country (Harris, 2016). Accessing anecdotal evidence and expertise, my key informant Lipinski contends that the immigration regulation is geared towards attracting Canada’s imaginary of the “best immigrants” which include “people who are really rich,” “highly educated,” “young” and “white”, from certain countries with a “good command of the English language.” This imaginary is racialized because the word “immigrant” is a subtle word for not White (Li, 2003a; 2001; Ng, 1993; 1986; 1981; Sharma, 2006; 2000:7-9). When I questioned about the rationale informing the current selection practice, key informant Lipinski linked past and contemporary immigration policies, saying: “if you look at our history, we [Canada] have not been the best with our immigrants but that’s what the state decides.” Since the student migrants that I interviewed do not fit all social categories of this young, White, financially well-off imaginary, it is therefore not surprising that most of them do not have a seamless transition to Canadian permanent residency.

That the Canadian state is guided by a points system to select immigrants appears on its surface to be objective. But could it be that it embeds a pre-established profile of the individual it desires as a good “fit”? Indeed, the Express Entry system assigns various points to predetermined categories such as age and experience in order to select what it considers the “ideal” or “most fertile” immigrant. What if some student migrants (international student graduates) are not really the “ideal” and the “most fertile source” of immigrants? Referring to immigrants as “ideal” or “most fertile” points to the new racism (particularly, the non-racial language/discourse) that Barker (1981:23-24) and Miles and Torres (2007) deconstruct in their analysis of the “discourses and practices of the social world” (2007:71-72). While the use of these discourse invokes the idea of ‘race’, the subtleties conveyed in them allow for a discussion of immigration in a manner that does not acknowledge phenotypical differences or ‘race’ as an organizing principle that structures access to permanent admission to Canada (Omi & Winant, 1986).
For a Caribbean participant, Berry, interpretation of the “ideal immigrant” points to the neo-racist discourse that she argues has influenced the contemporary immigrant debate in Canada. While unsure as to whether she fits the description of the kind of immigrant that Canada seeks, Berry historicizes the Canadian state’s attitude and policies associated with ‘welcoming’ and ‘integrating’ (im)migrant groups. Using her index and middle fingers of each hand to form the quotes, she asserts that the “ideal” person is one who “fits” into or can easily “adapt” to the “cultural norms” of White Canada. She extends the thought, adding that this individual will be “screened for Canadian values” and not be associated with “barbaric cultural practices.” It is important to contextualize this comment. While campaigning for re-election in 2015, Kelly Leitch of the federal Conservative Party of Canada proposed to implement legislation to “test” immigrants for Canadian values (Powers, 2015). Leitch repeated similar sentiments in her 2017 bid for leadership of the said federal party (Boutilier, 2018). Berry’s deconstruction of the discourse of ‘ideal’ immigrants which Canada seeks points to what Razack (2007:75) refers to as the “unmapping” that must occur in space-identity dynamics. Berry’s analysis indicates a realization on her part that there are discourses and practices that have been mapped onto racialized bodies seeking to permanently ‘integrate’ in the Canadian social formation. Historically these racialized immigrants and their cultural practices can be read as a threat to the dominant ‘Canadian culture’. I have argued earlier that throughout the decades, these discourses have been (re)produced and at times inform national conversations and state practices, and continue to limit the admissibility of (im)migrants in Canadian space. But if student migrants are represented as a threat to the society, it begs the question of the degree to which individuals are expected to have a seamless transition.

Further, discourses about “cultural norms”, ability to “adapt” and ‘fitting’ into ‘Canadian’ values suggest the socio-cultural stereotyping of immigrants originating from different cultures as intolerant, if not incapable of adjusting to Canadian morals and beliefs. My argument here suggests how immigration policies not only determine cultural practices that are acceptable in Canada but also render particular immigrants inadmissible.
5.3 Wait Times for Canadian Permanent Residency

5.3.1 Wait Times for Express Entry  
Part of the reason my participants experienced a protracted wait time was related to their difficulty in finding skilled employment to meet the labour market requirement needed to acquire Canadian permanent residence. The Express Entry regulation stipulates that each applicant must satisfy the work experience criterion of 1560 hours. This can be met by working one-year fulltime or 24 months part-time (Government of Canada, 2017). The data that I collected indicated that Berry, who had her permanent residency documents processed in February 2017, spent 12 months unsuccessfully navigating the labour market. Had she not experienced such long period of unemployment, she would have received landed Canadian status a year prior. Key informant Lipinski also reported that “a lot” of international student graduates do not receive an invitation to apply (ITA) for permanent residence because they “face the problem of not meeting the 1560 hours requirements.” According to Lipinski, those who fail to meet the labour market threshold often “ran out of options” in seeking skilled employment. That is, the transition to permanent residence was not ‘seamless’. Student migrants seem to either get frustrated with the transition process and return home (See Chapters 7 and 8), “go back to do more schooling,” or enter “the shadows” without status. While Lipinski does not know the number of student migrants in the “shadows” who fall out of status in Canada, she admitted that she provides them with professional advice. She explained that “the nature of my work is such that those who are non-status student migrants are among the individuals who really come to see me to seek advice on how to get their papers processed.”

Student migrants may also be unable to meet the points threshold of Express Entry because they experience an unfair assessment on the labour market criteria in the comprehensive ranking system (CRS). The computerized CRS system that I have been referring to collects and manages the information inputted by applicants and produces an overall score out of a possible 1200 points for each applicant. When I broached the issue of the CRS system, Lipinski revealed that it did not accurately account for the part-time employment hours she keyed-in for applicants. The CRS deviates from the immigration regulations and does not compute or award points for a “20 hours [per] week of
part-time work over a two-year period” as the “equivalent of one-year fulltime work.” Lipinski adds that this is a crucial point in the transition process where a student migrant might engage her office for professional advice regarding this perceived ineligibility (brought about by the “flaw” in the CRS). Lipinski commented that “some international student graduates come in and say that I am not eligible” and “some will not be even so bold” as to seek legal advice. Rectifying the problem requires the applicant to engage the services of an immigration consultant who:

manipulates the answer on the computer and provides an explanation letter on their file so that the immigration office understands… that the information is 100 percent correct. It’s because of how we [certified Immigration Consultants] are allowed to insert [and make changes to] the [online] form. However, [even when] provided this explanation, that client does not meet the requirement. And if the international student [graduate] is lacking this knowledge then they will probably be told that they are not qualified and move on. Yea. Which is unfortunate. (October 16, 2017)

This speaks to the inconsistency and the power relations that characterize the transition system and also raises questions about the (un)desirability of student migrants in Canada. Why is it that the state would knowingly have a system which miscalculates the labour market experiences so critical to their approval? Why does such system persist, although immigration consultants are bringing these cases to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada? This miscalculation of the points in the CRS only serves to protract the time, if not thwart the chances of international student graduates transitioning to permanent resident status. When the CRS miscalculates the points, retaining the professional services of immigration officials requires capital, which most student migrants lack. Arguably, most, because of their socio-economic status, find it difficult to sustain the process. Taken together, these observations suggest that the transition to permanent resident status is not a seamless process for the student migrant (international student graduate).

Key informant Kinder-Morgan sees the long wait-time associated with the Express Entry regulation as an attempt by the state to limit the number or eliminate student migrants who desire to immigrate permanently. As I have noted, the Express Entry regulations, introduced in 2015 by the Stephen Harper Conservatives, promised international students a more efficient/"seamless" transition to permanent legal status when compared to the previous two-step immigration regime in operation between 2008-2014 (i.e. the old version of the Canadian Experience Class). However, Kinder-Morgan
contends that the Express Entry system is a “misnomer” as it is “anything but express.” The rebranded merit-based system causes student migrants to believe their application will be processed quickly, expediting their transition to Canadian permanent legal status. But Kinder-Morgan describes the state’s approach to streamlining wait times:

> It’s a method of decreasing the processing time by simply eliminating a bunch of people or international student graduates from being able to apply. You know ... majority non-Whites... immigrants from China, the Caribbean and South and Southeast Asia.... people who are not really desired in Canada. The stories coming to my office.... [are] that students can’t find the specific jobs ... required to [realize the transition]. So, to me, that was not reducing the processing time. Instead, you are disqualifying them right off the top. (November 09, 2017)

This questions whether the system is an “express” entry or a segmented immigration policy. Sentiments expressed above indicate that the state is not pre-occupied (or overly concerned) with backlogs. Otherwise, it would have insisted that the issue was addressed in Bill-C24 or subsequent legislation or Orders-in-Council. Instead, the state grants permanent entry to Canada based on the immigrant’s ability to find skilled employment. And so, the student migrant seeking permanent admission has two options: he or she either satisfies them or not. While Kinder-Morgan’s racially-informed assessment of the Express Entry system insinuates that discriminatory practice based on Canada’s racist immigration history are occurring, it would certainly be difficult for the layperson to make such claims on the grounds of race or ethnic origin. The idea to limit the permanent entry of some student migrants is hidden in the process of immigration regulation. Given the use of the phrase “express entry”, the idea that the permanent entry of student migrants will be restricted is not the first thing that is communicated to potential applicants. The next section considers the protracted wait time in the postgraduate transition for student migrants who choose to apply to the provincial nominee programs.

5.3.2 Federal Processing Time for Canadian Permanent Residency

Student migrants transitioning via the Provincial Nominee Programs (PNPs) in my also study experienced a timing issue, since the federal bureaucratic process associated with PNPs subjects them to a protracted wait time for permanent residence. Given the shared federal-provincial
constitutional arrangements in immigration (outlined in section 95 of the *British North American Act, 1867/Constitution Act, 1982*), the choice to transition via the PNPs involves bureaucracy from both jurisdictions (Dyck, 1993). According to key informant Ngozi, the provinces select the immigrant, while the “role of the federal government is to screen” the applicants to ensure he or she satisfies the requirements of the *Immigration and Refugees Protection Act (IPRA)*. This involves establishing the applicant’s medical fitness, assuring s/he poses no security risks, and has acquired an official level of language proficiency. International student graduates seeking to immigrate as a PNP applicant do so through a paper-based application to the province of their choice (Government of Canada, 2018c). Applicants to the PNPs receive a certificate of nomination from the respective province, provided that they satisfy the specific requirements delineated in the different economic immigration programs. Seven of the 18 interviewees in my study have either transitioned or are actively transitioning though a PNP: four in Ontario (OINP), two in Nova Scotia (NSNP) and one in Saskatchewan (SINP). While student migrants are supposed to realize a hassle-free process obtaining nomination certificates, in reality the admission process is marred by a long-drawn-out processing time in the federal bureaucracy. To the chagrin of student migrants in my study, the process may extend beyond the 18-month period mandated by the IRCC.

Suthakaran, a participant in my study, confirmed the long processing time that OINP applicants can experience at the hands of the combined provincial and federal immigration bureaucracy. The issuance of provincial nominations typically occurs within three months of the application, but Suthakaran endured a nine-month waiting period for this document. When interrogated about the process(es) accounting for the delay, Suthakaran reveals what she considered a “fallacy” in the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP) instructions. She complained that the specific OINP clause that invites applicants “without a job offer” is “misleading” as it leaves (im)migrants in this stream with the impression that “the certificate [of nomination] does not require” full-time employment. Suthakaran, who took advantage of the opportunity to jointly sponsor her Bangladeshi husband and two children, reported that “at no time did Ontario immigration officials” who interviewed her and reviewed her file “mention that I need to get full-time work to apply” to the OINP. Her nine month’s
wait, she eventually discovered, was due to the fact that she would only receive the certification of nomination upon when she eventually got fulltime employment, updating the province of her current job as a financial administrator at a post-secondary institution in the GTHA. Her misconception - from reading the OINP website – had serious implications. Suthakaran’s employment status delayed the processing of her provincial nomination application at the provincial level. This is related to the requirement that prospective immigrants to Canada possess and demonstrate settlement funds which lessen their risks of being read as a burden to the state. Delays as experienced by Suthakaran with the provincial bureaucracy were further compounded by the long processing time for permanent admission to Canada beyond nomination. Suthakaran, who applied to the IRCC in August 2015, languished for 22 months awaiting landed immigrant status, which she received in June 2017. Taken together with the delayed wait time at the provincial level, the transition which averages at 18 months, for her lasted approximately 28 months.

Participant Phang, who also submitted documents requested by IRCC on time, experienced a similar long processing time and expressed her annoyance with the uncertainty and snail’s pace that characterizes the process. When I first interviewed her, she said she had applied to the IRCC in August 2016 and was "five months past the expected processing date of March 2018." Despite submitting the requested documents – for example, certificate of nomination, medical examination results, evidence of prior work experience and a criminal background checks - in a timely manner, Phang had not yet acquired permanent resident status. Based on her most recent telephone communication with the IRCC, Phang was told by the representative with whom she spoke that he could “not guarantee an exact processing date.” Instead, she reported that the “agent told me to wait another four to eight weeks for the documents to be completely processed.” Phang exclaimed:

Like, Oh my God! I don’t know what next. Based on government correspondence, I should have received my PR [permanent resident status] from February which was the full 18 months [of maximum] processing time. I am waiting for so long. It is now the end of June [2018] and still no PR card. (November 28, 2018)

Twenty-five (25) months had elapsed, and the immigration department had failed to establish a concrete delivery date for the document which it advertised as being deliverable within a maximum
18-month time span. A subsequent follow-up with Phang revealed that she did not receive confirmation of her permanent residence status until August 20th, 2018. Dimple Cooke, a participant from the Caribbean, experienced a similar delay. She applied to the OINP in June 2016 and received confirmation of permanent residence in August 2018. Both Phang and Cooke’s transitions did not unfold in a seamless manner but were inexplicably delayed.

Those possessing more knowledge than applicants themselves about the operations of the OINP not only confirmed the long wait times and frustrations but also identified reasons for the protracted processing period associated with the documents. Key informant Lipinski remarked that the program, in its October 2017 form, was “horrible.” During its infancy, the program allowed immigrants to realize permanent resident status within six months following the receipt of a certificate of nomination. Lipinski attributed the growing processing delays to a backlog at immigration departments and embassies, resulting from shortages of visa officers who process files and also because of the priority given to reunification of families, which remains a fundamental tenet of Canadian immigration (November 3, 2017). She added that the protracted processing period resulted in a “backlog” that caused student migrants awaiting provincial nomination to exceed the length of their postgraduate work permit (PGWP). This increases their susceptibility to “losing their status” in Canada. While none of the respondents with whom I met had lost their status, it is obvious that the backlog caused serious stress for applicants and has implications for what should have been a seamless transition.

The biggest challenge plaguing the OINP, Lipinski explained, is that “it opens and closes pretty fast.” An examination of the call for applicants to the Masters Graduate stream confirms the intermittent nature of the program. On May 1, 2017, the system put out a call for applicants and closed it on May 5, 2017. On April 5, 2018, the system announced a call for applicants and closed on the same date. The sporadic opening and closing of the system points to a use of a closure mechanism or constructed boundaries in the immigration system. There clearly exists a knowledge differential between student migrants and other stakeholders (political bureaucrats and immigration officials) as well as among the international student graduates themselves as to how the immigration system and admission to permanent resident status works. This knowledge differential between the two parties and among
applicants also constructs and determines power relations. The OINP operates as one of several policy mechanisms that the government uses to achieve its immigrant quota for the province and Canada. Policy bureaucrats are presumably the ones who decide the number of applicants that are greenlighted or excluded from obtaining permanent residency status. It is unlikely that students will be privy to such information. Thus, they will likely never understand what accounts for their delays experienced in pursuing “Express Entry.”

5.3.3 The Off-Ramping of Student Migrants, Inconsistent Information and a Network of Lenders

As noted above, wait time for permanent residence is compounded by the lack of clear information on the IRCC website, which makes the immigration process an arduous task for some student migrants. Critiquing the IRCC website as a source of information, key informant Lipinski, argues that “it is difficult to navigate.” Student migrants experience delays because the information on the immigration webpages is ambiguous. Lacking clear and concise information, the system creates what can be termed “off-ramps” that lead student migrants to various sources, for example, online fora, Google and other search engines, and student advisors for information that will supposedly aid with their transition. In pursuing them, applicants can spend an inordinate amount of time checking these sources before getting back or being re-routed on the main immigration online thoroughfare. Utilizing an analogy from the mechanic industry, Lipinski describes the “hunt for information”:

It’s like owning a car. Some people can really take care of their own car [by] putting in oil themselves and rotating their tires. And then, there are people like me who say “maybe I could figure it out, but I am not even gonna try. I am just gonna take it to a mechanic and say please look at my car and do what you need to do … because I just want to drive away and be safe”. (October 17, 2017)

Individuals encountering the immigration process will consult the sources that appear to have expert knowledge, information or advice that is pertinent to their individual circumstances. And so, arguably, the presence of ambiguous information helps to construct and facilitate an immigration pathway that is not ‘seamless’. If the process was truly smooth, the immigration department would make the information on their website more accessible and consultants would not be necessary.
Why would the state leave ambiguous information on a website when the process is supposed to promote a seamless transition for applicants? Is the ambiguity due to incompetence or is it an attempt to frustrate the process? In addressing this question, I discovered that the “off-ramps” created by the system also lead applicants to immigration consultants who redirect applicants at a cost. When interviewees in my study were “off-ramped,” they consulted student advisors instead because this is a free option. Given that student advisors are impolitic (or not necessarily informed) on matters relating to the transition process, I found in a few cases that student migrants are forced to engage the immigration consultants eventually to resolve the misinformation provided by student advisors and then redirect the process for a fee. Lipinski warns against this practice of consulting student advisors since they “don’t have the license to practice immigration.” She adds, “I just try to clean up the messes in the aftermath and see if I could help them.” Seven of the 18 interviewees in my study encountered the information ambiguities and inconsistencies to answers provided on the IRCC’s website. They also reported that they had to retain the services of immigration consultants or lawyers to help them navigate the system. Again, this does not depict an immigration process which offers student migrants a ‘seamless’ immigration pathway. Obviously, this temporary migrant group experiencing challenges is expected to foot the cost associated with ‘cleaning’ up or resolving their own immigration issues.

Provision of advice by student advisors, albeit well-intentioned and helpful, could be seen as exploiting the vulnerabilities of migrants who are subjected to a process that insists on a constant and stressful revisiting of the process. The notion that student migrants will solicit the advice of student advisors without assessing the credibility of the information hints at their socio-economic status and if my presumption is correct, it also hints at race. For me, the question becomes how valuable is Canadian permanent residency to these migrants in transition? True, permanent resident status offers the migrants a form of security in Canada. It guarantees them legal rights to participate in the labour force and limited citizenship rights in Canada. However, it is also a form of financial extraction, because after the schools have taken their money, then come the “consultants” to extract their share, all because the system is not seamless.
The situation of international student graduates consulting experts also raises the notion of class because the individuals who do not have money will seek to access the immigration information provided from less informed sources. Although Lipinski provides professional help to participants who are off-ramped in the transition process, it is important to note that she is operating a business. On my visit to her office, this was evidenced by the fact that I saw what appeared to be one of her clients who walked in on our interview and handed her two 100 dollars bills and a few 50-dollar bills. I observed the nod that she gave her clients after her hurriedly counting and stowing away the money in one of the drawers in the office. I have no idea whether Lipinski’s actions amount to conflict of interest. However, if one examines the business of consulting from the standpoint that it establishes or distinguishes between those who can and those who cannot afford a consultant, ethical concerns are raised. For the international student graduate who has been off-ramped, the question that he or she is left to contemplate becomes: which individuals to consult? We know that key informant Lipinski is the person who has the expert knowledge, and so she may command the highest price. This begs the question of whether there is a hierarchy of subject positions being created in the industry (Foucault, 1979) as these discourses of seeking information are put into operation. As actors in the immigration system, both immigration consultant Lipinski and the human resource person are seeking to help immigrants navigate the system. But each of them arguably occupies a discrete subject position. Each, by virtue of their subject position, does business with the student migrants (international student graduates) in a distinct manner. Lipinski caters to those who can afford to pay for the immigration services, whereas the student international office serves international student graduates who are strapped for cash.

From a broader perspective, the cost of consulting that constructs the conditions necessary for student migrants of lesser means to take advantage of the ‘free’ and ‘limited’ immigration counsel offered through international student offices is part and parcel of a larger cost-prohibitive immigration system. Interviewees transitioning on the Express Entry and the Provincial/Territorial Nominee Programs all attest to paying an application cost averaging Canadian $1500 (Government of Canada, 2018b). The transition to permanent resident, as Berry describes, “is a pricy process.” The application
fee is not inclusive of the amounts associated with legal services and settlement fees. With respect to the settlement fees, the IRCC requires that individuals without employment demonstrate the ability to support oneself in Canada by appending to the application proof of a minimum bank balance of Canadian $12,475 (Government of Canada, 2018b). If the transition process were seamless for student migrants, the costs associated with the transition would not be so exorbitant. In my study, the high “fee” presented obstacles to poorer student migrants in transition, especially those working part-time or seeking stable employment. Having to shoulder all these costs, it is not surprising that students will opt for ‘free’ advice.

In my study, student migrants also deployed their agency to fund their transition by resorting to a network of lenders. Specifically, incapable of single-handedly sourcing the funds associated with the transition process, student migrants often resorted to a network of personal lenders to, for example, obtain the money required to demonstrate their ability to support themselves. For example, participant Jerome Bradshaw, a Jamaican native living in Mississauga, Ontario described how he accessed the necessary funds through the fictive kinship relationship that he forged with one of his contemporaries in the Jamaican community. A lady whom Bradshaw refers to as his “sister” graciously allowed him to place his name on her bank account for a few months prior to submitting his application. This allowed him to demonstrate to immigration officials that he has sufficient funds to support himself. As Bradshaw suggests, “they [Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada] wanted an account with some money and my name on it, and I did just that.” Thinking that he outwitted the “system”, Bradshaw erupted into a hysterical laughter in the coffee franchise where we were seated. But his action is not strikingly different from other student migrants in the study who find it difficult to source settlement funds on their own. These individuals call upon their ‘uncles’ (via fictive kinship), cousins, relatives and other friends in diasporic communities to loan them varying portions with a promise to repay. Do not these stories confirm that the state’s assumption that student migrants will have a seamless transition is a myth? Arguably, agency and the access to a network of individuals willing to loan funds is needed to demonstrate self-sufficiency to the state, as both are critical for a successful transition to permanent resident status.
Cost issues are compounded by the fact that fees associated with settlement become due six months after receiving an invitation to apply for permanent residence. The idea is that student migrants are immediately employed and can pay the settlement funds. In reality, the sourcing of the money is reported by many as a strenuous task to achieve. Even Berry, who claims to have saved much from her salary earned working at a well-known media company, admits that she “fell short of the target” and resorted to family members in her native Jamaica. Having to foot the cost associated with living and other expenses, it is difficult to save approximately Canadian $13000 within such a short time span. In fact, it would ordinarily take years for a young worker to save that sum. As will become apparent in Chapters 6, 7 and 8, student migrants are initially applying to and obtaining low level positions and not managerial or six figure salaries. Again, the requirement of proof of settlement funds does not facilitate a seamless transition but rather one more kink in the circuitous journey from the postgraduate work permit (PGWP) to Canadian permanent residency. Failure to source the money to secure the bond within the period allotted means that individuals must re-enter the pool of the comprehensive ranking system (CRS) and wait (again) for an invitation to apply – a process that will further delay the transition. If the system were seamless as it is touted to be, cost would not be an obstacle to permanent admission.

5.3.4 Emotional and Psychological Pain Experienced via the Express Entry Route

As I have been hinting to this point, student migrants in the Express Entry queue in my study reported stress rather than the ‘seamless’ passage promised in the IRCC policy documents. All described the transition from graduation to permanent legal citizenship as a stressful period from start to finish. They all encountered some eventualities that were never made explicit in the Express Entry regulations. For Berry, the memories of the trauma visited upon her in her postgraduate life remain fresh in her mind. Shaking her head in disapproval, Berry argued that her interactions with the immigration regulations prove that the process is more “complicated than how it was communicated.” For her, the process amounted to a “long” and “exhausting” transition. When further questioned, Berry responded, “to accumulate the one-year experience? Eh!” It is important that I contextualize her use
of “Eh”. In Jamaican vernacular, this word, usually indicates that the listener either needs to brace for a more salacious context to the story being told or has not heard the worst about the subject being discussed. Berry, who graduated from York University in June 2014, explained: “it was not until July 2016 that I completed the Express Entry profile … when I consider all of the volunteering and internship and the long wait in between [processing of documents] and the labour exploitation I endured, the process was frustrating”. In total, it took Berry a little over three years to become a permanent resident. She began the postgraduate journey in June 2014 and became a landed resident in February 2017.

Lydia Merchant, another participant who encountered problems sourcing appropriate employment and work experience not only also concurred about the protracted wait time but also about the emotional toll taken by postgraduate transition. She reported that the Express Entry system is communicated as a “one shot thing” and not a “rigid, convoluted web” that is “difficult to navigate”. Her initial reading of the immigration policies left the impression that the immigration process in the postgraduate phase is relatively simple. Merchant complained, “I thought the Express Entry was going to be simple process. But upon reading it, you have to jump through hoops. I just did a diploma [at Fanshawe College]. I don’t feel valued as person here [in Canada]. It’s so frustrating.” My analysis of the interview with Merchant also reveals that the stress she encountered was due to the Express Entry system requiring a long-range plan. Her initial impression was that she would simply complete college, find employment and apply for Canadian permanent legal status. In other words, her initial reading of the immigration regulation did not prepare her for what was to come. Merchant’s transition is complex because she encountered difficulties meeting the labour market requirements delineated in the immigration regulations which prevented her from initiating the process. Although she eventually found employment, the process was stressful for her because the precarious nature of the job she first obtained did not satisfy the specifications delineated in the Express Entry regulation. Thus, Merchant had been in the postgraduate transition phase since June 2015 and still (as of December 2018) had not amassed the required number of points to apply for permanent Canadian residence at our interview.
For another participant, Bains, the stress resulted from the protracted wait time coupled with the anxiety of getting caught in the disjuncture between the old (Canadian Experience Class) and new immigration (Express Entry) regulations. Bains, who began working as an engineering technologist in August 2014, eventually realized that the Express Entry system required more than 12 months of labour market experience for him to “match the points threshold” to be invited to apply for permanent residence. This is in contrast to the Canadian Experience Class (CEC) regulations - which he initially began working towards - that asks him to provide evidence of only 12 months of work with a Canadian employer. Bains soon realized that by switching streams he was confronted with a “frustrating” reality. Coupled with the requirement of a minimum language proficiency averaging at 7.0 on the IELTS (CLB 7 for 64 Express Entry points), and the one-year requirement (40 Express Entry points), he was prevented from satisfying the cut-off score to be eligible upon his first entry into the pool. One can only imagine the emotional pain brought to bear on these individuals who were suddenly greeted with the news that they would not be grandfathered into the new immigration regulations. Nonetheless, Bains was successful on his second attempt. It also important to note that the CRS cut-off scores fluctuated between 786 and 423 points from January 6, 2016 to May 4, 2017, in which period Bains navigated the postgraduation transition (Government of Canada, 2018a).

5.4 Towards an Updated Express Entry System: Policy Recommendations

Earlier chapters paint a picture of a racist society in which racialized individuals are disadvantaged in areas, such as immigration, value placed on education, labour market entry and so on. It is therefore not surprising that the vestiges of an inequitable history could be found in the points system. Given my critique of the points system, one might question I would replace Canada’s points system? On the contrary, I endorse the merit-based system as a mechanism for selecting immigrants with college, graduate and postgraduate credentials for permanent entry to Canada. I also acknowledge the need for established criteria in Canada’s immigration selection system. An ‘open’ and ‘progressive’ immigration based on points (and subsequent versions) undid (and continues to keep open) what was once racist and overtly immigration system for marginalized and minoritized
groups from poorer countries in the South (Knowles, 1997; Tepperman, 2016). However, as my critique indicates, the criteria, particularly those in the Express Entry system, are not as 'neutral' as they appear in the comprehensive ranking system. For example, years of experience are penalized by devaluing older applicants. Unlike other areas of the society where the influence of racism might appear more obvious, it is more difficult to question numerical values. So, this problem needs to be addressed. Also, is there hidden discrimination in the one-size-fits-all devaluation of these student migrants’ credentials? Obviously, there is. It is difficult to label this 'new racism' since I have no data on White international student graduates on the trajectory to Canadian permanent residence. However, it is unclear how age discrimination intersects with, for example, socio-economic status, gender, and family status, as well as race, because they are hidden in the experiences of applicants. It is plausible to use a merit-based system to select immigrants; however, the criteria for choosing the desired immigrants must always be transparent, and there should be some mechanism for improving transparency.

To realize more transparency in the points system, I propose an amendment to the age criteria and the awarding of points. The CRS should award points to applicants at the age when they arrive in Canada and not the age at which they decide to make an application to IRCC. As identified above, this is a major problem. Generally, it takes an applicant a minimum of two years and a maximum of four years to acquire a college/university credential. But during this period, he or she is losing points on the basis of age. Therefore, it is necessary to have a system that does not punish the applicant or international student graduate who seeks a credential or additional training for the purpose of 'integrating' into Canadian society. Implementing this simple proposal will also result in a win-win-win situation for the postsecondary institutions and the immigrant and the employer. The immigrant will increase his or her human capital, the postsecondary institution will realize financial benefits in tuition fees paid, and the employer will benefit from the skills acquired by the employee. Also addressing the age criterion will also lessen the effects for individuals where age intersects with another visible or hidden marker of oppression, for example, marital status and work experience.
It is also questionable for the IRCC to subject applicants who have been educated in or have been speaking English for most of their lives, for example, from Jamaica and Trinidad, to language testing. To address this wrinkle in the points system, I propose a modification to language proficiency criteria to consider other forms of existing evidence which may help the international student graduate to demonstrate fluency/mastery in either of Canada’s official languages. The IRCC could require that applicants who are international student graduates satisfy this criterion by providing certified transcripts, especially in cases where one’s native language and language of instructions at the secondary and/or postsecondary levels in the home countries are either English or French.

In addition, I would also recommend the elimination of the semi-random selection mechanism from the Express Entry system. One suggestion might be to replace the ranked lottery with a quota system targeting immigrants for specific labour shortages in the economy. This will improve transparency in the immigration system for individuals seeking permanent resident status in Canada. It will also reduce the emotional anxiety and trauma associated with the transition process.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter provides an overview of the processes that structure the admission of student migrants to Canada through the Express Entry and provincial nominee streams. The discussion highlighted how the trajectory from the postgraduate phase to permanent residence unfolds in a manner that is contrary to the “seamless transition” discourse promoted in state policies. The analysis in this chapter drew upon interview data along with the interpretation of secondary data. Seen through the conceptual framework presented in chapter 3, it makes visible racial and other intersectional inequities and power relations experienced in the immigration system such as how the Express Entry system discriminates against student migrants based on age vs. work experience. Responses of interviewees were interpreted within the context of newspaper sources and Hansard to provide a description of the ‘ideal’ immigrant that Canada seeks. I argued that, for example, “colour-blind” discourses are used to ignore ‘race’ as a fundamental organizing principle that shapes access to permanent admission and that the Express Entry processes tend to ‘other’ applicants in a ‘rat race’ for
points in which only literacy scores are malleable. I further examined the protracted wait times and speculated what might be responsible for delays in receiving permanent residence. (In)accessibility to labour market assessments and the long processing time experience by provincial nominee applicants were experienced by a sizeable minority of my participants. Immigration stakeholders also point out that individual transition to permanent residence is mired down due to incidents of unfair assessment of points e.g. for part-time work in the comprehensive ranking system, unclear instructions and bureaucratic red tapes involving employers. These power relations which operate in the immigration system underscore the observation that the transition from the postgraduate phase to Canadian permanent residency does not unfold in a seamless manner at the level of the labour market impact assessment and provincial nominee programs.
Chapter 6: Institutionalized and Constructed Inequalities: Student Migrants, ‘Skilled’ Labour Migration, NOC Codes and the LMIA in Canada

6.1 Introduction
This chapter explores how the federal policies of Employment and Social Development Canada structure the transition of international student graduates (or student migrants) to permanent residence in Canada. It presents data that illustrates how the national occupational classification (NOC) codes or matrix acts as a tool to influence the labour market trajectory of the international student graduate. International student graduates who desire to make the transition are required to obtain a job that corresponds with their designated immigration NOC code. The 2016 NOC matrix ranks occupation skill categories as follows: management (0), highly skilled (A), skilled (B), semi-skilled (C) and low-skilled (D) (ESDC, 2018). The data utilized in this chapter are drawn from both international student graduates as well as key informants in the immigration policy circle, and government documents. The chapter commences with a discussion of the participants’ awareness of the NOC matrix. It also provides a discussion of labour market “saturation” and transitions using provincial nominee programs as an alternative economic immigration program. It then discusses whether there is a racial dimension to provincial nominee programs as routes to permanent residency and then moves on to examine the credential (mis)alignment of a few international student graduate participants within the labour market. This is followed by a discussion of the labour market impact assessment (LMIA) and how it structures the (in)admissibility of international student graduates seeking Canadian permanent residency. Here my analysis shines light on how the power relations mediate the postgraduate trajectory of student migrants in Canada.

6.2 Participants’ Awareness of the NOC Matrix: Getting the “Right Class” of Experience for Express Entry

6.2.1 The Importance of the NOC Matrix
The job category that international student migrants are assigned is important because student migrants must find employment within the NOC-specific category that provides them the relevant labour market experience required for permanent residence. In other words, the desired or prospective
labour market opportunity must satisfy a specific skill category (0, A and B) for Express Entry and type (in terms of the nature of the work being performed) (Government of Canada, 2016). David Ngozi, a Toronto-based lawyer in immigration policy and practice, pointed out that (prospective) labour market position or experience obtained in Ontario via jobs must be consistent with the NOC categories of B and above for international student graduates to qualify for the Express Entry or the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP). Employment in jobs where the skill levels are ranked below a B are not considered the “right class of experience” and therefore cannot count towards the applicant acquiring Canadian permanent residency status. As Ngozi further explained:

If the position is not listed in the national occupational classification codes (NOC) at the [appropriate] skill levels 0, A and B ... [or] if the intended employment or work that [the individual] finds is not NOC-friendly..., the student migrant or foreign worker would not be eligible to apply for permanent residence. (November 03, 2017)

Key informant Corrine Lipinski, an immigration consultant, also underscored the salience of student migrants’ acquiring of the “right class” of experience:

Jobs at Walmart, gas stations, Tim Horton’s, or cashier jobs do not count for points unless applicants are in a manager or supervisory [position that] ... would put the [applicant] at a 0 [skill level]. Counter level jobs [in business establishments or firms]... do not qualify under the [Express Entry] program. ... If you are managing a construction site, clothing store or [are] a site foreman or woman, then that counts for points ... [and is] considered a relevant skilled level. (October 17, 2017)

The “right class” of experience according to one’s assigned code then determines how migrants get selected and are invited to apply for permanent admission via the Express Entry System. Participants in my study indeed discovered that neither frontline customer service-oriented roles nor other semi-skilled jobs (Skill C) performed by them in cities across Southern Ontario (Toronto, Brampton and London) satisfied the labour market requirement of the OINP. Access to transition to Canadian permanentcy resident thus rests on the individual’s ability to secure employment in a labour field that is relevant to higher skill types or work duties outlined in the NOC. Based on my reading of the NOC, employment in, or promotion, to management and supervisory positions in the labour market (Skill 0) suggests that the individual has acquired and developed a wide range of occupational expertise, for example, in institutional decision-making. This means that only the individual who obtain this level of
experience is in good standing for entry into the Express Entry pool, and subsequently has a chance to be invited to apply for residency status.

6.2.2 International Student Graduates’ Awareness and (Mis)reading of the Significance of NOC

Of the 18 international student graduates in my study, only participants Kirk Johnson and Nyesha Jackson indicated that they were able to access and comprehend the NOC-related information. Other participants, even after attending on-campus information sessions facilitated by international student centres at Ontario’s postsecondary institutions, either stumbled upon or discovered these specifications when they decided to submit an application for permanent residency to the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). For example, Bernadette Berry found out about the NOC codes through her “own personal readings and inquiries” into economic immigration programs. She had consulted sources such as York International (the international student centre at York University) which helps both international and domestic students who desire to work or study locally or internationally. The centre also provides advising sessions for international students on topics that spans employment, student engagement, immigration and so on. She reported:

[T]he immigration guy [who] presented on the different economic programs did not tell us anything about the specific categories of jobs that are considered or not considered by the immigration system. (September 08, 2017)

Pranavi Suthakaran added

Applications are supposed to find a job in a certain skill category, but I didn’t get that from the immigration seminar. I found out several months after I initiated the immigration process. (February 02, 2018)

As a researcher interested in contemporary immigration and settlement policies, I attended a similar hour-long immigration information session facilitated by a representative from an immigration settlement agency at a Toronto-based university and did not obtain NOC information. Why was this critical detail overlooked? Do these consultants lack knowledge regarding the NOC policy stipulation? A perusal of the IRCC and OINP websites indicates that NOC-specific criteria by immigration stream is not hidden; it is quite accessible for applicants to all the relevant economic immigration streams to which postgraduate applicants may apply to become permanent residents. Once accessed through
the IRCC website, the NOC matrix is clearly itemized amongst a list of Canadian Express Entry requirements to be satisfied. The same can also be said for the PhD/Masters graduate stream of the OINP, which can be accessed through a readable file.

Nevertheless, participants Hortense Clue, Chevon-Marie Naipaul and Lydia Merchant were not conscious of how the system functions. When I initially interviewed Hortense Clue, she told me that after completing her undergraduate degree in business at Western University (London, Ontario), she had seven months of experience working with a mutual fund company in Toronto. As part of this position (outlined in Appendix E), she is mainly responsible for resolving customer complaints and processing their accounts. When I raised questions regarding the specificity of the NOC matrix with her, Clue kept asking me to either repeat or rephrase the question. After several futile attempts to bring clarity to the matter, I observed her quizzical facial expression. She finally admitted: “I didn’t know that I had to get experience in a specific kind of job to apply for the Express Entry. Ok, that’s cool. I will definitely look into that”.

Further, my follow-up conversation with Clue in December 2018 not only pointed to her inability to proceed towards Canadian permanent residency but also the difficulties she has comprehending the NOC matrix. It is also important to note that Clue, who has been working since October 2016, continues to experience these challenges two years and two months into her postgraduation transition. Here is her summation of the process:

I reached out to my HR department in order to get my NOC code for the Express Entry application. The lady in the HR department gave me the NOC code [6552]. … I inserted the code into my [online] profile and submitted it to [the comprehensive ranking system] in December [2018] … The IRCC [Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada] answered me the next day. … [via] email … saying that “I am not eligible for Express Entry” … It seems like the NOC code was the issue. The code that the HR department gave me listed my work at skilled level C. … and not 0, A or B. But I know that is not true. (December 31, 2019)

It is evident that Clue has trouble with the NOC codes and that this is of great significance for her transition. Indeed, the 2016 national occupational classification categorizes her line of work as skill level C (ESDC, 2016) which is not accepted by Express Entry System.
The interview with Chevon-Marie Naipaul also revealed a (mis)reading of the NOC in relation to the transition process. When I met Naipaul, she had already garnered nine months postgraduate work experience in Canada. She spent the first six of this nine-month period handling cold (inbound) calls and resolving customer complaints at a call centre in London, Ontario. The last three months was obtained at her current oil and gas employer in the nickel belt of Northern Ontario (Sudbury). As it relates to her understanding of the NOC matrix, Naipaul reported:

It will take me one year to [make an application] for permanent residence. I just started my [current engineering] job in August [2017]. I have been here for three months now. So, by February of next year (2018) I would have one year Canadian [work] experience; that is, six months from my past job [working in the call centre] and then six months from this job. So, I just need six months more in this job to be able to qualify [and make an application] for the permanent residence. (October 15, 2017)

Clearly, she did not realize that her call centre experience (category C or semi-skilled job) would not count and that she was not in good standing or even close to satisfying the permanent residence eligibility requirements in order to submit a completed profile into the Express Entry pool. She had not realized that a rank and file employee in call centre work is indistinguishable from a general customer service worker. Initially, I suspected that without our discussion, she would not realize this until the time for her to make an application to the Express Entry pool. And such was the outcome. Naipaul, in a follow-up interview, confirmed that she had to work an additional 9 months [May 2018] in her new (A category or skilled level) job which was eligible as a NOC code that would allow her to enter the Express Entry pool. And so, if we consider the NOC specific requirements, Chevon-Marie Naipaul, like Hortense Clue, experienced a significant delay transitioning to permanent legal status. Taken more broadly, and given my own confusion (before speaking to Ngozi), this is a clear indication that individuals do not always readily understand how the NOC matrix operates to direct those aiming for permanent residence into the correct stream, and if their choice is Express Entry, how to match job experience with the NOC categories.

College graduate Merchant’s post-graduate transition suggests that international student graduates from colleges who opt to immigrate in the postgraduation phase may also lack knowledge of the importance of the NOC categories to the Express Entry. It took Merchant two years and six
months to come to an understanding of what was required for the transition. At that point, Merchant contemplated a strategy that would allow her to circumvent the NOC policy requirement embedded in the Express Entry System via relocating to another province:

If I had known how the system worked, then I would have worked the system to my advantage. And I am still going to do it. I [spoke] with a lot of [international student graduates] from the college who go through unconventional means to just get the PR (permanent resident status). [At my work[place]… there are a lot of students [of Indo-Canadian heritage] who are moving [from Ontario] to other provinces because of the whole PR situation. Some people hire lawyers to help them jobs over in Alberta …or [they] pay whoever to get the jobs in other provinces as supervisors and managers. And these [include] people who are just finishing college. They are not moving there to go into their [occupational] field but they are going into a B class job in a different province which is less rigorous. They are going to spend a year there in a job and then apply. … They [feel] shortchanged by this long process in the Express Entry [and are willing] to engage in ‘back hand’ deals. … That is ultimately what I [plan] to do. (December 05, 2017)

It appears that the Indo-Canadian students graduates to whom Merchant refers, have mapped out an alternate path via provincial nominee programs that will help them navigate the NOC requirement of the Express Entry system.

Furthermore, Merchant interpreted the relocation of international students to provinces outside Ontario as an “unconventional” approach, but their strategy (as outlined here), is quite consistent with the responses provided by other participants in my study who applied from other provinces. In fact, MBA graduate Ventakaraman, and college graduates Jackson and Johnson made the trek from the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) to smaller cities in Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia to meet the NOC requirement of the Canadian Express Entry. In demonstrating his grasp of the of the transition through the immigration system, Johnson explained:

If you feel frustrated with the long process to find a job [in Ontario] …you may [move to] …another place in Canada where there is a demand for people to work [and] …you will [have a better chance] find[ing] a job. It clears the obstacles in your way. …You would [then] have to spend a year or two in that province’s labour force before you can apply for permanent residence. (December 06, 2017)

Participant Jackson, who left London for Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, was also knowledgeable about the NOC requirements for the Express Entry:

---

16 Dartmouth is one of four previous municipalities that, in 1996, was amalgamated with Halifax, Bedford and Halifax County to form the Halifax Regional Municipality.
Based on my research, I realized that Nova Scotia ... needs immigrants to work. I [also] figured that ... the [provincial nominee] program here to get your permanent residence is much easier than [in] Ontario. [So] I just decided to come here versus staying in Ontario [which offers me no other option but to] apply to the Express Entry. (January 29, 2018)

The transition to Canadian permanent residence through the Express Entry requires applicants to familiarize themselves with knowledge about the requirements of the Express Entry as well as the provincial nominee programs to decide which is the correct stream for them, and to engage in the actual process of moving to another province, if necessary. There was a significant difference between the transition experience of Merchant and the other college students who relocated to Nova Scotia. It was important for these student migrants to consider the requirements of the NOC codes for Express Entry. However, there exists no clear or pre-set pathway that directs them through this part of the transition process. How could they know that the value of their college credential would differ in different provinces? Canadian-born college graduates may be aware that a college credential (for example, in business or personal support work) does not typically prepare graduates for skilled 0, A and B positions (as would, for example, a Canadian-born graduate with a university degree) but this segmentation of the labour market may not be immediately apparent to the international student without advice from others.

6.3 ‘Saturation’ of Skilled Jobs and PNP Alternatives

Another part of the situation facing would-be international student graduates is the “saturation” of the of the GTHA. Arguably, due to the intense competition for employment in the GTHA and the greater likelihood that university graduates will obtain such positions over college graduates (Wheelahan and Moodie, 2017), the OINP is not as accommodating to student migrants as other provinces. In my study only participants such as Giang (Daisy) Phang and Dimple Cooke with postgraduate university degrees reported that they were eligible to apply for the OINP. The masters/PhD stream of the economic immigration program in Ontario (OINP) welcomes applications from, and nominates, applicants seeking to immigrate, providing that he or she performs work in an occupation within the NOC-designated matrix 0, A and B (ESDC, 2018). In contrast, Nova Scotia, for
example, is a province where nomination for permanent legal status appears to be less rigid in terms of facilitating the transition of student migrants to permanent legal status. College certificate and diploma graduates, Jackson and Johnson, were able to apply to the Nova Scotia Nominee Program (NSNP). Nova Scotia is a have-not province with economic needs and labour shortages; therefore, this Maritime province, in agreement with the federal government through its constitutional powers in immigration, is more ‘open’ or welcoming to individuals (including student migrants) who are employed in semi-skilled (C) and low/unskilled (D) NOC categories as qualifying for permanent resident status. Semi-skilled and low/unskilled labourers possessing a minimum of six months work experience and a labour market impact (LMIA) endorsement from their current employer in Nova Scotia meet the qualification to apply for and receive a nomination under the NSNP (Canada Visa, 2018). The overall pattern is that PNPs are used to target immigrants to fulfill economic needs in underserved Canadian regions.

However, this situation was only clear to a minority of the participants in my study. And a few had to face serious consequences resulting from the inability to find employment that corresponds with the required skill type or occupation for economic immigration in Ontario. An example is Caribbean participant Kirk Johnson who relocated from London, Ontario to Dartmouth. There he obtained NOC-specific jobs performing customer service roles at a Canadian telecommunications company and a North American fashion retail store. The 28-year-old Fanshawe College graduate speaks of the protracted process of finding a route to permanent residency and the emotional trauma associated with the process obtaining the “right class” of experience. In his words:

If you [do not] find a job in a category [0, A, B] that is congruent with NOC, it will not only reduce your chances of getting permanent residency but you may even feel frustrated with the long process to find a job, ... [move to] another place in Canada where there is a demand for people to work ... [and] spend a year or two [satisfying the provincial nominee requirements] before you can apply for permanent residence. ... I [subsequently] moved from Ontario [to Nova Scotia] because of the need to immigrate. ... I [initially] pickup a C class job. ... C class jobs [as per the NOC] are a [semi-skilled profession]. ... [However, this] makes you eligible to immigrate, if you stay [in Nova Scotia], ... especially, if [the employer] endorses your application [for] permanent residency. [A] few of my [Jamaican] friends ... got their permanent residence working in C class jobs here. (December 12, 2017)
This is an issue even in the case of applicants with graduate university degrees in Ontario such as participant Chevon-Marie Naipaul. She adds:

The problem for us [student migrants] is actually getting [that] job to [meet] criteria that Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada needs. [If you are an international student and you [are] working [in] customer service… for two years out of [the] three years on your postgraduate work permit … you could never fulfill [the] criteria to immigrate … [Such a] job is not in a class that is applicable. So, you may have two years of experience, but it may not be relevant experience because it is not in that particular class. (October 15, 2017)

As Schulich MBA graduate Ventakaraman pointed out:

If you are [an international] student in Toronto or if you [contemplate] applying to [the] Express Entry class…. [you] need [a] job in class 0, A or B …. [to make] everything [the transition] go smoothly. … Even C would class would allow me to get [my] landing here [in Saskatchewan]. (February 24, 2018)

As noted above, the specific NOC criteria as a text is activated when the individual decides to take advantage of state policies that allow international student graduates to immigrate permanently, though this may be a challenge in Ontario. It is at this point where most of the international student graduates in my study either encountered a structural barrier or delay of some kind in the transition process. In essence, they discover that getting the “right class” of experience determines whether the door of immigration eligibility is swung open to them for a smoother transition from visa holder to regularized status in Canada. But they may also have to move to achieve this.

The excerpts provided by participants Johnson and Ventakaraman also demonstrate that they have an understanding of or are able to distinguish between the two economic immigration programs relevant for them which facilitate the transition to permanent resident status. As noted, the differential NOC matrix requirements between the OINP and PNPs of other provinces influenced the movement of three international student graduates in my study from Ontario to other provinces where it is easier to access NOC-specific jobs. Generally, international student graduates are expected to obtain 12 months of fulltime labour market experience in the province of their choice. The only exception is Saskatchewan which expects out-of-province international student graduates to earn to 24 months of labour market experience in that jurisdiction prior to making an application for residency (Canada Visa, 2018).
Ironically, the above mentioned participants – Johnson and Ventakaraman - are skilled individuals but they were forced to move into low or semi-skilled occupations in order to qualify for permanent residency. The irony is that these economic immigration programs (Express Entry and the OINP) are designed to attract and facilitate the transition of supposedly skilled talent (including international student graduates) but the labour market presents structural barriers. As noted several times above, international student graduates are described and flagged in both the IRCC and related policy documents as “skilled” individuals. I have also pointed out how, in 2016, John McCallum, then federal Minister with responsibility for Immigration, publicly recognized international students as the prime source of talent in the contemporary age of migration and declared that the Canadian state “should do everything [it] can to court them” (Donovan, 2016). McCallum added that “international students are the best source of immigrants in the sense that they’re educated, they’re young, they speak English or French, they know something of the country”. My sample is small and not set up to estimate how often skilled (and educated) individuals, such as college graduates Merchant and Jackson and university graduate Ventakaraman have to take up semi-skilled (C) and low skilled (D) positions in the labour market and move to qualify for permanent residency. However, to the extent that movement across Canada occurs, it is a hardship which took these participants by surprise. On the surface, it is positive for Canada’s economy when student migrants enthusiastically make the trek to Canada’s hinterland provinces to take up semi-skilled and low-skilled occupations, but this is also a devaluation of the skills acquired by the immigrants themselves. By all accounts, (im)migrants do not experience great difficulty obtaining low and semi-skilled employment in Ontario; these jobs are relatively easy to find, regardless of your credential but they do not lead to permanent residence. These inequalities or structural reproductions in the transition system are so constructed that fear of not meeting the requirements for permanent status may impel some international student graduates to move to other provinces where they participate in semi-skilled labour arrangements that typically requires less than the postsecondary qualifications that worked to obtain.

Further, there may be a delay in becoming aware of this situation. As noted above, after three months unsuccessfully seeking a job that would provide the “right class” of experience,
Table 6.1 Participant Occupational Skill Level as per the 2016 National Occupational Classification (NOC) Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Credential</th>
<th>Job and NOC Skill Level</th>
<th>City/Province</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nyesha Jackson</td>
<td>Certificates: Personal Support Worker (PSW); Continuing Care Assistant (CCA)</td>
<td>Continuing Care Assistant (Health Care worker) (D)</td>
<td>Dartmouth, NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lydia Merchant</td>
<td>Dip: Fashion Merchandising</td>
<td>Customer Care (C)</td>
<td>Brampton, Ontario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirk Johnson</td>
<td>Adv Dip: Business Administration Accounting</td>
<td>Financial Services Rep (B)</td>
<td>Dartmouth, NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navdeep Bains</td>
<td>Adv Dip. Electronic Engineering Technology</td>
<td>Quality Control (B)</td>
<td>Markham, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhushan Kumar</td>
<td>Adv Dip Business Administration Accounting</td>
<td>Investment Associate (B)</td>
<td>Brampton, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerome Bradshaw</td>
<td>Adv Dip: Computer Programming and Systems Analysis</td>
<td>Application Software Technologist (B)</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hortense Clue</td>
<td>B.Com Business Management and Organizational Studies</td>
<td>Customer Service (C)</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zacchaeus Gittens</td>
<td>B.Eng Civil Engineering</td>
<td>Structural Engineer (A)</td>
<td>Cambridge, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimple Cooke</td>
<td>MSc Chemical Engineering</td>
<td>Quality Assurance Personnel (Mechanical Engineer) (A)</td>
<td>Mississauga, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevon-Marie Naipaul</td>
<td>MSc Civil Engineering</td>
<td>Geotechnical Engineer (A)</td>
<td>Sudbury, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giang (Daisy) Phang</td>
<td>MEd Higher Education</td>
<td>Recruitment Manager (A)</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khoshing Phy</td>
<td>MA Education; BA Theatre Studies</td>
<td>Marketing; Theatre (A; C)</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pranavi Suthakaran</td>
<td>MA Development Studies</td>
<td>Financial Administrator (B)</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernadette Berry</td>
<td>MA Development Studies</td>
<td>Journalism/Research Communication Co-ordinator (A)</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huang (Hilene) Ngo</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>Fraud Prevention Specialist (A)</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurratan Singh</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>IT Business Analyst (A)</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imelda Aquino</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>Student Services (B)</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacchin Ventakaraman</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>Sales Representative (C)</td>
<td>Saskatoon, ON</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Johnson realized the challenges posed by the NOC codes and made the decision to relocate to a region where he realized “there is a demand for labourers”. Fortunately, the experiences in these companies (i.e. the telecommunications company and the North American clothier) positioned him to take up another customer service-related post (financial services representative) with the Canadian Imperial Bank of Canada (CIBC) in Dartmouth-Halifax. But based on his experience navigating the postgraduation transition and discussions with his colleagues in other provinces, Johnson concluded that Canadian Express Entry “is just not good for international student graduates with a diploma” wishing to make the transition to permanent residence in Ontario. Table 6.1 (p.138) summarizes the credentials, NOC skill level of the associated job and the location of participants whose cases are discussed in this chapter.

6.4 Racial Dimensions of PNP Routes to Permanent Residency?

The cases of Caribbean participants Jackson and Johnson also suggest another layer of difficulties that international student graduates face. A graduate of Fanshawe College’s personal support worker (PSW) program, Jackson found it impossible to find a job in her field at hospitals or nursing homes either in London, Ontario or areas in close proximity. When I broached the question about her decision to seek work in Halifax, the entry-level health worker reflects not only on her personal experience but also on her community of friends. She contends that the complexities associated with the NOC matrix are also complicated by race:

I need [to secure] an A or B class job in order to be able to apply for Express Entry [from] Ontario. … And if the experience of other international students is anything to go by… London [Ontario] is not the place that a Black Caribbean person like me will find work. I was able to find a B class jobs way easier [in Nova Scotia] than in Ontario. Even my boyfriend [Kirk Johnson] … and another Caribbean [student] came to Halifax … [and] within a month, they [found] a C class job [as a customer service agent] … and a B class job as an early childhood educator … [My] boyfriend later found a [more skilled] job [in financial services]. These categories of [skilled] jobs allowed them to apply to live in Canada. … If my boyfriend and I were still in London, I doubt we would be just months away from getting our landing. International Black students don’t readily get those [0, A and B class] jobs in London. … Although, [my boyfriend] has a [three year] diploma in accounting, he didn’t have much luck getting interviews for jobs in accounting or something closely related [to that discipline]. (January 29, 2018)

As participant Johnson added:
The path[way] to residency is not easy for Black international students [in London, Ontario]. ... They [obtained college] diplomas ... but it does do much for them in terms of employment ... [because] the have a hard time finding good jobs in that [predominantly white] city. (December 12, 2017)

It might be argued that the reason these college graduates cannot find jobs relevant to their apprenticeship training or postsecondary college diplomas has to do with a “saturation” of these positions in London as well as the GTHA. However, these participants in my study point to the fact that Black Caribbean international student graduates in Ontario encounter challenges in the labour market in general and that they find it difficult to secure jobs that are commensurate with the qualifications. I will have more to say about race and the accessibility of jobs in smaller cities outside the GTHA in chapter 8.

Is it impractical to think that employers will hire a student to management or supervisory role immediately after graduation? Generally, these positions are reserved for individuals who have a minimum of five years experience doing a job, whereas recent graduates are often hired in entry level positions. But Jackson’s observation about the improbability of Blacks being employed in a skill level 0 or management jobs deserves some investigation. Labour market scholars (Galabuzi, 2006; Creese, 2009) confirm the under-representation of immigrants and other racialized individuals in management positions. These and other problems associated with navigating the NOC matrix challenge the discourse of “seamlessness” in the Express Entry program.

The point of making visible these cases is to emphasize that although student migrants may eventually be fortunate enough to secure employment in a NOC-designated position, employment in such positions does not always facilitate a ‘seamless’ transition to permanent legal citizenship. For example, Merchant, a holder of a 2-year college diploma, now oversees production of Amazon’s warehouse in the GTHA, in a Team Lead/Coach supervisor role. Amazon did not choose to offer her full-time employment, despite her seemingly important role in the company. She is tasked with the responsibilities of educating, training and managing associates on the warehouse floor. But she was only remunerated at a minimum wage ($11.60 per hour), at the time of our interview, for approximately 50 hours of work which is typically done over a four-day work week. It is positive that her job is
congruent with the NOC specific designation (Skill 0) and that her position as a supervisor in the company makes her eligible to receive points under the Canadian Express Entry system as a college diploma graduate. However, she is disqualified or rendered ineligible from satisfying permanent residency requirements as a consequence of the job being sourced through an employment agency in Brampton, Ontario. Despite amassing eight months at Amazon by the time of the interview, this employment agency flags her as an “occasional worker”. Therefore, her hours of employment are not documented as work done in the capacity of a supervisor, but rather as a temporary worker! The absence of a formal job letter or offer from Amazon also makes it difficult to substantiate her role and experience as a Team Leader or Team Coach. Had she been employed directly by Amazon, then she would have only required to an additional four months of experience in order to demonstrate her eligibility for permanent residence.

6.5 Credential (Mis)alignment in Canada’s Labour Market

Any analysis of the unfavourable outcomes experienced by participants as described above must consider the effect of lower credentials on the job search, especially in the larger cities in Ontario where there may be an intense competition for professional and technical jobs. In my study, only a few participants fell in this category but an examination of the credentials for participants with one or two-year postsecondary education shows that they hold C class (or semi-skilled) jobs; they have lower credentials which render them incapable of competing for 0, A and B class jobs (Table 6.1, p.138). As noted above, despite having a one-year certificate as a personal support work [PSW], Jackson found difficulties in obtaining employment in nursing homes across Southern Ontario. Jackson, as noted above, left the unfavourable labour market realities of London, Ontario for Dartmouth. Then, she also received Continuing Care Assistant (CCA) certification and practices as a health care worker in a nursing home. As she observed:

The [PSW] program that I did [at Fanshawe College did not get me a job in the health care field … in London and surrounding areas. [The] nursing homes in Ontario [were] more looking for nurses who specialized in different areas … [for example] a dietitian, nutritionist and so on. … Not a regular PSW person to bathe a patient, feed them or help
them with general care. … So, I find that … the college program did not help me find work in London. (January 29, 2018)

I suspected that Jackson, with a certificate, had difficulties in Ontario competing for jobs with individuals who possessed superior college or university qualifications.

While participant Lydia Merchant’s case has been outlined above, it is worth revisiting her originally unfavourable labour market outcome since appears to reflect an “alignment” problem. That is, there seems to be a disconnect between the two-year Fashion Merchandising program that she pursued and how she is marketing the credential on her resumé. This results from the mismatch between program nomenclatures in the academy and job titles. Should one conduct a labour market search using the keywords “fashion merchandising” on the website of the Mississauga-based retail store where Merchant sought employment or other retail stores, one would find that it does not yield any results with matching title and job description. Instead, one would probably find vacancies for “visual merchandiser,” and interior design, amongst other retail positions. It seems that her diploma signals to employers that she possesses expertise in sewing clothes rather than in retail. She had not consulted with a general resumé expert or someone in the field who probably could have informed her to modify the words “fashion” or even “fashion merchandising” to something more relevant in the retail industry. Is the problem here the uninformative title of a diploma? How does she represent the program on her resumé to employers? Were recruiters misguided/unable to interpret the skills being transmitted by this qualification? From the perspective of the college/university relationship, what accounts for the mismatch between the occupational and labour fields in the academy and the labour market? This also raises the notion of institutional closure that exists between the college and the university. Why did the college name the program fashion merchandising when the corresponding jobs in the labour market are that of visual merchandising? Could it be the college has to name the program Fashion Merchandising because the university already has similar name for that program?

There may also be a connection to be made between the (mis)information communicated by postsecondary institutions about college courses or programs to international students and the transition to permanent resident status. It appears at least in two cases discussed here that the
discourse that is used to market the course or programs they completed inadvertently did not contemplate the NOC-specific criteria or anticipate the consequences for students in their postgraduation. Lydia Merchant came from Jamaica to pursue studies in Fashion Merchandising at Fanshawe College in London, Ontario. However, her attempts to find work in her field reveals an interesting scenario. Trying to make sense of her difficulties in transition, Merchant reflected on how the program she completed was marketed by international student recruiters and the college. In retrospect, she saw that the college and international student recruiters (who spoke with at information sessions in Jamaica) over-emphasized the marketability/demand for workers with a fashion merchandizing credential in the Canadian labour market. Despite applying to numerous related job postings in the field, she continues to experience unfavourable labour market outcomes. Merchant “felt like the college program was hyped up” as it did “not necessarily get the dream job” she was promised. At the time we spoke, she was contemplating taking “an additional course” or “program” to make her resume more “appealing” to prospective employers. Again, the example of Merchant demonstrates the adverse effect of lower college credentials in the labour market. Besides, it is also important to note that the lack of alignment between program title and job titles is also evident in Table 6.1 (p.138) for some participants.

I also suspect that participants Kirk Johnson, Navdeep Bains and Jerome Bradshaw, with advanced diplomas which are three-year college credentials, also encountered labour market challenges due to unsuccessful competition with individuals holding a four-year university degree or higher credentials in the GTHA and London, Ontario. Johnson’s unfavourable outcome in London, Ontario may have resulted from the idea that employers assigned an inferior value to his business accounting diploma than those degree applicants seeking similar accounting jobs. It is also possible that Bains and Bradshaw’s initially unfavourable labour market outcome is influenced by the lower college credentials (engineering technology and computer programming and systems analysis respectively) and the intense labour market competition with university degree holders for top engineering jobs in the GTHA. However, as indicated Table 6.1 (p.138), Johnson, Bains, Kumar and Bradshaw with their three years of postsecondary studies (i.e. advanced diplomas) managed to obtain
skilled (B) jobs. Likewise, Hortense Clue, with her four-year Bachelors of Commerce, would also have difficulties competing with MBA holders for top jobs in the field of business. In fact, Clue’s current employment only required her to have a high school diploma. This confirms the finding of Wheelahan and Moodie (2017) who contend that graduates with university credentials/qualifications tend to realize better labour market outcomes when competing with college graduates for employment. Thus, it appears that those obtaining college rather than university (for example, business) credentials are extremely disadvantaged as they search for high enough credentials to satisfy Express Entry. All four men were only able to obtain “B” NOC code jobs (See Table 6.1 p.138). It is also interesting that all these four are men with B class (or skilled) jobs while Clue and Merchant are women with “C” NOC code (or semi-skilled) jobs.

In contrast, although Zacchaeus Gittens, Dimple Cooke and Chevon-Marie Naipaul did not have access to a social network (See Chapter 7), their engineering credential (bachelors and postgraduate degrees) placed them in good standing to compete with for high skilled (A) jobs in the engineering profession. The Nickel Belt Region in Northern Ontario where Naipaul found employment is a hub for individuals seeking work in civil engineering. Likewise, the Cambridge-Kitchener-Waterloo area where Gittens and Cooke obtained employment is an industrial centre in Southern Ontario which attracts those with all levels of engineering credentials. As Gittens, who works in Cambridge, Ontario, observed:

From talking to other colleagues who have been here before me, it seems like the company [has been] expanding. In recent times, they have been hiring at least one person per year. Last year [2017] it was me, and this year January [2018], the business hired another student full time. And then they are now [November 2018] looking to hire someone else. ... Other engineering companies in the area also ... hire college and university graduates ... to work on engineering projects in Real Estate and the commercial sector too. (November 28, 2018)

It appears that the region offers engineering technologist as well as university engineering graduates (including those from other professional and technical fields in the trades) to a labour force with good opportunities. Conestoga College in the Kitchener-Waterloo Area has one of the largest trades programs in the province, but these applicants were able to compete successfully with those coming
from Seneca and Fanshawe Colleges. Thus, the idea that an immigrant like Cooke had trouble finding a job in this area points to gendered (and perhaps racial) discrimination present in the labour market.

The next group of participants hold postgraduate degrees in education, social science and business-related disciplines were eventually able to obtain skilled (B) and highly skilled (A) forms of employment. Perhaps, this is due to the idea that their postgraduate degrees are considered to be superior in value when compared to the trades and technology as well as college business forms of qualifications identified above. Participants included Giang (Daisy) Phang, Khosing Phy, Bernadette Berry and Pranavi Suthakaran who hold postgraduate credentials in either education or development studies. While these participants obtained better outcomes than their counterparts with lower or college credentials, their labour market transition was not unmarked by challenges. As I explained in more detail in Chapter 7, Phang initially encountered problems obtaining employment commensurate with her qualifications and expertise, which were later discovered while performing clerical duties. Participants Hilene (Huang) Ngo, Gurratan Singh and Imelda Aquino also found highly skilled (A) and skilled (B) forms of employment with their MBAs. Perhaps, this is possible since the GTHA has a thriving business sector that seeks the positional goods or prestigious degrees that students obtain from the Schulich School of Business. Sacchin Ventakaraman’s case is quite anomalous as he is the sole participant with a postgraduate degree from the Schulich School of Business who could only find semi-skilled (C) employment, and who moved to Saskatchewan, as also detailed in Chapter 7. That Ventakaraman has to move to Saskatchewan to find work raises the question of racial discrimination in the labour market. But if so, why did the other MBA holders of colour not have this trouble?

To summarize, 2 out of 6 college graduates have skill level C and D jobs that make them ineligible to apply to the Express Entry or the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program stream. Only one (Zacchaeus Gittens) of 2 participants with undergraduate degrees has a highly skilled (A) job, a NOC-related prerequisite for applicants considering an application under the Express Entry stream. However, nine of the 10 participants with postgraduate are employed in highly skilled (A) or skilled (B) jobs that will permit them to transition to permanent residency on either the Express Entry or the OINP.
Thus, it is clear that choosing a higher level credential in the transition process not only influences labour market outcomes but also the ability to obtain Canadian permanent resident status.

Key informant Ngozi also contended that the requirements of the NOC matrix (coupled with labour market disadvantages), especially in Ontario, appear to have a disproportionate negative effect on student migrants, particularly holders of college diplomas and undergraduate degrees, who try to navigate the labour-immigration nexus through the Canadian Express Entry stream. Ngozi, a Toronto-based immigration lawyer, insisted that the international student graduate’s inability to secure a “NOC friendly job” in Ontario has a “direct adverse effect” on their transition to permanent status. He argued, as I have above, that if the position they obtain is not listed in the national occupational classification codes at a skill level 0, A or B, then the person is ineligible to achieve permanent immigration status in Canada which may force them to pick up employment in a semi-skilled job. Ngozi, who provides legal advice to student migrants, shared that this particular problem overwhelmingly affects undergraduates who are essentially restricted from applying to the Canadian Express Entry. Neither of these arguments are as yet backed up with data to reveal how widespread this problem is, but a larger study of the trajectory of college graduates would be a useful follow-up. In the next section, I look more closely at another exclusionary practices in the labour market-immigration nexus for international student graduates.

6.6 The LMIA: An Exclusionary Practice in the Contemporary Immigration System?

In this section, I synthesize the discussion on power relations in the immigration system, and how they work to shape the student migrant’s (in)admissibility to Canada. As noted briefly in Chapter 5, student migrants in Ontario generally find it difficult to obtain labour market impact assessments (LMIs), a government document that aids in the transition process. The difficulty has to do with the degree of government restrictions placed on employers. However, obtaining a LMIA from the employer significantly increases the number of points they obtain in total and their chances of being invited to apply for permanent residence. However, key informant David Ngozi contends that employers seeking
to hire a prospective foreign worker or student migrant must contemplate the “financial standards and business liquidity” standard established by the province. As Ngozi contends:

If you are an employer within the regions of the GTA [Greater Toronto Area] – Toronto, Durham, York, Peel and Halton - and you have a minimum annual income of $1,000,000 dollars, then you are at liberty to select up to one employee for every five existing [Canadian citizens or permanent resident] employees that you have. You employ five employees, and you can select one immigrant every year. If you employ 10 [Canadian residents] then you can select 2 [student migrants]. If you employ 15 Canadians, you can select three foreign students. [For employers] outside of the GTA … It is sufficient [to] demonstrate an income of half a million. So, let’s assume that you have your business in Guelph [Ontario] … Then all you have to show is that your business is generating half a million. You only have to show that you employ three [Canadian or permanent resident] for every nominee you want to select. (November 03, 2017)

These immigration policies suggest that student migrants can improve their transition chances by obtaining a LMIA. Access to LMIA's is contingent upon the willingness of an employer who operates within the confines of monetary and geographic constraints imposed. Power relations also come to the fore as employers wishing to hire student migrants are subjected to the different provincial checks and balances. And so, this is yet another way in which the immigration pathway is not seamless a process for student migrants. Specifically, the relevant provincial department will have to verify whether the firm’s income generating capacity and the number of employees qualifies for the LMIA according to the immigration regulation.

Another restriction that constrains employers from hiring prospective student migrants is related to the requirement that they must demonstrate to the government that the prospective talent is difficult to source in Canada. As established above, the LMIA is a government document that allows a company to source a talent that is not accessible in the local pool of labourers in the labour market. Key informant Duncan Sands, who has a decade of experience hiring domestic and international labourers for his employer, contends that the regulation does not give carte blanche to employ student migrants and that employers are expected to prove that the talent they seek “is not readily available” from the local labour market pool. This legalized form of discrimination on the basis of immigration status tends to exclude student migrants according to Sands. It also limits employers wishing to hire student migrants or foreign nationals who possess the skill sets that the business needs. The respective employer first has to demonstrate to the state that the post is widely-advertised, and that
the employer is experiencing problems finding the talent to fill the position. Sands contends that a post is only considered difficult to fill when the position advertised only attracts a few responses who lack the skills to perform the job. As Sands puts it, “this suggests that the employee you are looking for is not in the local labour market.” Sands, in essence, concludes that “the LMIA regulation makes it difficult for employers to say that they can’t find the talent that they are looking for.” Thus, even if companies in Ontario want to support the student’s transition via a LMIA, there are power relations and boundaries that the employer has to negotiate. Arguably, the LMIA does not work significantly to advance the cause of those seeking permanent residence in Ontario. The restrictions described by Ngozi and Sands are also substantiated my participants.

Thirty-five year old Jerome Bradshaw, introduced above, began his postgraduate transition in June 2013 and obtained landed immigrant status through the Express Entry system in July 2017. To obtain access to the LMIA, he turned to a Black professional who is also a part of his network in the Black Church in Mississauga, Ontario. Employed by a call centre in Toronto, Bradshaw notes, “I had to contact my friend at Church who works in Human Resources at the same company” to help me source the LMIA. Bradshaw also reports that the human resource professional also assisted him with compiling and competing for the appropriate documents, but the efforts were futile. The application compiled never made it beyond the human resources manager who was reluctant to sign the documents. When questioned on why the process fell through, Bradshaw said the company claimed that labour market impact assessment (LMIA) process was a “hassle” their company was not willing to undertake on his behalf. He went on to describe the process that governs access to LMIA:

[G]etting the LMIA is not a cut-and-dried process as the government makes it seem. [Y]ou have to have people in an established organization with a certain number of employees. And ... the company has to be willing to go through ... the back and forth to immigration on your behalf and filling out all the paper work and stuff. So, if you don’t have someone on the inside to do things for you, just forget it. At this point, you are cut off. (September 09, 2017)

The LMIA is arguably layered with politics and power relations at different levels – of the employing organization itself and between the organization and the provincial government. Although Bradshaw desperately needed the LMIA to facilitate his transition to permanent resident status, it evaded his
grasp. Even aid from the Black Church inside the company was not influential enough to cross the existing boundaries or the power relations between spheres of the firm and the state. This is a clear instance which challenges the assumption that the availability of the LMIA policy makes employers willing to provide them to employees. Employers operate within established boundaries which, in most cases, are not explicitly clear to the student migrants. Again, the transition process to permanent legal status is not seamless.

Of the 18 participants in my study, 16 reported employers’ reluctance to support their applications for permanent residency with a LMIA. Let us examine the responses of a few more individuals who were denied a LMIA. When I raised the accessibility of the LMIA with Bains, he burst into more hysterical laughter before documenting the numerous denials he received from his employers. Bains added: “when the LMIA policy came out, I was confident that I could go to my employer [because] I am a good worker. So, I thought that I could ask for it. I approached the employer like 10 times and every time the [human resource personnel] would give me a reason why [the firm] couldn’t do this.” Bains approached the employer as he wanted to improve his points threshold. With the LMIA valued at 600 points, he reasoned that it would “make it way easier to receive an invitation to apply for residency.” But the fact that he had to petition employers numerous times suggests that the immigration pathway offered is largely illusory. It was definitely not seamless.

Participant Nyesha Jackson’s experience in Nova Scotia exemplifies the employer’s power to override any barriers to hire international students and use them to their advantage. A graduate of Fanshawe College’s personal support worker program, Jackson relocated to Dartmouth, in search of employment to facilitate her permanent legal transition to Canada. Three weeks after setting foot there, Jackson found a job as a Continuing Care Assistant (CCA) in a nursing home in Dartmouth. Realizing Jackson’s temporary immigration status, the employer offered to support her transition to permanent residency via a LMIA. Jackson recounted the exchange with the recruiter:

When I made the application for the [nursing] job [the recruiter] told me they are short on staff. …. She [also] asked if I was able to work legally in Canada. I told her “yes.” [As] we [proceeded with] the interview, she found out that I was not permanent…. She said that they were [hiring] fulltime [nurses]. …. She [also promised to] check out the necessary steps to get permanent residency. My employer…. sponsor[ed] my application as I told
her I was [an] international student… looking to work and live here in Nova Scotia. So, I did the papers and I added my boyfriend … as we are liv[ing] together in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. (January 29, 2018)

This one case is in contrast to the experiences of the respondents who remained in Southern Ontario. This comparison suggests that the LMIA operates as a closure mechanism that reveals segments in the labour market. Employers can influence the outcome of the immigration transition process by hastening or delaying it, but government so closely regulates this process that human resource/employers are not often willing to be of assistance.

The constructed boundaries in the immigration system are flexible across Canada’s provinces because of the contrasting labour demands in each sub-national jurisdiction. As demonstrable in Jackson’s case, the boundaries are not only manipulatable by the employer but also the provincial regulatory body (the Department of Health and Wellness) which works in tandem, in this Nova Scotia case, to fill labour demands in the nursing sector. Taken together, the various ways in which the PNPs, LMIA and the IELT operate together challenge the assumption that student migrants will experience a seamless transition. Because one of my participants communicated a desire to settle in a Maritime province, the employer was more inclined to support her transition to permanent resident status facilitated through a positive labour market impact assessment (LMIA). And so, after one year of employment in the nursing home, it was possible for Jackson to apply for Canadian permanent residency via the Express stream of the Nova Scotia Nominee Program (NSNP). The dissimilar LMIA-related outcomes experienced by Jackson versus other international student participants who remained in Southern Ontario, however, point to an historical parallel which emphasizes the structural racism experienced by (im)migrants in Canada. Calliste (1993/4; 1993; 2000) and Dua (2012) have both discussed how historically Canada used its state and immigration policies to structure the permanent admission of (im)migrant – as domestics, railways porters and construction workers – from the Caribbean, China and the southern parts of the United States. These labourers, who are part of what has been called the “reserve army of labourers”, were called in to satisfy economic demands and expelled during periods of economic contraction or when the job was completed (Calliste, 2000). It was their labour that was needed, not their bodies or citizenship (Bauder 2006; Calliste; 1993;
In fact, their labour was dispensable. Of course, once the international student graduates obtain their permanent residency today, they cannot be expelled!

These power relations and the constructed boundaries that characterize the international student graduate’s access to the LMIA also seem to be sector-specific. Jackson’s experience with acquiring a LMIA for nursing work differed significantly from the other student migrants looking for engineering technology positions. Further, those who relocated to less populous provinces like Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan were able to find work that aided with their transition. Despite Jackson not yet satisfying the credential requirements stipulated by the Nova Scotia’s nursing authority (the Department of Health and Wellness), the employer hired Jackson and granted her time to acquire the requisite qualification. Thus, within a period of one year, the employer allowed her to “ladder up” to the provincial regulatory standards through the completion of a series of Department of Health and Wellness (DHW)-administered course and exams. As Jackson put it, “I got a job and began working and the DHW gave me one year to match the certification in Nova Scotia. I needed to upgrade my skills here by taking a few courses.” Kirk Johnson, who also left London (Ontario) for Dartmouth, was not fortunate enough to obtain a LMIA for his expertise in business administration accounting. Likewise, Sacchin Ventakaraman, an MBA graduate who left Toronto to fill an entry level sales position in Saskatoon’s mining industry, experienced the same fate. Five months following the initial interview (July 2018), I followed up with Ventakaraman, who told me of the employer’s continued reluctance to support his transition to permanent residency: “I approached Human Resources, asking for support with the LMIA, but they refused to help me. The man in human resources looked me in the eye and told me “it’s not what we [the company] want to do right now.” These cases reveal the rockiness of the pathway to permanent residence that most participants negotiate. Even relocating to lesser populous provinces where their expertise is valued more did not guarantee Ventakaraman and Johnson access to a LMIA to facilitate a smoother transition.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter examined how the national occupational classification (NOC) codes structure the transition of international student graduates (or student migrants) in Canada. It was established that
only employment in job categories Skill 0, A and B accepted in Ontario qualify an individual for residency status under Express Entry. Two participants claimed that they were unaware of the “right class” or category of skills by referencing the potential consequences on the transition process. Participants Berry and Suthakaran had no knowledge of the NOC matrix. My attendance at a postsecondary education seminar failed to mention this requirement for the Express Entry is consistent. This raises the question as to whether it should be incumbent upon university facilitators to communicate this knowledge to applicants. A few other participants became aware of the embedded NOC matrix for permanent residency, but they were not familiar with the details. These other participants - for example Clue, Naipaul and Merchant - revealed how the international student graduates in my study mis(read) the NOC in relation to their transition process. This means that they were unable to associate a particular occupation with the right NOC category or not aware they must find a job that matches a NOC category that will allow them to proceed through the Express Entry transition process.

Participants with unfavourable outcomes also studied for lower credentials such as certificates and two-year diplomas. These participants could only get C class jobs, as their lower credentials made it difficult to compete for higher skilled jobs. The study also reveals that participants with postgraduate degrees generally found highly skilled (A) and skilled (B) kinds of employment.

The participants in my study also find it difficult to obtain LMIA. This access to the government document that facilitates the transition is contingent upon the willingness of the employers to nominate them because of monetary and geographic constraints of the state. Thus, the process is laden with power relations. Employers wishing to support the transition of international student graduates with an LMIA are confined to the checks and balances of the provincial governments. With that said, this constructed boundary in the immigration system is still flexible, as provincial government permit employers to use it fill labour demands.
Chapter 7: ‘I Don’t Look and Sound Like the Regular “Canadian”’: Resumé ‘Whitening’, Racial Networking and the Labour Market Integration of Student Migrants in Canada

7.1 Introduction
This chapter begins to explore the labour market strategies that international student graduates utilized to secure employment in their postgraduate transition in Canada. As outlined, Canadian economic immigration programs stipulate that international student graduates contemplating postgraduate transition must obtain a minimum of one-year full-time (or two-years part-time) skilled or professional employment in order to satisfy residency requirements. The data presented in this chapter are primarily drawn from the responses of international student graduates who remained in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA). Citing specific cases of labour market navigation, I move the discussion to the role and significance of ethno-racial/cultural networks, specifically in their school to work transition in Canada. The chapter commences with a discussion on the practice of resumé ‘whitening’ across both Caribbean and Asian groups. Here, I emphasize that resumé ‘whitening’ varies between South/Southeast Asian and Caribbean participants. International student graduates reached out to network professionals who either assessed or provided advice on their resumés. Citing relevant cases, I then discuss the efficacy of resumé whitening as a labour market strategy in Canada. The subsequent section presents data on the importance of networking in order to obtain fulltime professional employment. Here, I contend that South/Southeast Asians with specific types of networks enjoyed better labour market outcomes compared to Black Caribbean international student graduates, followed by a discussion on the complexities of power relations in networks. In the next section, I provide a discussion on the dissimilar network experiences of South/Southeast Asian and Caribbean participants and close the chapter with a discussion of the activation of social capital and field alignment in their labour market outcomes and integration.

7.2 The Divergent Practices of Resumé ‘Whitening’ Across Ethno-racial/Cultural Groups

7.2.1 South/Southeast Asian Participants and Resumé Whitening

Participants originating from South/Southeast Asia ‘whiten’ their resumes in a manner that allows them to retain the value of their prior home country experience. The professionals they consult do not
advise these international student graduates to omit, from their resumés, the prior skills and expertise which they have acquired before (im)migrating to Canada. In my study, the resumés of South/Southeast Asians are assessed by network professionals of the same (or similar) cultural backgrounds who are employed by the prospective industries in which the participants seek employment (See Table 7.1, p.155). In other words, they used ethno-racial/diasporic networking as a mechanism to integrate themselves in the labour market. Selected responses drawn from the data below indicate the degree to which networking facilitated the students in their transition to the Canadian labour market. Data collected from participants indicate that professionals in these ethno-racial/cultural networks assist international student graduates with the preparation of resumés.

Participant Ngo, for example, who works in the banking industry, detailed the remarkable role of a female Vietnamese-Canadian college professor in her network:

She helped me a lot with fixing my resumé and also with interview questions too … just to get me [prepared] … I included my previous experience from back home...on all the resumés that I gave to the banks. … But I don’t think [my prior experience] affected [me] much in the actual [job search] process or interview ... [Prospective employers] actually looked at [whether] you can do [the job] … not where you get the experience. … [Besides] the college professor always [forwarded my resumé] to contacts [in the banking industry] and arranged for me to meet with them at their offices. (December 09, 2017)

A South/Southeast Asian participant, Gurratan Singh, who has four years prior expertise working in the field of information technology, had his resumé evaluated by Indo-Canadian professionals and a recruiter with whom he interfaced at conferences informally. He also spoke of the multiple strategies and tailoring applied to his resumé:

I placed more of the stuff that I did in Canada on my resumé. I worked at a technology company [in] India. So, yes, I did include my previous expertise [as] it is relevant to the job in which I [had] an interest. … The person who [assesses] your resumé [should] work in the company which you desire. I got [a recruiter] who worked in the [hydro] industry to take a look at [my] resumé ... Because [he or she] can specifically tell you what the [recruiter] is looking for… whether there is a fit. (February 18, 2018)

A third, South/Southeast Asian participant, Kumar, who has prior expertise managing his father's family-owned and operated firm in India, also benefited from coaching provided by his relatives. He
Table 7.1 Participants’ Transition to Fulltime Employment in Canada indicating Timing, Network Assistance, Resume Whitening, Credential, Sector Job Titles and Location of Ultimate Positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Grad. Date</th>
<th>Fulltime Job Date</th>
<th>No. of Months To Find Fulltime Job</th>
<th>Network Assistance</th>
<th>Resume Whitening</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Degree or Diploma</th>
<th>Job Title</th>
<th>Location of Ultimate Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Black Caribbean Participants</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevon-Marie Naipaul</td>
<td>Jun 2016</td>
<td>Aug 2017</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>MSc.</td>
<td>Geotechnical Engineer</td>
<td>Sudbury, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimple Cooke</td>
<td>Jun 2015</td>
<td>Apr 2017</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>MSc.</td>
<td>Quality Assurance Personnel</td>
<td>Mississauga, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zacchaeus Gittens</td>
<td>Jun 2017</td>
<td>Nov 2017</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>B.Eng.</td>
<td>Structural Engineer</td>
<td>Cambridge, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hortense Clue</td>
<td>May 2016</td>
<td>Jan 2017</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>B. Comm</td>
<td>Customer Service Representative</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lydia Merchant</td>
<td>Jun 2015</td>
<td>Sep 2015; Apr 2017</td>
<td>12 13</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Dip.</td>
<td>Customer Service</td>
<td>London, ON; Brampton, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernadette Berry</td>
<td>Jun 2014</td>
<td>Feb 2016</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Comm.</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Research Communications Co-ordinator</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyeshah Jackson</td>
<td>May 2016</td>
<td>Aug 2016</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Health Care</td>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>Continuing Care Assistant (Health Worker)</td>
<td>Dartmouth, NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>South/Southeast Asian Participants</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giang (Daisy) Phang</td>
<td>Jun 2015</td>
<td>Oct 2017</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>MEd</td>
<td>Recruitment Manager</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacchini Ventakaraman</td>
<td>June 2016</td>
<td>Aug 2016</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>Sales Representative</td>
<td>Saskatoon, SK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navdeep Bains</td>
<td>Nov 2013</td>
<td>Aug 2014</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Engineering Technology</td>
<td>Adv. Dip.</td>
<td>Quality Controller</td>
<td>Markham, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhushan Kumar</td>
<td>May 2015</td>
<td>May 2015</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Adv. Dip.</td>
<td>Investment Associate</td>
<td>Brampton, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huang (Hilene) Ngo</td>
<td>May 2016</td>
<td>Jul 2016</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>Fraud Prevention Specialist</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imelda Aquino</td>
<td>Jun 2015</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>Student Admissions &amp; Services</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khosing Phy</td>
<td>Jun 2013; Jun 2015</td>
<td>Nov 2013; Nov 2015</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>BA, MA.</td>
<td>Theatre; Marketing</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pranavi Suthakaran</td>
<td>Jun 2014</td>
<td>May 2015</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Financial Administrator</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurratan Singh</td>
<td>Jun 2015</td>
<td>Mar 2017</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>IT Business Analyst</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
described the process taken by his Indo-Canadian cousin to “fix” his resumé:

One of [my cousins] who worked [in] banking checked my resumé [to ensure that] … it match[es] the way [the] bank wants. I managed [a manufacturing company] for more than a year [in India] … and I have experience managing the finances too. …[So] she made sure that it [the resumé] had the right words and skills the bank people [are] look[ing] for. I worked on [the resumé], and sent it back and forth to her, until she [thought] it was perfect to land a job at the bank … There was no need to alter or change my first name on my resumé. I handed it in with my own name. (December 10, 2017)

A fourth, Pranavi Suthakaran, who has approximately 10 years experience working with rural economic development, asserted:

No, I haven’t altered or changed my name while looking for a job. … I wouldn’t have done that. … My friend from [India checked] my resumé; checked that I had my work experience in [microfinance and development banks] from Bangladesh, and that [it was] grammatically correct. (February 02, 2018)

Filipina participant Imelda Aquino similarly explained:

A Filipino alumnus [with] the Schulich School of Business … ‘structured’ my resume. He [ensured] that my experience working as a product manager in the field of education [in the Philippines] stood out to the employer. I did a little bit of marketing too. … When the company launch[ed] products, I had to know what is going on and think of ways to increase its use or the demand for the product. … He [also] edited [my resumé] depending on the [job] that I was applying to. If the company [advertised] a [posting] in learning and training … then I presented more of my education experience. But if the job is in marketing, I emphasized what I did while pursuing my MBA. (November 16, 2017)

These Asian international student graduates benefited significantly from the presence of these network professionals who identified with the same racial or cultural backgrounds in Canada as well as the same job sector. In each scenario, the network professional performs or assumes the role of a consultant who evaluates the resumés for the respective international student graduate intending to integrate in the labour market.

Participants of South and Southeast Asian heritage also adopted Anglicized names in order to better their interview prospects in Canada. Data gathered in my study indicate that this labour market strategy was only routinely practiced by two participants, Daisy (Giang) Phang, and to lesser extent, by Hilene (Huang) Ngo (a point to which I will return later in the chapter). Forty-three-year-old Phang pursued a Master of Education at the University of Toronto using her Vietnamese name at birth, Giang.
Phang. However, with her entry into the labour market, she adopted what she calls a “Canadian name.” When interrogated about the process(es) or reasons that precipitated her decision, Phang echoed sentiments in a media report in the March 17, 2017 edition of the *Toronto Star* (Keung, 2017) which details the labour market struggles of Asians who retained their birth first names. She explained:

I heard from a media report [that] it might not be easy for people to remember [names with] more than three syllables. The media report said the people with Asian names have a hard time getting jobs … [and] some also have a difficulty … pronouncing Asian names or some non-western names. …I also learned from my [Vietnamese and Indo-Canadian] friends’ experiences…that non-white sounding names have negative impacts for people [looking] like me in the job search process. So, after finding out this information, I changed my name a little bit. …I took on the name Daisy, which is a white sounding name. … to improve the chance of getting my resumé in the recruiters’ “yes” pile. (November 18, 2017)

On the matter of resumé adjustments, Hilene (Huang) Ngo, another Vietnamese participant introduced above, admits placing a westernized first name when applying for some jobs in Canada. The 38-year-old Schulich business graduate asserted:

On all the [resumés] that I [submitted] to the banks…my mentor [college professor] actually changed my first name to an English name. …[for] the interview… [The English name] on my resumé [helps to limit] the awkward situation of … trying to pronounce my name correctly. (December 09, 2017)

When international student graduates adopt such a strategy to morph their racial identity, inherent is a covert practice that arguably opens access to the racially segmented Canadian labour market. It is a form of racism since the process of whitening their resumés involves them sanitizing or stripping away a central core of their identity in order to avoid being discriminated against in hiring. Kang *et al.* (2016) and Oreopuolus (2011) suggest that non-white bodies or immigrants of ‘other’ cultural backgrounds are susceptible to unfair treatment in the recruitment and selection process. Indeed, for these participants, the assumption is that the more they appear White in their resumés, the greater their chances of making it through the hiring process.

\[17\] This is a pseudonym
7.2.2 Black Caribbean Participants and Resumé Whitening

Unlike South/Southeast Asians, Caribbean participants networked with consultants who actively encouraged them to ‘whiten’ their resumés to such an extent that the value of their prior expertise was concealed. This is what happened to Caribbean participant Chevon-Marie Naipaul, who had prior expertise working in project management in her native Trinidad and Tobago. Despite holding graduate level qualifications in an engineering discipline from a Canadian university and applying online in the traditional way, Naipaul reported that she never had a favourable response from recruiters for job applications made in the GTHA. As she remarked: “I tailored my resumé to reflect the keywords and phrases [advertised] in the job posting and highlighted my prior skills … but I wouldn’t get a call back.”

Frustrated by difficulties associated with entering the labour market for skilled employment, Naipaul sought the advice of few people in her network who gave their input on her resumé. These included an Iranian engineering professor and Afro-Caribbean international student graduates with whom she studied at Western University. These individuals, particularly her friends from Trinidad and Tobago, advised her to delete references to her management skills obtained working in her home country. Naipaul noted:

[I] got different advice on how to fix my resumé. … People were like, … “if you want to improve your chances of being called in for an interview, you need to take off all your previous experience, employers and locations which indicated you worked in Trinidad”. And I went ahead and removed my experience from back home. (October 15, 2017)

A second Caribbean participant, Berry, who spent approximately two years seeking fulltime and professional employment in the GTHA, also eventually sanitized her resumé based on the advice of network professionals. She emphasized:

I [had] different versions of my resumé … [some of which] were dumbed down to present myself to recruiters as someone other than a Black person from Jamaica…or at least so I think. For example, when making job applications, I would omit the six years that I worked in print and online journalism back home, [and] for some I would include it. (September 08, 2017)

The assumption was that the skills and expertise obtained in their home countries may be valued but stigmatized by association with Jamaica. This raises questions about the construction of the job
market, hierarchies of skills and knowledge, as well as the premium placed on skills obtained in Canada vis-à-vis those originating or produced in the Global South.

Two other Black Caribbean participants seeking employment in Ontario also removed racial and cultural identifiers from their resumés that would reveal their country of origin to employers. In my study, international student graduates in Ontario even manipulated or altered job titles and the country in which they obtained their prior occupational skills. An examination of the third Caribbean participant, Dimple Cooke’s resumé showed that she obtained approximately four years relevant work experience in Jamaica. There, she was employed as a chemical engineer in the bauxite industry and also as a laboratory technician in the country’s energy sector. Prior to entering the Canadian labour market, Cooke suggested that she had her resumé appraised by a “Black male friend from Jamaica” who has a considerable number of years of experience working in a human resource department at a prominent postsecondary institution in Ontario. On the specifics of adjustments or ‘whitening’ done to her resumé, she explained:

[He] told me that I have too many things [linking] me to Jamaica on my resumé. [He] also said that if I put [the word] Jamaica [on my resumé recruiters] may automatically think that I am a Black person and an immigrant, and this may limit my chances of making it [to the] interview. …In Jamaica, I worked at the Jamaica Public Service (the main energy company), … I changed it [to] JPS Electrical Company. …just so that it does not [reference] Jamaica. I [also] worked at JAMALCO [the Jamaica Alumina Company] for a Summer and I substituted it [with the words] the Alumina Company. (October 20, 2017)

Also, despite possessing expertise conducting academic research on gender and use of contraceptives amongst Garifuna women in Belize, the second Caribbean participant, Bernadette Berry, also opted to sanitize her resumé, removing the experiences linking her to Jamaica. Berry, who eventually obtained employment as a Research and Communications Co-ordinator with an international development agency in Toronto, detailed the advice given by a mentor and coach:

I signed up with TRIEC [the Toronto Region Immigration Employment Council] …where I was [paired] with a mentor who is [employed] in my field (communications). [My] mentor … a white lady from the CBC said, “do not put the words Jamaica Gleaner” on your resumé … [as it could] influence whether I got called for an interview. For example, [at] the Jamaica Gleaner where I worked, the [word] “Jamaica” alone reveals to [employers] that I [am] a Jamaican woman who is Black... [and] it tells them that … I am not from Canada. And so, I [deleted], the locations where I worked in Jamaica. …The consistent advice that I got from my [Black female] interview and resumé coach at the YMCA career counselling centre…is that I should remove some of my experiences from back home. I
had six years worth of [professional] experience. The people at the YMCA also [insisted on] a functional [and not] a chronological resumé … highlighting [my] skills [and] listing volunteering opportunities [and] internships… and reducing a lot of [the] things I did back home…to show more involvement in Canada. (September 08, 2017)

The appraisers are essentially assisting the participants to make invisible international experience on their resumés by pretending their prior experiences it may have happened in Canada or worse, removing it altogether. Appraisers are thus aware that participants may be susceptible to racist discriminatory practices in the Canadian labour market. And so, the whitening of resumés is a mechanism which they recommended to mask not only racial identity but also their cultural background or country of origin, mostly for Black Caribbean participants.

Among the male Black Caribbean participants, a fifth participant, Jerome Bradshaw, also ‘whitened’ his resumé in order to mask his cultural background from prospective employers. This became a strategy for Bradshaw after two years of not being able to work. Following his graduation in June 2013, Bradshaw missed the 90-day time period which the IRCC stipulates that individuals desiring permanent immigration to Canada must apply for a postgraduate work permit (Government of Canada, 2018a). The process for him dragged on approximately two years. Being unemployed, Bradshaw was invited by two male parishioners in his local Black Church to play an integral role in the establishment of Jamaica Exporting Dealers Enterprise\textsuperscript{18}, a small business which repaired and shipped used tires to clients in Jamaica. For Bradshaw, the tripartite business arrangement, which went insolvent after one and a half years in operation, at least at the time, cushioned him from financial hardship during the months of ‘unemployment.’ The opportunity also provided him the environment to practice and keep relevant his skill set – computing and programing skills learned in college. At the firm, his job description and involvement included but was not limited to assisting and managing daily operation and logistics. Bradshaw, who developed the website for the small business (Jamaica Exporting Dealers Enterprise), was also responsible for maintaining it. Bradshaw’s entrepreneurial skills and resourcefulness extended beyond the shipping business to others in the Mississauga area. He added “I [did] some minor website development for others.” Although Bradshaw moved on, in

\textsuperscript{18} This is a pseudonym developed to maintain anonymity.
August 2015, to obtain regularized status in the labour market, he omitted the years spent working in the shipping company from his initial round of job applications and this, he believed, negatively affected the outcome of his first interview. The recruiter began to question him about the gap in his resumé. As Bradshaw described it, “there was a crater in the middle of my resumé [as] I had not worked in the [formal labour force] since I had done my co-op. … [T]he recruiter said “what happened, what have you been doing?” He reached out to a recruiter at his Church who ‘whitened’ his resume for the Canadian labour market. In describing this whitened version of his resumé, Bradshaw said that “the company where I worked had a Jamaican-sounding name, so I used an acronym and re-named it JAM Exporters. I also ‘doctored’ all of that work experience [as] a web developer for the company… to fill the missing gaps.” With a doctored resumé, Bradshaw’s labour market prospects subsequently improved as he received what he referred to as “two major interviews,” one of which led to his current employment as an Application Software Engineering Technologist with a prominent Canadian financial institution in Toronto, Ontario.

Caribbean participants not only ‘whiten’ their resumés to mask cultural backgrounds but also the racialized spaces in which they live and work in Canada. This describes the case of Berry who resided in the stigmatized Jamestown community of Toronto. Berry contends that she included her address and postal codes of the places in Toronto where she resided and had short-term precarious jobs in the initial phase of her labour market transition. These places include the Jamestown neighbourhood in which Berry resided at the time of various interviews, as well as the notorious Rexdale area and Jane and Finch corridors in Toronto. However, acting upon the advice of her mentor at the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), as Berry noted: “I used to do it, but I stopped when the lady the YMCA office told me to remove it, …I also removed all locations where I lived and worked [in Toronto]” from my resumé. The fact that the resumé “consultant” at the YMCA organization informed Berry to discard her address and postal codes suggests that she is aware of the systemic practices of racism in the wider Canadian labour market. Located in the constituency of North Etobicoke, Jamestown, like its geographically proximate neighbourhoods of Jane and Finch, and the community of Rexdale, is a low-income and racialized area that is often stigmatized in the media when it is linked to crime, poverty
and a host of social problems (Toetonio, 2018). Thus, by simply excluding her address on her resumé, she wanted to avoid a situation where it may be possible for recruiters to stigmatize Berry as a resident of this racialized neighbourhood and thus discriminate against her in the labour market.

The advice to ‘whiten’ resumés comes from a wide variety of advisors: Black friends, Human Resources personnel, the YMCA, White mentors, and the Black Church. Thus, the racial discrimination in hiring is widely known in Toronto, it can be argued.

7.2.3 Immigrant Identity and The Efficacy of Resumé ‘Whitening’ in Canada

What is the connection between resumé whitening and the chances of getting an interview? A few international student graduates from South/Southeast Asia and the Caribbean credited resumé whitening with bringing them into contact with prospective employers for interview opportunities, albeit to varying degrees. There were similar patterns for South/Southeast Asian and Caribbean participants who changed their names. For example, Vietnamese participant Phang reported that she witnessed a dramatic improvement in the number of interview requests she received from employers after resumé whitening, eventually obtaining fulltime employment in Toronto. As she pointed out:

[Since] changing my name on my resumé to a [white sounding name] Daisy, I noticed [that] I got more calls for interviews… When I used my Vietnamese first name, I got no call backs. None whatsoever! (November 18, 2017).

For Caribbean participant Bernadette Berry, similarly, a ‘whitened’ resumé increased the number of calls or responses from employers. However, a positive labour market outcome was not forthcoming for her, at least for approximately a year into her transition:

[R]emoving the address of locations and places where I lived and worked … somewhat improved my chances at getting call backs and interviews… [but it] did not mean I got the job. That is all it guaranteed. … I remembered [receiving] calls for a few customer service positions, … The resumé I used for applications [was based on the] advice of the people at the YMCA in Toronto’s Rexdale community. (September 08, 2017)

Cooke added:

Although I did not notice a big change in terms of the callbacks I got, I [did] remember getting at least two calls [with] the resumés [on which] I made adjustments. (October 20, 2017)

Overall, Naipaul, who felt that she had wasted time using online applications, explained:
I probably sent out 300 resumés and have I have gotten two replies. [The] other firms to which I applied did not even send me anything…not even a thank you for applying message or email. (October 15, 2017)

The experiences of these participants suggest ‘whitening’ may increase callbacks overall consistent with the finding of Kang et al. (2016) and Oreopoluos (2011), whose work also underscores the disparities in responses received by job applicants of differing cultural and racial backgrounds. Together, our observations raise questions about the degree to which resumés are ‘whitened’ as an attempt to overcome stigmatization.

Beyond merely improving callbacks, there are questions regarding the efficacy of resumé ‘whitening’ as a labour market strategy. While participants originating from the Caribbean and South/Southeast Asia whitened their resumes and successfully obtain interviews, the process did not always translate into employment. Prior to obtaining a job in ‘Quality Control’ at an automotive safety company, Navdeep Bains had difficulties securing employment in his occupational field with his ‘whitened’ resumé. Although it might be argued that the GTHA job market for this occupation is saturated, the Seneca College electronic engineering technology graduate observed an interesting pattern in employer response for applications he submitted to online jobs sites (such as Workopolis, and Indeed.ca) and applications he delivered in person either at job fairs or at firms in the GTA. For the period of eight months that Bains spent navigating the GTA labour market, he reported that employers were more likely to respond to applications delivered personally, whereas those made online terminated at the initial telephoning screening. As he noted

I would go to [the respective] companies in person and drop off the resumés. I don’t know if it is because I wear a turban and Kara … I don’t look and sound like the regular ‘Canadian’…[but] I never really got a call or reply from the resumés that I dropped off in person … only for those that I made online. (October 08, 2017)

Regarding the applications done online, he continued: “I got a few calls for the interviews over the phone but after the interview I never really got a reply”. Racial discrimination is impossible to prove but in each case Bains was not able to employ the practice of resumé ‘whitening’. His racial and cultural identities were known with the initiation of both interview processes. Like other Indo-Canadian participants in my study, Bains is not only customarily attired according to the Sikh faith, but also
speaks with an Indian accent to the extent that words with ‘Vs’ are enunciated as ‘Ws.’ Given the historical construction of Whiteness or implicit biases vis-à-vis foreign accents in certain quarters of the Canadian labour force (England & Steill, 1997), discrimination cannot be dismissed when whitening of resumés produces callbacks.

For international student graduates that I interviewed, the process of resumé whitening may go along with a fragmented identity. Participant Phang reflected on how a whitened resumé causes her to vacillate between different social identities in Canada. In 2016, Phang applied to a recruitment manager posting at a well-known private career college in Toronto. Despite submitting a whitened copy of her resumé, Phang unsuccessfully interviewed for the position. When questioned about the processes that might have contributed to her not being “short listed” on her first application for the job, she remarked:

I don’t think it is about racism [at the employer level]. … I don’t think [my application] got to the final possible list of candidates to be hired. I was thinking that my skill, experience and my knowledge from Australia and Vietnam was not relevant [in Canada]. I [also] know that my name may be hard for people [the recruiter] to remember me the very first time. That is why I changed it. … In the professional world in Canada…I introduce myself to people with my name Daisy, which is different from my original [Vietnamese] name on my [official documents] … But I find it a bit troubling at times. [Taking on] a second name almost makes it seems like I am two [separate] people… For a place like Canada, that should not be. Because [Canada] should be an open society giving people opportunities… Canada said it’s open to people from all countries. …The two names make me feel like I am not…one individual (November 18, 2017).

Canadian multiculturalism, to her, signals tolerance, diversity, valuing of cultural and racial difference. It also speaks to her consciousness of racism. She does not attribute not being short listed for the job to ‘racism’ but then moves to reject the contrasting social identities being denied produces. She has a difficulty reconciling the idea that the labour market requires her to perform a professional identity which is separate from her cultural identity. When interfacing with the institutions of labour she performs or takes on a professional identity that is ‘whitened’ in order to ‘fit’. Indeed, her comment connects to what postcolonial scholars hypothesized as the “walled in” or “colour prejudice” and marginalized experience that stems from harbouring the oppressor (Fanon, 1967:117; Freire, 1970; Memmi, 1967). Phang has an understanding of what it means to be a Vietnamese-Canadian. Essentially, White society has a contrasting representation of immigrants in its multicultural text and
the labour market practices imposed upon her. As a part of this process, the resumé whitening phenomenon raises questions about the place of non-White bodies and the ‘tolerance’ of cultural difference not this time in an historical context, but in contemporary Canada (Goldberg, 1993; Razack, 2002; 2007). Labour market entry for Phang as she experiences it necessitates making invisible her cultural identity, at least on her resumé, to ‘fit’ the valorized white identity of Canada.

One of the Black Caribbean participants in my study, Zacchaeus Gittens, in preparation for the labour market, reported that he had his resumé assessed by a representative in career services at Western University. As Gittens noted: “I had numerous appointments with the co-op internship advisor who [examined] resumés [and] cover letters. I also [had] numerous appointments…for her to look over my resumé and critique it.” Gittens also reported that he attended job preparation workshops which centred on job preparations to allow him to improve his resumé, and therefore ensured that it was properly “aligned,” “formatted” and properly “structured.” He also reported to have detached from his resumé those items that could connected him to his country of origin, Barbados. As he asserted, “there is nothing on my resumé that indicates I am from Barbados…. I am not sure if anyone can tell that I am from Barbados because of my name.” However, my juxtaposition of the resumé (which he used to apply for jobs) and interview data reveals a contrasting reality. There were several items in the document that I thought exposed his cultural background. While he lists his internship and summer employment in Canada, he failed to remove the prior expertise he obtained in his home country. In the Summer of 2013, Gittens was employed to receive basic training and assist with a few projects in a structural engineering firm in Barbados. His listings of extracurricular and voluntary participation are predominantly within Caribbean student and community organizations. This points to a misconception on his part of what constitutes the process of resumé whitening. He thought that process of achieving a ‘whitened’ identity is limited to the whitening of certain ethnic sounding names (similar to some of my South/Southeast Asian participants).
7.3 International Student Graduates and Racial Networking: The Route to Employment in the Postgraduate Transition

7.3.1 South/Southeast Asian Participants and Pre-existing Racial Networks

Four participants in my study originating from South/Southeast Asia obtained professional employment because they had access to an established racial network that have linkage to/within specific occupations. Network professionals belonging to these diasporic communities assisted participants in their postgraduation transition to secure interviews that materialized in the form of fulltime professional employment in the GTA, as demonstrated in the cases of Hilene (Huang) Ngo, Gurratan Singh and Khosing Phy. For 38-year-old Ngo, her full-time employment resulted from networking that she formed with a university business professor whom she met at a campus event hosted by business professionals in Toronto’s Vietnamese-Canadian community. As she puts it, “you have to go to conferences and workshops to meet people, especially people who look like you, and are from your country.” She developed a professional relationship with this individual, whom she considers her mentor, by volunteering for her and helping her to organize conferences at the business school, that prepared students for job interviews. As a reciprocity for voluntary hours, the professor helped her to secure an interview and employment approximately three months subsequent to the completion of her MBA degree at York University’s Schulich of Business. The process facilitated Ngo’s employment as a Fraud Prevention Specialist with one of Canada’s leading financial institutions in Toronto. As Ngo explained:

The [female] Vietnamese-Canadian college professor [whom I met] knows a lot of people of Vietnamese [background] who work in business and [in the GTA]. [She] introduced me to a white male [bank] branch manager who had an opening at his branch. She [college professor] ... made it easy for [me] to connect with the bank [manager] with whom I am now working. ... [The bank] manager invited me for an interview. ... [That] helped me to get me into the banking job. ... [My college professor] was [also] talking to other Vietnamese contacts and Canadian friends at other banks [on my behalf] ... because lots of Vietnamese work in the banks in [the GTA] ... But I got this interview with Scotiabank first. ... [At other times], she helped connect me to [these] contacts in her network [and] spoke to them for me as well (December 09, 2017).

The second South/Southeast Asian participant, Gurratan Singh’s employment as an Information Technology Business Analyst with an energy firm in the GTA, stemmed from the friendship he forged with one of his Indo-Canadian colleagues while pursuing studies at the Schulich School of Business.
in Toronto. He explained the dynamics of the process and how it prepared him to present himself in the interview:

A former classmate of mine connected [the prospective recruiter and I] through LinkedIn. ...The prospective recruiter in the hydro industry [who happens to be White] is a [Schulich School of Business] alumnus … and a friend of my classmate. We had a good conversation about what the company was looking for. I even asked [him] questions [relating to the position and] … he reminded me to talk about the different technologies that I worked on in my previous gigs [as well as] my experience working with process flows (a kind of technology) … in India and Canada. (February 02, 2018).

The third South/Southeast Asian participant, Phy, now holds a fulltime job in the Marketing department of a Toronto-based retail firm, and he also sees networking as a process which contributed to his part-time employment in the city’s theatre industry:

I maintained connection with my [White] professor at Queen’s [University] who has connections with people in the theatre industry in Toronto. [He introduced me] to two of his [Caucasian] friends… older people, here in Toronto who have connections in theatre productions… His two friends … knew that I have a theatre and media arts degree … so, they [informed] the directors of my skills. That is how I got a break in theatre. Unlike most international graduates… who have [a] challenge adapting to the social environment. I did not have that problem. I went out and did not only stick with the Cambodian… or Asian communities, I [had] opportunities to… meet and connect [with] people in the wider society. (January 25, 2018).

These three South/Southeast Asian student graduates were able to tap into established networks to realize favourable outcomes in the GTA labour market. These scenarios illuminate the salience of social capital in an efficient labour market trajectory. International student graduates who initiate the networking process with professionals in their racial communities in Canada presumably find jobs more easily than those who do not.

The cases of Ngo, Singh and Phy bring into view interracial networking between South/Southeast Asian and Whites which these individuals identify as being central to the process of securing professional employment in the Canadian labour market. As indicated above, the professionals in Ngo and Singh’s networks are of Vietnamese-Canadians and Indo-Canadian backgrounds respectively. These principal contacts (the college professor and Singh’s classmate) had an existing relationship, shared values or some form of trust with individuals in their respective industry and profession in the mainstream Canadian labour market. For Singh, his Indo-Canadian classmate connected him with a White human resources recruiter who mentored him about the process of obtaining a position and how
to make himself relevant in his occupational field of business. Ngo’s college professor went beyond this to vouch on her behalf to business associates. In other words, Ngo’s college professor and Singh’s classmate had associates and acquaintances within the business and industry who could be called upon to grant them favours across racial lines. The social networking that helped to facilitate the labour market integration of participants Ngo, Singh, and Phy into skilled employment in Canada transcends race and culture. The successful use of White networking as the strategy for obtaining employment is best exemplified in the case of Phy. His White undergraduate professor, who taught him at Queen’s University, networked with others on his behalf so that he could obtain entry the theatre industry, a field which is predominantly elite and White.

The presence of an established networks in the South/Southeast Asian community in Toronto also assisted in providing part-time employment for two of the participants. The first, Imelda Aquino, who completed her MBA in the Summer of 2016, put a hold on her labour market aspirations due to the anticipated birth her first child. In the fall of 2016, Aquino continued her labour market search with the support of a Filipino associated with York University’s Schulich School of Business alumni. He assisted her to source employment in Student Services at a university in Toronto, where she dedicates her time to developing and assessing initiatives relating to the admission of local and international students. She outlined the process that contributed to her labour market integration:

I had a few offers, but I didn’t take [them] … [because] I was expecting a baby. I decided to have the baby and then gradually look for work. [My husband and I] decided that my husband would work fulltime and then I would eventually take my time and look for work. … My mother is retired and is here from the Philippines. She helps me with [the baby]. … I reached out to the Filipino guy … [who] helped me to get the part-time job [that I did while pursuing my studies]. … He knew that I had just had my baby, but I had explained to him … that I wanted to get Canadian experience in the meantime. A few months after [the birth of] my baby … he [the Filipino alumni] told me of another part-time position available. … He made [a] phone [call] to his connection [at the university] to get me [an] interview. … and I got the job. (November 16, 2017)

The excerpt underscores the salience of network but also the gendered process that characterizes Aquino’s postgraduate transition to skilled employment. The case of Aquino also points to the challenges that confront mothers (and fathers) in the wider Canadian society where the market forces of capitalism do not support accessible day care spaces for all families. This speaks to the issues
regarding the intersection of gender and relative absence of national child care policy (England & Steill, 1997; Stasiulis & Bakan, 2005). Aquino had to negotiate both race and gender in her employment trajectory. Arguably Phang, as a single mother, in her case without an extended family was caught in the same predicament.

The second of the two South/Southeast Asian participants in my study who sought and obtained full-time employment through networking opportunities with a professional who did not share her cultural background was Pranavi Suthakaran. She was a Bangladeshi international student graduate. In her final year (Spring 2014) of her Master of Arts program in Development Studies at York University, she was elected to the graduate student association (GSA). On the executive of the GSA, Suthakaran advocated for the needs of graduate students, spending a weekly maximum of 24 hours where she primarily consulted with departmental representatives from various graduate programs, and then communicating and demanding those concerns be addressed by the relevant body within the university. Other work-related activities and her privileged position on the executive of the GSA allowed her to foster numerous professional relationships with Indo-Canadians which helped to facilitate her transition to full time employment at a Toronto-based publicly funded higher educational institution where she is now the financial administrator in the graduate student union. Suthakaran elaborated on how the interactive and informational exchange processes unfolded:

> Working at the graduate student association, I got the exposure to attending conferences, meetings and other social events where I would meet people. … Through my work and involvement [in] these events… I met other people of South Asian [descent] from other student [union] groups in Ontario. …They got to know my skills and my abilities. …I wouldn’t have heard of this [financial administrator] job, if I had not [been attending] the conferences…because you just do not always know where they are posted… [One of the Indo-Canadian] persons whom I met [at a union gathering] told me when this work [that I now have] was being advertised [by her company]. So, the person who recommended me to her boss…knows [my expertise] and skill set. I applied [and] went through the usual process of interviewing…and got the job. (February 02, 2018)

The excerpt demonstrates the active role of the network professionals in successful labour market navigation. Network professionals were essential in keeping Suthakaran abreast of the labour market information.
7.3.2 Relatives as Network: South/Southeast Asia’s Diasporic Communities.

International student graduates from South/Southeast Asia also used relatives in specific businesses and industries as a network in order to obtain professional employment in Canada. Relatives of participants also used their networks in their industries or firms in order to help secure interviews and employment on behalf of the international student graduates. This labour market strategy was employed by two of the Indo-Canadian participants in separate cities in the GTA. One such participant is Bhushan Kumar, who obtained fulltime employment as an Investment Associate in Brampton, Ontario at one of Canada’s largest financial institutions. He attributed his employment to this post to networking efforts of his three Indo-Canadian cousins who held influential positions in different banks of Canada’s banking sector. He reported that “[the] semester before graduating college, … I asked my cousins to connect me with people in the jobs that will allow me to use the skills I learned. My cousins also knew lots of people [of Indo-Canadian] background in the banking industry who could make things happen.” Kumar added that his cousins would “inform him when banks are hiring” so that he could pass his resumé on to “the managers at the banks where they work” as well as other “professional friends.” As it turns out, the networking efforts of his cousins assisted him in securing interviews with two financial institutions in the GTA. The strategy worked, as Kumar noted that he obtained “employment in the first week following his graduation” from Fanshawe College (London, Ontario). Again, the salience and efficiency of the social networking is illustrated. He benefited from the networking efforts of his relatives who appeared to have well organized networks within the banking sector. And so, Kumar, like the other South/Southeast Asian participants in Table 7.1 (p.155), obtained fulltime employment in a slightly shorter period in their postgraduate transition than those of Caribbean descent (around 10 vs 12 months on average). Although the participants were not randomly sampled, the route to an engineering position is clearly longer than one in business. However, more important, influences on getting a fulltime position faster involves using networks or settling for a lower level job, as in the case of three Caribbean participants Johnson, Clue and Merchant.
The case of Navdeep Bains demonstrates how Bains, another Indo-Canadian participant, utilized the established racial network in engineering as a mechanism to obtain employment in Canada. After spending eight months in his postgraduation seeking professional employment, Bains, with the aid of his friend and his uncle by way of fictive kinship, secured a job with an automotive safety company in Markham, Ontario. In response to my question posed about his labour market access, Bains spoke about the integral role of key individuals of Indo-Canadian background in his network. These included other international student graduates and his “uncle”. As he explained, he belonged to a circle of friends which consisted of “international student graduates like me from India. Whosoever gets a job [usually] messages the others to say that [their workplace] is hiring…and that they could come and drop off their resumés.” Bains also reported that there was no need for him to “volunteer” or “intern” for the post advertised by the prospective firm in which he desired employment. As he emphasizes, “I had an uncle who already had his foot in the door of the company. He [informed] me when to drop off my resumé, and spoke to the manager, telling him that his nephew is looking for work.” Through this process, Bains received an interview and was subsequently hired in the firm’s quality control department where his duties include but are not limited to making and repairing the electronic units, sensors and airbags in automobiles sold in North America. He also claimed that the strategy he employed is frequently used to hire people Indo-Canadian backgrounds: “we did that many times, but this one time I was lucky enough to get the job”. Bains’ labour market outcome speaks not only to how Indo-Canadian (and South/Southeast Asian) participants successfully use both White and racialized networks to find employment in what Bauder (2006) and Mensah (2010) identify as ethnic enclaves. But also as indicated in the scenario, Bains’ “uncle”, who belonged to an earlier generation of Indo-Canadian migrants, leveraged his social capital in order to assist his nephew (Bains) to integrate in the labour market. These case studies are important theoretically because they suggest what is important in the transition process for the international student graduate; racialized individuals can find professional employment in the GTA, and they do so via networking in the sectors with intermixed White and racialized workers. Particularly notable is the role played by York University’s School of Business. However, college networks may turn out to function in the same way with further research.
7.3.3 Gender and Race in Racial Networking

None of the nine Caribbean participants in my study had the employment advantage of the racial network leveraged by six of the nine South/Southeast Asian participants in the postgraduate transition. Therefore, their labour market integration occurs at a more sluggish pace. None of the Caribbean participants indicated that they had a racial or racialized and white network that could connect them to insiders in professional and technical employment in their prospective sectors. Table 7.1 (p.155) suggests that there is not much average difference between the two racialized groups before they were integrated into a full time and or professional employment but there are other differences. Willingness to work outside the GTHA reduced the wait for participants Chevon-Marie Naipaul, Zacchaeus Gittens, Kirk Johnson and Nyesha Jackson (as outlined in chapter 8). Black Caribbean international student graduates spent between 14 and 24 months seeking employment, in contrast to the three the Asian business graduates who remained in the geographical area of their choice mostly using a network through their schools or industry. Three in education and engineering took longer and two were women with families. This confirms the work of Mensah (2010) who contends that Black immigrant cohorts, unlike other immigrant groups, do not have access to established networks in professional occupations and as a consequence experience greater difficulty integrating into professional employment. However, Asians in my study did not have a homogenous experience, with consideration of age (as in the example of Phang) gender and sector requiring more research to see if they conform to the networks revealed in this data. Unfortunately, these international student graduates who fail to obtain fulltime professional employment may have to resort to work in short-term professional jobs, the customer service industry or areas outside the GTHA.

It is interesting that the four longest waits to fulltime employment were women – Phang, Berry, Aquino and Merchant. Does this suggest gender discrimination in employment networks for women of colour? Lydia Merchant exemplifies one such Caribbean female participant whose labour market navigation and incorporation was not facilitated via the presence of a professional network. In fact, Merchant’s network was limited to colleagues with whom she studied with at Fanshawe College and her local ecclesiastical community in London and Brampton, respectively. As she remarked: “the only
friends that I have made here [in Canada] are from school or people from the Caribbean … and two [other] persons from the Church that I visited." However, when asked whether she consulted these individuals or an expert for assistance in preparing for the labour market, she reported "I haven’t sought any professional help to do my resumé …or to look for work … [as] I believe that I can prepare a good resumé." But Merchant has not been fortunate enough to secure skilled employment. As noted above, after completing her Fashion Merchandising diploma, Merchant spent approximately 23 months performing customer service-related duties in manufacturing and warehousing environments in the cities of London and Brampton, Ontario. An analysis of her interview transcript revealed that she has twice been denied entry to job postings to which she applied at firms in London and the GTA. She commented on the perceived worth associated using a with network as a strategy in finding skilled employment:

I [got] a few [job] interviews …[but] I was not successful in getting [the jobs]. There was one job specifically I felt like I was a good candidate for … [It] was a visual merchandising position with [a prominent big box retail chain] in Mississauga … [which required that I travelled] to other stores within the [city] and help them to set up display and signage, incorporate brand messaging of the company in all projects, and all that stuff. … I told the recruiter that I did fashion merchandizing. … [based on the interview, I gathered that] she was thinking [of] fashion in the sense of clothes. I don’t only do clothes design. I do home décor and all that stuff. … The opportunity fell through … [as] the recruiter felt that my interest was in fashion. … As an international student, you don’t readily know how to prepare for an interview in Canada. … I did not have the right people to help me prepare for that interview. So, like, if I had known from the get-go. … then I would not experience this hiccup. (December 05, 2017)

Hortense Clue was another female participant who only found fulltime employment in customer service at a Mutual Fund company in Toronto, despite having a Bachelor of Commerce in Business Management and Organizational Studies from Western University. Her problem in not knowing the importance of the NOC codes was reported in chapter 6. She also spoke of further difficulties navigating the labour market without networks in London:

I didn’t know how to sell myself to or connect with the right employers. … I uploaded my resumé and cover letter when applying for jobs. But it just didn’t feel like I was doing enough…. I didn’t know the right people to connect with to help me get the job I am looking for …. The people [with] whom I connected were not in a position to connect me with the kind of people who can make things happen. … [For example], helping me to get an interview, … telling me about the do’s and don’ts [of] preparing a resumé for work in Canada, [and] how to search for a good job … that matches the kind of [skills] that I learned in my [Business Management] program. (December 04, 2017)
These cases underscore that accessibility to (interracial) labour networking is an integral component of the postgraduation transition process in Canada but there is also a gender component. Any absence of a robust network imperils the international student graduates’ prospects of obtaining professional employment which seems to be a prerequisite for obtaining permanent residency. These two Black women participants were off-ramped in the transition process into the lowest level positions as late as my interview with them. It is evident in my interviews with them that they did not have access to networks leading to professional employment in Canada which often demands or necessitates the formation of such networks. Their cases challenge the notion that postgraduate transition is a seamless process both in terms of a gendered and race, as do the case of Phang and Aquino, but these two latter participants eventually did achieve good positions on their own in the field of education.

The lack of a professional network led a third Caribbean participant, Cooke, to work in a series of temporary/short-term professional jobs before obtaining fulltime work in the GTHA. For example, she held two short-term jobs prior to obtaining employment as a Quality Assurance Personnel in the GTHA. Twelve months following her graduation (2016), she finally obtained employment as a Quality Control Inspector, a position which lasted only about five months. She then rejoined the unemployed labour force, after which she successfully applied for a contract position as a Quality Consultant with a mechanical engineering firm in Guelph, Ontario. In the position, Cooke primarily performed a consulting role between customers and retailers. For Cooke, with an engineering degree, the “job was more sales oriented and stressful” [as] she performed the role of “a third-party inspector” of products “customers desired to purchase from those selling it.” She continued: “I would be the third-party to check and make sure that the products being sold to customers are in good order.” Her duties also included the preparation of manuals and other instructional literature for products across various industries, whether they be clothing or otherwise. This she felt, was not a good match for her skills and so she resigned the job in order to fill a more permanent position as a Quality Assurance Personnel at another mechanical engineering firm in Mississauga, Ontario. Cooke, the third Black woman discussed here, was disappointed with this current position at the time of the interview, maintaining
that the job as Quality Consultant was “low paying” and did not “guarantee that [her] contract would have been renewed.” Thus, without networks, she was “off-ramped” as were Merchant and Clue, while the two Asian women were relatively successful (but also under-employed).

It is worth noting that participants Bernadette Berry and Jerome Bradshaw, two Black Caribbean participants in my study seeking employment via Black diasporic networks did find employment support, but were exploited by their network contacts, as they were not properly remunerated. Berry worked free for the lawyer whom she met at her local Black Church in her Toronto neighbourhood. Cognizant of Berry’s unemployed status and that she needed ‘Canadian’ experience, the lawyer, who is also of Afro-Caribbean ancestry, made Berry a part-time offer, which she eagerly accepted. As Berry noted, “when she and I had that discussion about me looking for a job, I was getting a bit antsy being at home. I just wanted to have somewhere I could go, even for a couple days a week.” At the lawyer’s office, Berry performed the duties of law clerk, not really related to her skills as a professional in the field of communications. These included but were not limited to scheduling appointments, organizing meetings and conducting research which helped the lawyer to prepare for trials. Because of her financial precarity, Berry characterized the experience with the lawyer as a “nightmare”:

[T]here was no consistent structure for payment. And she was extremely busy. She was [seldom] in the office. I figured that she wanted someone to help her in the office. [Working] there proved that she was not willing to pay someone to help her do the office stuff. … It was a challenge [holding] a conversation with her to get my pay. I [questioned] “why am I not getting money?” Initially, I only wanted to work three days a week …. but [she] asked me to do more days. I [was] spending money to [commute] … but I was there for three months [and] in that three months, she paid me once. And then after I left she gave me another cheque for $300 dollars. (September 08, 2017)

Gossip in the GTA includes observations about students, desperate for work, volunteering to work for free. While Berry did not exactly end up working entirely for free, she was not properly remunerated. The interview excerpt speaks to the susceptibility of the international graduate student engaged in work arrangements in ethno-racial enclaves or diasporic networks. The contractual arrangements between the parties involved are based on trust, and therefore the employer has carte blanche to alter work expectations.
Bradshaw, who had missed applying for permanent residency within the allotted time period experienced a similar fate of exploitation and stigmatization in his Caribbean diasporic network prior to eventually obtaining employment as an Application Software Engineer Technologist with the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce in Toronto. As noted earlier, insolvency and subsequent closure of JAM, his start-up enterprise, meant that Bradshaw rejoined the unemployed cohort in the population, and was forced to turn once again to his diasporic network for support. When questioned how he supported himself during this period, Bradshaw reported that he eked out a living by participating in menial economic activities which he characterized as jobs that remunerate individuals in a shadow economy “under the table.” This was his only option, as his precarious legal status curtailed his chances of obtaining regular employment. Seated in the coffee franchise, where I was interviewing him, Bradshaw who, at this time, gained employment through friends in the Jamaican community remarked: “I worked cash jobs. [My friends] tried to support [me] because they know the [challenges] I was faced with. They [connected] me [to] jobs in flooring, small companies… [and] factory jobs where extra help was needed.” Bradshaw maintained that he willingly accepted such work, whenever it became available, to avoid offloading his financial burden on the family with whom he resided during this phase of his life. But with his precarious legal status in Canada, he often participated in unsafe working environments and often earned below Ontario’s 2013 minimum wage. As Bradshaw puts it,” the work conditions were not the best. I just hoped I didn’t injure myself while [doing] those jobs … They did not pay much [as] I took home less than $1000 every two weeks.” For the frightening period of time while he was in limbo, Bradshaw acceptance of cash jobs in the GTA which left him susceptible not only being labelled as an illegal immigrant (which he was) but also to being marked and targeted by employers as an individual with no choice but to be employed as cheap labour within exploitative networks.
7.4 The Complexities of Power Relations and Labour Market Integration in the GTHA

7.4.1 The Tale of Two South/Southeast Asian Female Participants

Although as I have documented above, seven of nine Southeast Asians in my study obtained professional employment through various networks after graduation, two did not. As mentioned several times, Daisy (Giang) Phang, who holds a Canadian master’s degree and prior expertise coordinating higher education programs in Australia and Vietnam, applied to a job posting in 2016, which sought a qualified individual to recruit international students at a private postsecondary institution in Ontario. In preparation for the interview, she consulted a White female professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Educational of the University of Toronto, who connected her with one of her former male students who has expertise recruiting to fill non-academic positions in the higher education industry. This individual appraised Phang’s resumé and assisted her with the application process. As Phang observed: “he was very helpful. He also offered to review and edit my resumé and cover letter, and then submitted it to the [public postsecondary institution] in Toronto.” Upon reviewing the applications, the employer told Phang that she was not qualified for the job. In fact, she initially received a similar response when she applied for the post of a Recruitment Manager for the Southeast Asian region with a private career college in Toronto. Instead, the college hired her to work as a Summer camp coordinator before hiring someone else to the position that she had been seeking. It was during this period that the manager suddenly realized that he could better utilize her prior skills (and business acumen) to advance the economic interests of the institution. Obviously still dealing with the emotional effects during our interview, Phang’s face began to communicate her bewilderment as she recounted her experience integrating in the labour market. Having received an unfavourable response from employers, she returned to the human resource professional with whom she initially consulted, to discuss the claim that she was not qualified for the position. In her words, “we talked about [the employer response] and he confirmed that I am [a] competitive candidate for the position that I applied for. … But still my application did not pass the desk of the recruitment manager.” Having been assured that her experience and qualifications made her a suitable candidate for the job, Phang added that
she and the human resource professional discussed other possibilities that may have cost her the position. Based on the discussion that ensued between the two, she concluded that:

You need to have an internal reference. That is, the candidate applying for the job needs to know someone inside…. [This] person will bring their friend’s application to the desk of the hiring manager. I [now] believe that it is all about who you know. … [The problem] is not just applying to the job. I know my HR friend, but he is not in the postsecondary institution [at which I sought] employment. (November 18, 2017)

This type of knowledge is important when navigating the labour market. Access to employment in the educational sector that Phang was applying to, in this case, seemed limited by the clout that a particular network professional might wield at various stages of the hiring process just as in the case of Black participants and Black diasporic networks.

Further, the observation that participant Phang needed an ‘internal reference’ communicates that applicants, regardless of whether they are Black or Asian, do not all start out on equal footing in the labour market. In Phang’s case, she faced a triple whammy (see Chapter 5) of age gender and race in trying to enter the job market. Access to professional employment rests on one’s ability to network, the strength and specificity of one’s particular network, and the power relations within the network. Phang’s assumption was that a network could have helped her to short-circuit the perceived racist processes that structure the hiring process. But “network” is a euphemistic term which obfuscates power relations in the labour market and therefore it needs be problematized. As the cases above demonstrate, networking simply does not refer to a collection of people but rather how those individuals are arranged in the network, on the rungs of hierarchy that each person occupies, and how that position occupied links to individuals connected to the network who are in a position to act proactively for individuals facing ageism, sexism and racism.

An examination of the networking strategies of the nine South/Southeast Asians in Ontario demonstrates that labour market hiring is structured by race and gender. Juxtaposing experiences of participants Ngo and Phang illustrates the intricacies of these processes. Both female Vietnamese participants had a female professor who connected them to a white male in their respective professional fields. In Phang’s case, her university professor connected her to a former male student who had no influence over her outcome due to his position exterior to the public postsecondary
institution that posted the job. In contrast, Ngo’s college professor’s position and access to a host of professionals in the banking industry and Vietnamese-Canadian business community offered her some amount of leverage to advocate on her student’s behalf. It also appears that the White bank manager to whom Ngo was initially introduced is not only acquainted with the faculty member but also an influentially situated figure in the financial institution. He had decision-making powers that allowed him to parachute Ngo into a vacant position at another branch. With this configuration of power relations and access (or the lack thereof), it is not surprising that Ngo secured employment as Fraud Prevention Specialist with one of Canada’s main financial institutions while Phang’s initial application to recruit international students was denied for “lack of qualifications.” That is, the dissimilar outcome between the participants can be attributed to the power dynamics within their networks, highlighting the importance of knowing someone (or someone who knows someone with the power to help her) in the sector to which one is applying.

7.5 Social Capital, Alignment and Participant Labour Market Outcomes

My analysis of the dissimilar outcomes between the two groups of international student graduates also suggests that some participants in each group have access to social capital in their respective cultural assemblages while others do not. Network professionals whom these South/Southeast Asian and Black Caribbean participants consulted to “improve” their resumés appeared to have a working knowledge of what it means be an immigrant navigating the upper segment of the Canadian labour market. Arguably, the consulting role performed by these participants can be interpreted as a mechanism that is deployed to pushback on the implicit any racial biases against immigrants in the Canadian labour market. But this raises questions as to what process(es) might be responsible for explaining the divergent labour market outcomes vis-à-vis Caribbean and Asian participants? The observation that most South/Southeast Asians in the study used networks successfully while most Caribbean participants did not, suggests a difference between the groups, and that affects or shapes the success and timing of their labour market outcomes. For South/Southeast Asian participants, the concept of racial/ethnic or ethno-racial distinction allows us to
make sense of why they maintain the value of their prior experiences obtained in their respective home countries. Participants Singh, Ngo, Suthakaran and Kumar all had one thing in common: they all had access to business and industry experts in their respective cultural groups who did not insist they whiten their identities (for example, their prior expertise or first names) on their resumés. The idea that resumé experts (for example, the banking manager, Indo-Canadian professionals, and cousins in banking, etc.) did not advise Ngo, Singh, and Kumar to whiten their identities for a potential employer might be linked to the dynamics of the active networking amongst these individuals belonging to the same or similar cultural background. Resumé experts also participate in an active networking that helped to construct a “fit” between the participant and the position. This is best illustrated in the cases of Ngo and Singh. Their resumé experts arranged in-person meetings with a representative of the prospective businesses (hydro and banking respectively) who helped to ‘orientate’ them to the hiring process.

Race/cultural background was arguably a non-issue not only for the experts who appraised the resumés of South/Southeast Asian participants but also for the respective employers across the sectors in which these international student graduates were hired. Although Ngo alludes to the presence of Vietnamese in banking, the field in Canada is predominantly White. In spite of this, Ngo and Kumar efficaciously used their cultural networks and broke into the desired field. It is important that they both had prior (or pre-immigration) expertise in banking and entrepreneurship (See Table 7.2, p.182), which they managed to import internationally. It is also noteworthy that these participants did not enter the sector at lower rungs of the hierarchy of the businesses. Participant Suthakaran had the same experience. Her prior expertise disbursing funds through a microfinance organization in Bangladesh was significant in her fulltime employment as financial administrator with the student union at a public university in Ontario. She suggested:

I had an undergrad in economics [and] experience working with numbers and managing international projects [in] Bangladesh. Even though they were not [acquired] here [in Canada], the organization where I am working [has] recognized those [expertise], and that help me to get this job. (February 02, 2018)
The examples of Bains and Phy also demonstrate that race or cultural background did not stand in the way of obtaining employment with an automotive company in Markham, or in Toronto’s theatre industry respectively. And so, it could be that résumé experts and their contacts in the labour market more or less embody and appreciate similar (or the same) dispositions or tendencies that mediate their perceptions of immigrants, immigrants with Canadian and/or (foreign) credentials and immigrants with (prior) foreign expertise. It may be that these individuals have professional friends or people in their respective diaspora. But another possibility is that they have racial/ethnic distinction (Borglum, 1984:260) that is valued by the résumé experts and individuals in their respective fields, for example, the banking community. This is a small sample and I did not interview in participants’ networks. However, it is worth considering the possibility that racial distinction contributed to the South/Southeast Asian participants Ngo, Kumar, Singh, Bains, Suthakaran and Phy in entering their career fields.

It could follow that Caribbean participants in my study in the overall GTHA had a less favourable outcomes due to a relative lack of such racial/ethnic distinction. For example, participants Cooke, Merchant and Dimple pointed out that they did not have access to the kinds of network contacts who could help them make a direct connection to finding employment in their respective career fields. Instead, they had to whiten their résumés and endure an arduous pathway to employment (which again raises issues regarding how the complexities of gender and race might have structured labour market outcomes in their respective fields). The two exceptions are Bernadette Berry and Jerome Bradshaw. Berry’s transition into fulltime employment as a Research and Communications Coordinator with a Toronto-based community organization results from networking activities at the community YMCA and her career field. Her résumé and network consultant at the YMCA might have been knowledgeable about race and immigrants and so inform her to remove résumé entries that signified ‘race’ to ‘whiten’ Black identity in the résumé. But what may be more telling about Berry’s story is that she found an ally through the Toronto Region Immigration Employment Council (TRIEC), an agency that helps immigrants to circumnavigate racism in the labour market; Berry was able to
Table 7.2 Participants’ Educational Credentials and their Alignment with Jobs in Canada

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Educational Credential</th>
<th>Alignment w/Labour Market</th>
<th>Int’l Expertise</th>
<th>Pre Immigration Employment</th>
<th>Ultimate Position/Jobs</th>
<th>Sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nyesha Jackson</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Certificates: PSW and CCA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Health Worker</td>
<td>Health Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lydia Merchant</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Dip: Fashion Merchandising</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Customer Service positions</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirk Johnson</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Adv. Dip Business Administration Accounting</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Financial Service Representative</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerome Bradshaw</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Adv Dip: Computer Programming and Systems Analysis</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Banking and Web design</td>
<td>Application Software Engineering Technologist</td>
<td>Program Systems Analyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhushan Kumar</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Adv Dip: Business Administration Accounting</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Managed family business</td>
<td>Investment Associate</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navdeep Bains</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Adv Dip: Electronic Engineering Technology</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Quality Control Engineer</td>
<td>Engineering Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huang (Hilene) Ngo</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Banking</td>
<td>Fraud Prevention Specialist</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurratan Singh</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>IT Specialist</td>
<td>IT Business Analyst</td>
<td>Energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khoshing Phy</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>MA Education; BA Theatre Studies</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Marketing; Theatre</td>
<td>Business; Theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imelda Aquino</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Product Manager</td>
<td>Student Admissions</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zachaeus Gittens</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>B.Eng Civil Engineering</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Prior training in the field</td>
<td>Structural Engineering</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimple Cooke</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>MSc. Chemical Engineering</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Energy &amp; Mining</td>
<td>Quality Assurance Personnel</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevon-Marie Naipaul</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>MSc. Civil Engineering</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Project Management in Oil sector</td>
<td>Geotechnical Engineer</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernadette Barry</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>MA: Development Studies (Communications)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Print &amp; Online Journalism</td>
<td>Research Communication Co-ordinator</td>
<td>Comm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giang (Daisy Phang)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>M.Ed. Higher Education</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Managed Education Programs at Australian Consulate in Vietnam</td>
<td>Recruitment Manager in Private Career College</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacchin Ventakaraman</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Sales rep. mechanical firm</td>
<td>Sales Representative</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
catch the eye of an individual who works in communications at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). Unlike a general resumé expert, the consultant from this government media company works in communications. Such an individual would be able to provide specific instructions on how to refine a resumé for an individual seeking employment in the communication sector. This process contrasts with seeking the general expert who examines resumés without having knowledge of the field. With a refined curriculum vitae, Berry was better positioned to contemplate the labour market integration in Toronto. The CBC employee also advised her to seek an internship opportunity with a mainstream employer in the industry and this provided her the long-awaited experience necessary to break into the industry. As she observed:

I [applied] to an internship with Metroland Media [which] should have lasted three months but after two months [the firm] hired me on a fulltime basis. … This experience prepared me to work in the job I currently have. (September 8, 2017)

Bradshaw also eventually experienced success in his transition to the labour market too. Despite working illegally with friends in the Jamaican-Canadian community for two years in Canada, he gained experiences designing and maintaining webpages. He subsequently ‘whitened’ and used this expertise to his advantage.

The finding that Black Caribbean participants are encouraged by consultants to ‘sanitize’ their resumés or prior experiences speaks to the notion of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1986). These participants (like South/Southeast Asians), upon entering the Canadian labour market, might not even have anticipated that they would experience racism. However, through a Bourdieusian lens, we could interpret the role of the resumé experts as individuals who understand how racism is practiced. This might also help to explain divergent practice of ‘whitening’ between both groups of participants. And so, we might theorize that the credentials or prior work experience of Black Caribbean participants are devalued because their applications to prospective job postings are judged by recruiters or employers that may not racially/culturally identify with them. Thus, for respondents Berry, Bradshaw, Cooke and Naipaul, the process of resumé ‘whitening’, could be significant beyond the elimination of text from a document representing their experiences and skills. Certainly, it is asking respondents (or prospective
job applicants) to conceal their cultural capital that they have brought from the Caribbean – leaving it out and pretending that it did not occur. But this is still symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1984).

In examining the data on networking, one might also question other underlying processes besides racial difference (racial/ethnic distinction) contributing to South/Southeast Asian participants fairing better of the two groups in the labour market. This requires us to examine the arrangement of the academic field (institutionalized cultural capital) and labour field (job opportunity) and social capital. Caribbean participant Jackson’s credential aligns with the labour market in a province that needs workers to fill labour demands. Jackson’s case contrasts with that of Merchant. As described above and in Table 7.2 (p.182), Merchant’s postsecondary qualification does not line up with the labour market opportunities in customer service. Like Jackson, Johnson’s advanced diploma in Business Administration accounting seems to have made it possible for him to obtain employment in the Dartmouth’s business sector. Besides the access to social networks in the Jamaican-Canadian community, participant Bradshaw’s prior experience in banking and web design combined with his advanced (3 year) diploma in Computer Programming and Systems Analysis from Seneca College placed him in good stead to take up employment in the programs system analysis sector.

Other Caribbean participants - for example, Gittens, Cooke and Naipaul - also possess institutional credentials in different engineering disciplines which aligns with the employment opportunities in the engineering sector. Each of these Caribbean participants also had prior international experience in their professional field prior to immigrating to Canada. Also, participant Berry’s postgraduate degree in development studies (with a concentration on communications) and prior experience in journalism are also salient to her obtaining skilled employment in the communications sector.

In my study, seven of the nine South/Southeast Asian participants found skilled fulltime employment easier not only because they have access to network contacts (social capital) but their postsecondary education and or prior expertise are congruent with the employment opportunities in the relevant sectors. Kumar’s transition into business (as an Investment Associate), for example, is possible because of his advanced diploma in Business Administration Accounting which aligns with
the field of business. Besides, Kumar’s cousins also had other opportunities lined up for him in the field. Bains’ engineering technology credential also aligns with jobs in the engineering technology sector. Likewise, Ngo’s business credentials and prior expertise in banking lines up with her job as a fraud specialist in one of Canada’s leading financial institutions. Her credentials also demonstrate a possible fit with other prospective opportunities in the business sector. Given the network dynamics, a similar analysis is also applicable to the postgraduate labour market integration experiences of Singh, Suthakaran, Phy and Imelda Aquino in the GTHA. Despite the challenges encountered, participant Phang also has the relevant postgraduate certification and experience managing higher education programs at the Australian embassy in Vietnam that also aligns with her current employment as recruitment manager at a private career college. However, the case of participant Ventakaraman is difficult to explain. His ultimate employment in sales does not align with his MBA qualifications but rather his prior expertise. Ventakaraman observed:

> After I did my engineering [degree] back home [in India], I worked for four plus years … with a mechanical engineering company. … I was doing business development and sales for that firm. [T]hat experience helped me to get a job in Canada. (February 24, 2018)

Thus, a discussion of participants labour market outcomes must also consider the alignment of different fields.

### 7.6 Conclusion

In sum, my analysis suggests that there exists the practice of resumé ‘whitening’ amongst international student graduates upon entry into the labour market. International student graduates consult network professionals within their White postsecondary and diasporic/racial groups in Canada who assume the role of consultants responsible for evaluating their curriculum vitae. Acting upon the advice of these individuals, international student graduates from Asia in my study generally did not ‘whiten’ in the same sense of removing the skills and expertise gained in their home countries from their resume. In my study, the South/Southeast Asian participants may take on anglicized first names, a practice which reifies the covert forms of racism that persist in the Canadian labour market. Caribbean participants, on the other hand, realized a devaluation and/or misalignment of their credentials of prior expertise as they received labour market advice from ‘general’ consultants. Black
Caribbean participants also ‘sanitized’ or ‘whiten’ their resumés of cultural and racial identifiers in order to conceal their country of origin and current racialized neighbourhoods from employers.

Selected cases highlighted in this chapter speak to the salience of interracial networking, a process that network contacts used to leverage the labour market outcomes of most South/Southeast Asians in the postgraduate transition. Despite being hyphenated Canadians, these principal network contacts tend to have established relationships with professionals that belong to their racial/cultural assemblages as well as the mainstream Canadian labour market. This kind of social networking facilitated their transition into fulltime employment even in the “saturated” market of the GTHA. Primary network contacts assist participants with the labour market search in their place of employment or the occupational sector. This raises the notion of the economic enclave and the idea that it can be a site that fosters that economic advancement of immigrants if a prior generation has established a network.

Although both groups of participants are disadvantaged in the postgraduate transition, in the groups I studied, Caribbean participants found it more difficult to obtain a job due to the dearth of such established networks in a particular industry in this case, business and banking. In contrast, international student graduates of Afro-Caribbean heritage are sometimes off-ramped into customer service work. One of the participants encountered exploitation in the labour market due to his illegal status in the country, whereas another experienced exploitation working for a professional in her local ecclesiastical community. However, even with this relatively small number of participants, the discriminatory dynamics of race, gender and age can be easily detected in hiring, (re)hiring and work climate. I turn to this topic in my next chapter.

The dissimilar labour market outcomes between both groups of participants proposes that some of the participants have access to social capital in their cultural groupings. For example, the network professionals consulted by South/Southeast Asian and Black Caribbean participants not only provided resumé service but also, perhaps, fostered ethno-racial distinction. The resumé experts from the respective cultural backgrounds appear to understand and appreciates the value of prior expertise in Canada; those consulted by Asians did not encourage participants to whiten their resumé for entry
into prospective industries. This helps us to comprehend why South/Southeast Asian participants maintained the value of the prior expertise while navigating the labour market.

Generally, it would follow that Caribbean participants did not have access to an ethno-racial distinction and thus have a relatively less favourable outcome. However, two cases in this group were anomalous to the trend observed. For example, Berry had access to network professional in the wider community and in the communications industry, who helped her to overcome perceived racial biased and align her resumé with the expectations of the communications sector. Bradshaw also placed the experience he obtained from entering into a business arrangement with the friends in the Jamaican community on his resumé. This helped him to obtained skilled employment.
Chapter 8: “Fitting” into Whiteness at ‘Work’

8.1 Introduction
This data chapter explores processes of race, racialization and gender that shape and structure the labour market integration and transition of international student graduates (or student migrants) in Canada. It presents data that describe their labour market integration and racism of various types that international student graduates originating from the Caribbean and South/Southeast Asia experience as they navigate the labour market in different geographic regions. The international student graduates are individuals who have pursued postsecondary studies in educational institutions across Southern Ontario. Data utilized in this chapter are drawn from my interviews with international student graduates and a key informant who has expertise in human resources as a recruiter. The key informant provides his own critique of aspects of international student graduates labour market integration. By referencing specific examples of student graduates interfacing with the labour market, the chapter centres the processes that structure their incorporation (or the lack thereof) in the labour market. I document the pattern of half the interviewees forced to take minimum waged employment in customer service as their first job in Canada. I then return to the situation of these non-white immigrants who relocated to work outside the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), and then move on to discuss the forms of covert racism participants experienced in the communities where student migrants obtained employment. Here the discussion centres on the discourse of “fit” and examines their social and labour market integration in White communities. I illuminate how the recruiters used the ‘fit’ discourse to rationalize the rejection of student migrants’ job candidates, as well as the different meanings communicated by the pervasive blanket disqualifier: “not the right “fit”.” In the final section of the chapter, I present additional data on the daily manifestations of racism experienced by student migrants in the workplace.

8.2 Immigrants and Elusive Professional and Technical Jobs in Canada’s Labour Market

Based on my interview data collected in London and the GTHA, it is worth emphasizing that, at first, professional and technical jobs in the economy eluded half of the participants from both the
Table 8.1 The Initial and Subsequent Job(s) obtained by Caribbean and South/Southeast Asian Participants in Canada

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Credential</th>
<th>No. of Months to Obtain Initial Job</th>
<th>Initial Job(s) Obtained</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Subsequent Job</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jerome Bradshaw</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Adv Dip. Program Systems Analyst</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Factories, cash jobs</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>Mississauga, ON</td>
<td>Application Software Technologist</td>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernadette Berry</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>MA Development Studies</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Internship</td>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
<td>Research &amp; Comm. Coordinator</td>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevon-Marie Naipaul</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>MSc. Civil Engineering</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Customer Service</td>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>London, ON</td>
<td>Geotechnical Engineering</td>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>Sudbury, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zacchaeus Gittens</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>B.Eng Civil Engineer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>London, ON</td>
<td>Structural Engineer</td>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>Cambridge, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lydia Merchant</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Adv Dip Fashion Merchandizing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Customer Service</td>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>London &amp; Brampton ON</td>
<td>Customer Service</td>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>Brampton, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhushan Kumar</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Adv. Dip: Business Administration Accounting</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Investment Associate</td>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>Brampton, ON</td>
<td>Investment Associate</td>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>Brampton, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimple Cooke</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>MSc. Chemical Engineering</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Customer Service</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
<td>Quality Assurance</td>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>Mississauga, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hortense Clue</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>B.Comm Business Management &amp; Org. Studies</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Customer Service</td>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
<td>Customer Service Rep</td>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyesha Jackson</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Certificates; PSW and CCA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Health Care Worker</td>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>Dartmouth, NS</td>
<td>Health Care Worker</td>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>Dartmouth, NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navdeep Bains</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Dip. Electronic Engineering Technology</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Customer service</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>Markham, ON</td>
<td>Quality Control</td>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>Martinez, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huang (Hilene) Ngo</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Fraud Prevention Specialist</td>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
<td>Fraud Prevention Specialist</td>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giang (Daisy) Phang</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>MEd Education</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Volunteering/ Administrative Coordinator</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
<td>Recruitment Manager</td>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imelda Aquino</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Student Services</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
<td>Student Services</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khosing Phy</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>MA Education; BA Theatre Studies</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Customer Service (Sales)</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
<td>Marketing Theatre</td>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pranavi Suthakaran</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>MA Development Studies</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Customer Service; Grad Student Assn.</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
<td>Financial Administrator</td>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurrratan Singh</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Contracts in IT Sector</td>
<td>Contract</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
<td>IT Business Analyst</td>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacchin Ventakaraman</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Customer Service</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>Brampton &amp; Toronto ON</td>
<td>Sales Rep</td>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>Saskatoon, SK</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Caribbean and South/Southeast Asia. It was difficult for them to find these positions in the GTHA. Table 8.1 (p.189) indicates that 9 of the 18 participants were first employed in “customer service” or low-skilled and precarious jobs upon entering the labour market. Table 8.1 (p.189) also indicates that six of the nine participants originating from the Caribbean initially obtained jobs which saw them doing customer service work in call centres, warehouses and factories at all credential levels (whether they had advanced college diploma, Bachelors degrees and Masters degrees) while four of nine South/Southeast Asians did also at all credential levels. As noted in the previous chapters, only two Caribbean participants got their initial employment in professional and technical jobs of health care and engineering (Jackson and Gittens). By comparison, participants originating from South/Southeast Asia reported slightly better outcomes. Table 8.1 (p.189) also shows that four out of nine South/Southeast Asian participants with graduate degrees found initial employment in professional and technical jobs, but one found employment in a contract job, while the remaining 4 did customer service jobs. The idea that professional and technical jobs seem to be elusive to student migrants, at least at the beginning of their entry to the labour market, raises questions about the vestiges of a racial hierarchy in the labour market. I did not interview a comparable sample of White international student graduates to confirm whether half of them also face this difficulty. However, I did examine the interview transcripts to detail what processes accounted for the labour market disparities between those students who did and did not secure professional jobs upon entering the labour market. As Table 8.1 (p.189) indicates, four of the Caribbean participants – Zacchaeus Gittens, Dimple Cooke, Chevon-Marie Naipaul and Nyesha Jackson - with professional degrees and/or college certificates and diplomas initially found professional employment in within six months of navigating the labour market but only outside the GTHA while two Asian participants - Bhushan Kumar and Huang (Hilene) Ngo - were able to obtain fulltime professional employment within GTA cities of Brampton and Toronto.
While I raised Merchant’s case in previous chapters, I specifically revisit it here to argue that the low-skilled jobs she obtained are a good example of a misalignment between the diploma attained by Caribbean international student graduate and the labour market forcing her into work low skilled jobs in the London and the Greater Toronto Area (GTHA) just to survive. When questioned about the accessibility of jobs in London, Merchant, who holds a college diploma, explained that while in London, she had multiple low waged manufacturing jobs which lasted for a year. She then relocated to Brampton where members of her diaspora told her she would have an easier time finding a job. But even after three months of distributing her resumes and making job applications across the GTHA, Merchant’s labour market prospects did not improve. Despite possessing a college diploma in Fashion Merchandising, Merchant found that she was only employable in customer service work on different factory floors in Mississauga and Brampton. Unwilling or unable to leave the GTHA, she initially found five months employment with a company that warehouses, packs and distributes merchandise to Winners, HomeSense, Marshalls and some of the other big-box North American retailers and other local stores across Southern Ontario. Subsequently, a job agency ‘third-partied’ out her labour to a factory outlet where she performs customer service duties for an online distribution company operating in Brampton. As noted above Merchant contended that her area of expertise is currently “not in demand,” though GTHA employers are eager to hire labourers. So, instead of benefiting from her college diploma, she became a part of the “reserve” supply of labour that helps employers drive wage rates and keep them at or above the (then) Ontario minimum wage of $11.60 per hour (2017). As Merchant suggested:

Factory jobs are the only work that Black people [including international student graduates] can pick quickly up in London and Brampton. [Employers] want people so that they can work in factories and warehouses. They really do not need a lot of people for corporate jobs. (December 05, 2017)
Taken together, the overwhelming participation and representation of these participants of colour in the such low-skilled jobs and customer service jobs confirms that Roberts and Mahtani’s (2010:250) notion of race neoliberalism is an integral force that reinforces the racial structure” in Canadian society. It also supports the idea of Bonacich et al. (2008) that global capital expansion thrives on the exploitation of cheap labour of non-White bodies.

The contradiction between the initial acquisition of low-skilled work in factories and customer service jobs by ‘skilled’ student migrants with college diplomas and university degrees also raises questions about the emotional trauma that is experienced by my participants in their postgraduate transition to the labour market. As noted in the previous chapter, among my South/Southeast Asian participants, Sacchin Ventakaraman moved outside the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area to Saskatchewan for fulltime employment. He characterized his earlier phase of postgraduate labour market navigation as a “stressful and painful” process. Ventakaraman had been applying to several job postings in his field from his final semester in an MBA program at York University’s Schulich School of Business. However, even three months after completing his studies, he found that submitting those resumés and job applications only proved an exercise in futility. He eventually settled for a part-time opportunity. As noted in Table 8.1 (p.189), 8 of 18 participants only found part-time work at first. Like Ventakaraman, Naipaul, with her MSc in Civil Engineering credential, experienced her own share of frustration seeking employment in the bigger cities of Southern Ontario. Unable to cover her monthly expenses with the meagre earnings from a London call centre position, Naipaul quit the job and headed for Toronto, where she had hoped to find an opportunity aligned to her expertise. However, her decision to resign her London call center job and move to Toronto had not been well thought through, as she subsequently encountered six months of unemployment. During that time, Naipaul had become dependent on parents who frequently sent her money from Trinidad to cover her living expenses. With tears welling up in her eyes, she sorrowfully recounted:

I was networking with people in the [engineering] field and applying for jobs. [But] I had no luck [finding employment]. I told myself [that] I couldn’t do this anymore. I also refused [to accept more] money from my mom, [as] she had [already] been [helping] to buy food and [pay] for rent and other things. (October 15, 2017)
This underscores that the labour market search for international student graduates can be not only tumultuous but filled with uncertainties.

After two months navigating the labour market, Navdeep Bains, with his diploma in Electronic Engineering Technology, found a job in customer service work in a local eatery and bakery located in Markham. As he observed: “most of the time I was working in a restaurant.” Bains continued, “I [did] the midnight shifts,” waiting tables in the restaurant and “I worked somewhere else baking cookies” for minimum wage ($11.60). Likewise, Ventakaraman held down two part-time jobs in Brampton before leaving for Saskatchewan; he waited tables at a banquet hall on the weekends as well as part-time shifts placing cold calls in a Toronto-based call centre. Again, this illustrates the idea that capitalism thrives on the exploitation of cheap supply of labour provided by racialized bodies but also the notion that global expansionism requires flexible labour force (Arnold & Bongiovi, 2012; Bonacich et al., 2008). Similar to other participants, Dimple Cooke, with her degree completed, was initially not able to find an engineering position; she spoke of the conditions that contributed to her less-than-favourable labour market outcome in the months succeeding her exit from a chemical engineering masters’ program at the University of Toronto. The situation was complicated by her personal situation, as the accommodations provided her by relatives terminated during this period and she was now expected to find a place of her own. As Cooke shared, “I did mediocre jobs working in restaurants. I had to move out on my own and I had bills to pay. So, I also took up another part-time [job] at Tim Horton’s” in Mississauga, where I worked the “night shifts.” Taken to together, the processes by which these ‘skilled’ immigrants are incorporated into the labour market questions the “seamlessness” of their transition. Canadian policies categorize international student graduates as part of the pool of ‘skilled’ talent which the country seeks but their initial outcomes indicate otherwise.

8.3 The (Un)desirability of Non-White (Im)migrants Outside the GTHA

8.3.1 Just Neoliberalism or (Re)producing Racial Hierarchy in Labour Markets?

One of the research questions explored in participant stories was how employers in predominantly White and/or rural areas of Southern Ontario approached hiring participants who are
racialized or non-white student migrants. I wondered, for example, whether they are perceived as individuals who seek initial opportunities for the sole purpose of gaining Canadian experience, and who later will leave the area seeking to advance their professional careers and outcomes elsewhere. This type of interaction was experienced by participant Zacchaeus Gittens, who originates from Barbados. The requirements of ‘Canadian’ work experience influenced 26 year-old Gittens to engage in a year-long internship with an engineering firm in London, Ontario. However, the practicum did not translate into immediate success following graduation. Instead, the international graduate from Western University spent the first five months postgraduation unsuccessfu...
distance or close to agricultural areas that host temporary foreign workers participating in Canada’s Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP) and the temporary foreign worker program (TFWP).

To sort out if international student graduates are perceived as contingent foreign workers, I questioned what participants in the study knew about the assumptions upon which recruiters select candidates. For example, how do recruiters select applicants for interviews? What are the criteria which recruiters use to determine who are the most suitable candidates for the advertised position? Do employers select applicants based only on their qualifications for the job posting? Participants in London and Dartmouth spoke of the uncomfortable exchanges they had with recruiters who interrogated and expressed doubt about their legality to work in Canada. Nyesha Jackson, who interviewed with nursing homes in the Regional Municipality of Halifax provided the following account:

[During] the interviews, the human resource people kept asking me for the [postgraduate] work permit. [They] thought that I was kind of gaming the system. I was nervous about that. I had to explain [the postgraduate work permit] to the employers [during] the interviews. [As I told them], …it [is] a legitimate [document] from the IRCC, [made available] to [international] student [graduates]. [I also informed them that], between the periods [of] leaving school and the [processing of the] work permit, the IRCC gives [us] a [temporary] document to show the prospective employer… [This indicates] that [we] have applied for a work permit. So, sometimes the employers [are] turned off …because they really do not understand it. (January 29, 2018)

It is evident that these recruiters in Nova Scotia were not abreast of the regulatory changes regarding the participation of student migrants (international student graduates) in the Canadian labour market. This might also partly explain why the recruiters could misconstrue Gittens as an individual belonging to the contingent and temporary labour force in Canada. In this case, it might also be that the company is one that only employs contingent workers.

Whereas Gittens was fortunate to have received employment counselling and advice from his internship supervisor, participant Dimple Cooke did not have such support. Cooke, a University of Toronto Master of Science engineering graduate of Afro-Caribbean heritage, was fortunate to have had two interviews with firms in Kitchener and Brantford, Ontario. However, she reported that the recruiters questioned her desire to settle in and accept permanent employment in these centres outside of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Here is her summation of her interaction with recruiters belonging to mechanical and chemical engineering firms:
For the few interviews that I’ve had in smaller cities or in areas located outside of the bigger cities like Mississauga and Toronto, … [the recruiters’] biggest concerns were that I am over-qualified for the job and [based on that reasoning] they don’t think that I am gonna stay. Yeah, I was told that more than once. They say… there is no way we believe that you are going to sit in our company and do this for the long term. They were like, “you are just doing this as a stepping stone, or for the time being, until something better comes up”. (October 20, 2017)

This again questions the “seamlessness” of the labour market integration process, and ultimately her transition in Canada. It also confirms Inwood’s notion of the “abstract” and covert discourse used to depoliticize racism (Inwood, 2015:415).

Does Cooke’s experience also question the willingness (or reluctance) of employees to embrace racial minorities in areas outside the GTHA? On the surface, it appears that the recruiters are concerned about Cooke’s loyalty to the firm. However, anti-racist literature on the subtleties of the ‘new racism’ would suggest another view that covert and indirect cultural expressions of racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Leach, 2015) are triggered in the above scenarios chronicled by Gittens and Cooke. In both explanations, the discriminatory hiring practice encountered by the student migrants is not overt. According to Cooke, the recruiters pointed to her MSc Engineering qualification and the geography to rationalize their decision not to employ her. However, their reference to “overqualification” along with assumption that student (im)migrants are temporarily exploiting local employment opportunities could be cultural discourses or ‘dog whistles’ (Goldberg, 1993; Leach 2015) that are used in lieu of overt forms and discriminatory practices to deny employment to these individuals who are from different cultural backgrounds.

On the positive side, both Gittens and Naipaul eventually obtained jobs with engineering firms, and now work and reside in small cities outside the GTHA (Cambridge and Sudbury, respectively). In a similar fashion, other student migrants who studied in London and Toronto have moved to the capital cities of provinces outside Ontario, Halifax-Dartmouth (Jackson and Johnson) and Saskatoon (Ventakaraman). There are other people of colour and immigrants raising families and working in these locations where they are respected for their professions. But arguably, the presence of racialized student (im)migrants in these ethnically diverse cities outside the GTHA - for example, in a place like Halifax with a large Black population across the harbour in Dartmouth - forces them to negotiate the
racial tensions that arise. Historically, the postsecondary institutions in London are known for inviting international students from the African diaspora (the Caribbean) and South/Southeast Asia. But despite the fact that the London and Toronto colleges and universities invited and hosted Gittens, Dimple and Naipaul for their two to four year-period of postsecondary studies, local employers did not initially facilitate their employment. Making more opportunities available to migrant students could enable the building of migrant communities outside the GTHA. In the current situation, participants asked: after extracting the international tuition fees from students, are their bodies are not desired in these spaces? Could it be that student migrants are not being made comfortable and so are pushed out to the more urban and culturally diverse cities like Toronto and Brampton? As Gittens, who spent fours years in London, pointed out:

I wouldn’t mind remaining in and working in London because the engineering jobs are there. … I am somewhat familiar with the place. I [have] also made friends since I have been [living] here … and I have no problem [accessing] the city and its services. (November 28, 2018)

For Naipaul:

I liked it here in London because it has or is close to areas that have the industries and skill jobs that we international students are qualified to do. The problem is that I find it difficult to pick up those jobs. (November 28, 2018).

The students are not unhappy because they despise the areas (London and other municipalities in Southern Ontario). With the exception of Merchant, at no time did any of the respondents in Southern Ontario indicate any sign of despair. The reality is just that student (im)migrants choose to leave London and Southern Ontario respectively because they find it difficult to obtain jobs there. In fact, since the cost of living is high in Toronto, perhaps they are fortunate to find opportunities elsewhere.

However, much has been written about people of colour working in White institutions. Therefore, hearing that minority participants were mobile, I wondered if and to what degree is racism manifested or experienced in different regions. In speculating about White geographies, it is important to examine power relations, gender and race (institutional racism) intersect and structure the outcome of specific immigrants’ experiences in the labour market. A close reading of the excerpts provided by Gittens and Cooke (above) direct attention to the salience of the gatekeeping role performed by recruiters (and
hiring managers) in the hiring process. These individuals, in making their decisions, act based on the directive of company policies and so influence the gendered and racial composition of the staff and the kinds of employments that each or groups of individuals are hired to perform. In doing so, recruiters are in a position to maintain (or challenge) existing gendered and racial hierarchies in the labour market. For example, Gittens’ supervisor at his internship motivated him to take up employment in Cambridge but what was the climate he experienced there? In addition, can any glimpse of discrimination be seen in the experiences of Naipaul and Cooke, being immigrants and female who had trouble finding employment in the Cambridge-Kitchener-Waterloo area – a region which, supposedly, is the industrial hub for engineering and engineering technology jobs in Ontario?

Five Caribbean and two South/Southeast Asian participants interviewed in London, Ontario, all contended that as student migrants, they experienced challenges in securing an interview. Five of the six respondents who originally lived in London shared this view. When questioned about her labour market navigation in Canada, for example, Nyesha Jackson spoke of the general difficulty experienced by her and her Black colleagues. She was aware, through her diaspora, that student migrants in London “have a hard time getting work and an interview” there. Concerned about what she had heard about the unfavourable labour market outcomes realized by Black international graduate students from the Caribbean, she asserted:

[S]omething just seems to be wrong in London [Ontario]. Something is really going on! Most of the Black international students who graduated with me or just a year ahead of me could not find job [in London]. We even have a hard time getting an interview there. (January 29, 2018)

Kirk Johnson also spoke in detail about the perceived differential treatment based on race that he experienced during an interview at a coffee franchise in London, Ontario. Johnson reported that his Jamaican college professor and a career counsellor at Fanshawe generally helped to prepare him for interviews. But despite his preparation, his efforts did not land him a job with the local coffee franchise. He provides the following summation:

It is really hard to get job [in London]. I am not sure if its just an international student thing…. When I just started to apply for jobs, I did an interview at Tim Hortons. I prepared a lot for it, I thought. Some other locals, more so White people, were there too …I interviewed [for the same job]. [Based on my responses] in the interview, and my
educational [qualifications], I really thought I had the job. [The] other applicants were [also ]
young high school students [and] they didn't even dress professionally for an interview.
But when I called back, they told me that another person got the job. (December 06, 2017)

The disadvantage that Johnson experienced in this situation could be explained in several ways
Obviously in the excerpt is the dynamic of neoliberal competition for employment in the local labour
market which Johnson and the supposedly younger White applicants were seeking. Also, these
companies that remunerate prospective applicants at the then Ontario minimum wages of $11.60
clearly find it more cost effective for the coffee franchise to hire high school students who possess
lesser qualifications on a part-time basis as opposed to Johnson who holds a college diploma.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Indo-Canadian participant Bhushan Kumar obtained
employment in the bank through familial network one week after completing his business education at
Fanshawe in London, Ontario. This raise questions about the processes in which the racial hierarchies
in labour markets are (re)produced. What processes might have been responsible for him
circumventing the difficulties that participants customarily encounter in the labour market in London.
Was his experience different due to specializing in business than engineering? Was it due to him using
his familial network to get a position?

However, the finding that half of the international student graduates in my study initially obtain
low skilled jobs, and a few had experiences they explained as covertly racist needs to be considered
alongside other possibilities. For example, the idea that recruiters’ perceptions of international student
graduates limit their hiring in Southern Ontario or (mis)information of labour policies (e.g. postgraduate
work permit) needs to be examined more closely. As described earlier, through piecemeal
arrangements, the Canadian federal government and its provincial counterparts introduced
immigration and labour regulations to create the postgraduate work permit in 2005 (Williams et al.,
2015:14). An open work permit, the postgraduate work permit is designed to facilitate the labour
market integration and transition of international student graduates (or student migrants) in Canada.
But it could be that there are human resource professionals who remain unaware of the regulatory
changes associated with the PGWP and the transition of international student graduates.
There is also the disturbing finding that recruiters refer to Cooke’s Master of Science in engineering as “overqualification” and rationalize their decision to not employ her based on her lack of commitment to the firm. This may be an example of a subtle use of the ‘new’ racism discourse that simultaneously pathologize and questions the place (or presence) of racialized immigrants from non-White countries in culturally white and homogenous communities across Canada. Historically, these discourses claimed that (im)migrants are unenthusiastic about working in or are unable to adapt to work in areas that are not urban and culturally diverse. For students currently living and working in White geographies, justification for not hiring using a discourse of “fit” (an issue which I discuss at length below) and hiring for unskilled work are all questionable in White communities and can be linked to Bonilla-Silva’s (2003:2-3) understanding of how the new racism as discourse replicates historically racist ideologies, and by extension, Whiteness in Canada. The next section returns the willingness of student migrants to fill undesirable jobs outside the GTHA.

8.3.2 Willingness to Fill Undesirable Jobs in Areas Outside the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA)

The notion expressed by an advisor to one of my participants that a recruiter believes that student migrants will not settle permanently or stay for the long haul and the discourse of “using jobs”, in predominantly White spaces (detailed above) must be contextualized. It is well known that immigrants, if given the opportunity, will settle in places where they can relate to people belonging to their cultural backgrounds. By and large, the culture and geography of the GTHA differs significantly from that of the other cities in Southern Ontario. The GTHA cities are more urban and ethno-racially diverse in comparison to London, Cambridge and other proximate towns in Southern Ontario, which are surrounded by an expanse of rural areas and communities with more conservative (White) populations that the GTHA. Thus, individuals racialized as non-Whites may occasionally leave to find a safer place to live and work rather than having a lack of commitment. Obviously, it is easier for recruiters to make a deficit argument that justifies the non-hiring of student (im)migrants who apply to these jobs. In fact, I have presented evidence which indicates otherwise, in that several participants expressed
willingness to move and did move there. The difficulties sourcing employment and the need to fulfill immigration requirements, for example, led Ventakaraman and Gittens to extend their labour market search beyond the urban areas of the London and the GTHA. The participant that moved the furthest, 34 year-old Ventakaraman, employed as an entry level sales representative with a mining company in Saskatoon, experienced being “snapped up”. In his words:

I went through rounds of interviews [which] rubber stamped things for me. The [recruiter] wanted me to relocate there [in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan]. [The recruiter did a] phone screening… and then a face-to-face [interview] in Mississauga [where the company is headquartered in Canada]. I got the job [at this point]. The [recruiter added that] the [firm] can’t find people with [a business] degree or the skill set to fill the job that they are looking for here in Saskatchewan. They [also offered] to help me to get the work permit. That’s how badly they needed me to start working for them. (February 24, 2018)

Gittens, at age 26, also tells of a similar recruitment process experienced when he followed his advisor’s advice and applied to his current employer in Cambridge, Ontario:

I never did a long interview. It was pretty a much short interview [when compared] to other interviews [I did]. [The] person [recruiter] just asked me a few of questions. [She] thought I wasn’t going to take the job…. Because [Cambridge, Ontario, is] about an hour and a half drive from where I [lived] in London. I feel like she convinced me [to take the] job. The lady in HR said they want someone who will fill the job like asap …because the company has been advertising and extending [the] job [posting] for a long time. So, I guess it was difficult to find someone to take [the job]. (October 25, 2017)

These experiences clearly signalled to me that the jobs are difficult to fill. These experiences contrast with those of other participants trying unsuccessfully to find work in the GTHA. These interviews might have appeared “easy” to the student migrants, but the ways in which they were conducted lead me to consider the probability that these firms actually target international student graduates who are willing to relocate to less populous Canadian regions.

Further, in analyzing these recruitment experiences, it is important to note that the international student migrant’s labour situation may not differ significantly but rather be comparable to an individual racialized as White in London or the GTHA seeking an engineering job or any professional job. Provinces are given special permission via federal-provincial immigration arrangements to recruit individuals as described by my participants. So, if you are a White engineer, you could also move to these areas to find work. But as it relates to the question raised, international student graduates are often desperately seeking employment opportunities that will allow them to achieve the minimum one-
year labour market work experience and many may be only have an inclination to relocate outside Ontario. This will allow them to make an application for landed immigrant status via the respective provincial nomination program. So, it would be easier for firms to target these young people to relocate. Implicitly, these student migrants become agents of their own change. While opportunities may be available in other provinces, the student have to make that conscious decision to relocate in order to improve their economic outcomes in Canada.

Below are selected responses which demonstrated the availability and the accessibility of jobs in the various Canadian geographies to which individuals move. As noted above, frustrated with juggling low-skilled and part-time employment in a Brampton Banquet Hall and a Toronto-based Call Centre, Ventakaraman sought better opportunity in the Prairie province of Saskatchewan. As he shared:

I had to leave Toronto, Ontario…. [because] I couldn't find a job. I [successfully] interviewed for [a sales position] an engineering firm, and then moved ….to the city of Saskatoon because its easier for immigrants to find work here. The employers in places where there are not many people applying for the same job [seem] more willing to hire us [international students]. (February 24, 2018)

But Naipaul complained:

I moved here [to Sudbury, Ontario] because I had a hard time finding a proper job or a job in my field [geotechnical engineering] related jobs …in the cities of London, Hamilton or the Greater Toronto Area. (October 15, 2017)

Johnson, who escaped joblessness in London, in September 2015, for Halifax-Dartmouth, also observed that:

[It] was far less difficult to find work here in Nova Scotia [than] in [Southern Ontario]. Instantly, as I came to Halifax…about 2 months I got a job with [a North American fashion store] and [a leading Canadian telecommunications firm]. [After one week working the two jobs] I quit [working] the job [with the clothier and started] working in customer service at [the communications provider]. By January [2016], I applied and started working at CIBC [Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce]. (December 06, 2017)

And Jackson, a health care worker, added:

I realized that Nova Scotia was more of a growing population and that it needs immigrants to work here. So, I figure that I would have a higher chance to be successful in Nova Scotia. Within the first week of moving [to Dartmouth, Nova Scotia], I send out like 15 resumes and I [received] call backs from 7 [prospective employers of nursing homes] for …..within a three-week period. [I] declined some of the interviews. (January 29, 2018)
The underserviced areas to which these participants share a common feature of having a labour market that is defined by little or no competition and high labour demand with a less cumbersome process of finding employment than the more populated city of London and the GTHA. Conversely, there is a greater labour market rivalry amongst job applicants for the same or similar jobs in larger cities. Besides, most of the job postings (for example, in the fields of nursing and engineering) require a prospective candidate with specialized training and skills, and so many firms probably experience difficulties in sourcing this labour supply within the local or immediate areas.

8.3.3 Processes Contributing to the Labour Market (In)accessibility Amongst Participants in the GTHA

The data I collected also indicates that the majority or 13 of the 18 student migrants remained in the GTHA where their lack of Canadian experience and competition and other issues made it difficult for them to obtain fulltime employment. Select responses from individuals demonstrate the challenges participants encountered in the GTHA. Among those this group who remained were Giang (Daisy) Phang, a single mother with a young child in school, who made several applications to postings in the public and private postsecondary sectors, all unsuccessful. It is worth detailing her story again. Despite 10 years managing higher education programs and recruiting postsecondary students between Australia and Vietnam, a brief stint in the Netherlands, and approximately 8 months voluntary involvement with local organizations (for example, the Charity Village and the Canada-Vietnamese Trade Council), Phang initially had to settle for a temporary front desk position with a private career college in Toronto. She recalled the job search for a fulltime position:

It [was] a painful process because it took me [approximately] 28 months after my graduation to obtain [the Regional Recruitment Manager position in which] I am [employed]. ... I applied [to the said] posting [several] months before and was not successful. [I then applied for] and [interviewed] for [a] short-term job as an administrative coordinator for a Summer [camp] program [with the same institution]. [Within] two months of joining the [institution], the [Recruitment Manager] found out that they can use my [prior] experience [and] my knowledge in another capacity. [Partly], that is why [he] promoted me. I started [at] a junior position [where I managed a database] that handles [international] student registration, class list and generates reports. (November 18, 2017)
One observation that can be taken from this case is that uprooting from Toronto to Saskatoon or London to Cambridge and Sudbury would be less complex for single international student graduates without children than for those with children and families.

Imelda Aquino, who also has a family, possessed prior experience in marketing and launching products, but she observed that by staying in the GTHA recruiters used her lack of Canadian experience to rationalize a low salary offer:

[Towards the end of] interview, the [employers] said “oh you do not have [Canadian] experience in this field”. [The employer] also insisted that I start at a lower pay rank…. And I wasn’t willing to do that because the rate of pay was [commensurate to] people [who hold] a diploma [or undergraduate] qualifications, and not for a MBA [graduate]… [For example], when [one of the prospective employers] asked me about salary expectations, I [anticipated] $CAD80,000 [but] the [employer made] an offer of $CAD65,000. … Whenever I [asked], “[would] you [be kind enough to] top-up the salary”? … [He] compared me to the incumbent [who currently earns] $CAD67,500 dollars [saying] it did matter that I had a skill-set in business from back home and a [postgraduate] degree. … [but] that I [lacked] experience [in] corporate jobs in Canada. (November 18, 2017)

Likewise, Cooke spoke of the under-compensation that characterized the jobs she obtained in the GTHA:

The engineering positions that [I had were] low paying … [and] it is not that my [current] job in Mississauga [Ontario] pays much better either. An engineer with a bachelors [certification] will [potentially earn] on average $CAD50,000 per year. I have a masters [but] my salary is not different from that figure. It is about the same as a student [with] a first degree … would have received for the same position … in places like Toronto or Hamilton. (October 20, 2017)

It is evident that the employers in these situations had little or no appreciation for the prior work experience of applicants. Phang’s skills were “discovered” while performing temporary work for the company. In Aquino’s case the employer displayed reluctance to negotiate in the absence of Canadian experience in a city where there exists greater competition in the labour market. It is also consistent with previous studies that show that the devaluation of foreign expertise influences the earning potential of Canada’s immigrant professionals (Li, 2001b; Reitz, 2001).

As I have suggested earlier, pointing to the number of graduates initially obtaining customer service jobs, the difficulties associated with navigating the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area labour market also means that international student graduates obtain jobs in which their skills are underutilized. Although Cooke possessed prior expertise and credentials in the form of certification
from the University of the West Indies (Mona) and expertise in chemical engineering as well as a Canadian graduate degree in the discipline, she had difficulties obtaining a job that utilized discipline specific knowledge in her career field. Most chemical engineering graduates work in the oil industry in Alberta. She has only been fortunate to find employment in mechanical engineering in the GTHA. Cooke reflected on the skill-mismatch throughout her career since her postgraduation in Canada:

A diploma [or] a bachelor’s would be ok to do [those professional] job [that I obtained]. … [The positions] do not [require] much [theoretical] knowledge but more practical [knowledge]. [They] are not geared towards chemical engineering but more towards mechanical engineering. … [Consequently], I did a lot of measurements [rather than working] with chemicals. (October 20, 2017)

Despite having the proper credentials and expertise, Cooke, who sought employment in the GTHA, feels deskilled. This finding is also consistent with Creese and Wiebe (2012) and Mojab’s (1999) argument that immigrant women and professionals with foreign credentials are susceptible to the institutional processes that cause them to be deskilled in the labour market. But Livingstone (1999) has argued, based on his annual surveys, that Ontarians are generally underemployed.

8.4 “Fitting” into Whiteness: ‘An Isolated and Isolating Place’

8.4.1 International Student Graduates and the Chilly Climate at Work?

Arguably, international student graduates in London and the GTHA face a labour market dynamic in which international student graduates are pitted against workers in the domestic population who possess ‘Canadian’ experience. Ventakaraman eventually came to accept the fact that some of the “young, educated [international] student graduates entering the job market” just will not find jobs in Ontario. As he continued: “some people will be able to enter decent jobs, and some will not. Some will have to settle for jobs that require little or no [postsecondary] education.” But how does this competition play out? He observed that the employers in “major cities like Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal” ask him for “Canadian experience, whereas the those smaller “cities like Saskatoon and Winnipeg” did not. For Ventakaraman, “most managers do not want to [hire]” international student graduates “who don’t know the business culture here in Canada”. But “[employers] will not explicitly say it to you.” And so, he recognized that employers in small “cities of Saskatoon and Winnipeg”, lacking a readily
“available source of labour supply”, are more likely to hire “international student [graduates] to work in corporate level [jobs]”. This reproduces the historical practice of (im)migrants filling labour shortages in other Canadian geographies (e.g. Calliste, 2000) that I outlined in Chapter 2.

A consequence for international student graduates moving from cities of London and the GTHA to work in other, predominantly White, Canadian regions is that they encounter an involuntary detachment from their host South/Southeast Asian and Caribbean communities. Also, they face a general lack of diversity in Canada outside of the largest cities. There is a strong Indigenous presence in the North and in Saskatoon as well as a Black community in Halifax. Arguably, these groups are not “visible” in the labour markets to which international student graduates aspire. In my study, two of the five participants who moved province reported how the social distance from their ethnic and diasporic communities in Canada impacted their lives. As Naipaul noted:

Sudbury is four hours north of Toronto where I know people. I don’t know anybody here in this town. Nobody! The few people that I know [are] back in Scarborough [Ontario]. Its really lonely up here. But its ok. At least, I can work and earn money, right? I love my job and everything else though. (October 15, 2017)

Ventakaraman, in Saskatoon, added:

Employers in [Saskatchewan] are more wiling to take a chance to hire us [international students] but adjusting to the culture here is hard. Like really hard! But we have to make it work. It’s [an] isolated and isolating place. Saskatoon [is] a small city with 240,000 people and not very diverse. So, I am like an outsider here. I don’t have university friends here. [They] are all in Toronto. I don’t have much of a social life here. [The] people here don’t treat me differently. It’s just hard to blend into the cities to which they move. (February 24, 2018)

Employment opportunities in these cities near business and industries provide international student graduates opportunities to support themselves; however, their presence in these White areas raises the question of their acceptance or “fit” into their host communities. In the cases of Ventakaraman and Naipaul, the absence of their respective diasporic groups and acquaintances poses a challenge to them integrating into the social life or social landscape of their host communities of northern Ontario and Saskatoon. As a corollary, their interactions with people in these predominantly White communities is limited mostly to the spaces of work. Alternatively, there may be a Black community, as in Halifax-Dartmouth, which is not visible to the migrant former international students.
The responses provided by the participants further highlight contradictions regarding the discourse of “fit” in the wider Canadian labour market. Whereas the presence of a large immigrant population may allow international student graduates to better interact with and integrate into the social fabric of urban and or culturally diverse cities, it does not necessarily translate to them finding better opportunities in London or the GTHA. As shown in this chapter and Chapter 7, labour market integration remains a challenge for immigrants even in culturally diverse cities across Ontario. Had all these student migrants been able to find jobs in their respective cities of choice then there would have been no need for them to relocate to less diverse or culturally homogenous cities in Canada.

The case of Ventakaraman also raises questions about the role of provincial immigration policies on the (in)ability of student migrants to “fit” outside the GTHA socially. One of the research questions that emerged in my study was: how do provincial immigration programs assist or hinder the careers of international student graduates? Therefore, I asked Ventakaraman whether the Saskatchewan Immigration [Nominee] Program (SINP) helps to facilitate migrants such as himself? He had already obtained a sales job in the Saskatoon’s mining and construction industry and had been working for 16 months in the city. This meant that he needed eight additional months to submit an application for nomination which would initiate the process of applying for permanent residence. However, he complained about what appeared to the stringent immigration regulations that the province established for international student graduates who pursued postsecondary studies in another Canadian province or territory. He commented:

I have to wait long before I [can] apply to [live] here. The [Saskatchewan] immigration [nominee] program wants international student [graduates] from outside of [the province] to work [in Saskatchewan] for two full years [before] applying to provincial nominee program. (February 24, 2018)

In addition, it is also important to note that this (two year) period does not include the subsequent 18-20 month period which the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) takes to process applications for permanent residence. And if the cases of Pranavi Suthakaran, Giang (Daisy) Phang and Dimple Cooke serve as an example, the processing time may well extend beyond the time specified above (See Chapter 5). Approximately four years would have elapsed by the time
Ventakaraman achieves permanent legal Canadian status. He also complained about what he considered to be the limited access to employment opportunities and “growth in [his] career” available in “Toronto and surrounding areas.” He added: “I am not sure if Canada is the place for me [or if] I am willing to stay in Canada for the long haul.” That is, he contemplated returning to his home country (India) where he believes that the “fast growing economy of India” will be better able to provide access to jobs that will permit him to use “the skill set” obtained from doing a “business degree” in Canada. Ventakaraman feels pigeonholed in a dead-end job on the Canadian Prairie and contemplates a repatriation to India. Implicitly, he not only questions his “fit” outside the GTHA but may end up rejecting Canada as place to work and settle permanently.

Kirk Johnson, another business graduate with an advanced diploma in business administration accounting also experienced the limited opportunities available for the upward mobility of immigrants in Nova Scotia. Johnson, a Black Caribbean participant, spoke of the enthusiasm and satisfaction he experienced through provision of customer service and the daily interaction with clients. However, he questioned whether upward mobility was possible for Black Caribbean international student graduates at the call centre where he worked. In his words:

I really loved working the phones and helping the customers …but based on how things were in the call centre, I wonder if someone looking like me would be able to climb up in that company. …I understand that I was not in [this] job for [a] long [time, but] there was not much chance, or should I say opportunities, for me to grow or get more training in a different role. …. [My] Black [colleagues] on my team who have been working there for …two and three years said that there are other opportunities available …But coaches [are less inclined] to support [the application of] Black [applicants].…. [specifically, the supervisor logged] call time and other performance metrics to rationalize why [he could not be promoted to the most recent] job posted by [the] Human Resource [department]. [He explained that] the agents are subdivided in teams with [team] coaches and floor supervisors … who generally give their white [associates] the chance to cover their duties when they are away from [work]. At least that is how I see things worked on my team. (December 6, 2017)

Call centres are notorious dead-end jobs all over the world (Mirchandani, et al, 2010; Livingstone, Mirchandani and Sawchuk, 2008). Although youth and immigrants are notoriously stuck in these organizations or spaces of work, Johnson sees Whites finding opportunities for growth more accessible than Blacks like himself who seem to be marooned at the base of the organization working the phones. This is despite his advanced college diploma! In Johnson’s call centre, he is actually
aware of the power relations since the post of team coach is held by an individual who happens to be male and White and he observed these individuals exercise a great degree of influence over the individuals (racialized bodies) who get elected to submit an application for internal postings.

These racist processes were also identified by participants in other industries. Two participants described hiring situations in which recruiters shepherded them through several rounds in the interview process before informing that they were unsuccessful. For example, Johnson applied for accounting-related postings in London, Ontario and reported that the recruiters, on multiple occasions, used the not the right “fit” discourse to rationalize not employing him:

[For] some of the jobs that I applied for…, there are different stages [involved in the recruitment process]. … I would [do] online courses…and pass those…. I would also do one or two interviews. [And towards] the end of the hiring process, I would get the news that I'm not really a fit … for the job or what the company is looking for. (December 06, 2017)

Merchant chronicled a similar outcome of a series of interview that she had with a White recruiter in London, Ontario:

[The recruiter told me that] I did well in my first and the second interviews [for a posting in a clothing store]. …A month after, [the recruiter] called me and said “we need you to do [another] interview with the regional manager of the organization.” …I did that, and I felt [that] it went well…[but] the [recruiter] did not call me back…. I [followed-up a month later] …and the recruiter said that I wasn’t the right fit that they are looking for. (December 05, 2017)

The discourse of not the “right fit” highlights the subtle racist practices that are a part of the hiring process. This also confirms the ‘new’ racism discourse highlighted by Goldberg (1993). Despite evidence (for example, passing tests) to support their progression in the interview process, respondents were declined an offer of employment. I have raised these issues of hiring to argue that employers can engage in discrimination in hiring practices since there is no enforcement of fair hiring processes. Because the recruiters refused to communicate or provide Johnson and Merchant with a more explicit reason for refusing to make them an offer, one can only speculate as to whether their “immigrantness” or accents factored into the employers’ decision. In fact, the discourse of not the right “fit” is very similar to the vague and general responses that personnel who answer phones in bureaucratic agencies repeat when posed with specific questions.
The case of 35 year old Naipaul also demonstrates the role of agency. Naipaul reported that she utilized Jobscan, an internet-based application to prepare job applications that she thought might leverage her chances of obtaining an interview. When questioned on the operation of the application, Naipaul warned “you have to make sure you hit a lot of the key words in the job [posting] because that is how [the recruiters] filter out the application. [I first uploaded] the job posting on [Jobscan] website, [followed] by [my] resume. Naipaul assessed the internet platform as useful because it helps job applicants to “adjust their resume” prior to submitting to the prospective employer. This is because the internet technology allows the job applicant to identify the keywords and specific skills that may have been left off their resume and adjust it accordingly to address whether their skills “fit” the posting. Naipaul also challenges the claim the Jobscan application increases the applicant’s “chances of passing the initial screening” which leads to an interview. In her experience, the efficacy of this tool remains questionable when, as noted above, none of the approximately 300 postings to which she applied in London and the GTHA contacted her with a favourable response. Then, when she reached out to a few engineering and engineering technology postings to which she had made applications, employers told her that she “was not the right fit.” It is interesting to note the oddity of sequence in which this response is provided to Naipaul. The discourse of “fit” is usually deployed after an interview, and Naipaul never had any interviews with any of these prospective employers. This suggests that the use of the online tool to improve one’s “fit” does not guarantee that the individual will secure the job interview. And even if the Jobscan application selects the international student graduate to obtain an interview, in person, recruiters still can use the vague justification of “fit” as a rationale to decline an application. Again, this confirms the subtleties of the new racism discourse (Goldberg, 1993; Leach, 2015; Miles, 1989). The response provided to applicant does not invoke phenotypical, biological or overt racist ideologies. Instead, the notion of “fit” is a vague and non-racial response which masks the significance of race (Goldberg, 1993; Miles, 1989).

Employers may resort to a discourse of not the right “fit” as rationale for not making an offer of employment even when international student graduates possess ‘Canadian experience’. This described the case of Gittens who unsuccessfully interviewed for an engineering posting in London,
Ontario. In the Summer semester of 2015, Gittens explored the industry work (co-op) permit opportunity available to students seeking experience prior to completing their programs. With the assistance of the relevant career services department at Western University, he successfully obtained an internship at an engineering company in London, Ontario. Owing to what appeared to be a lack of proper administrative oversight by the university, Gittens spent a year with the engineering firm and did not continue his studies until the Fall of the 2016. This meant that Gittens obtained his required one-year’s work experience in the firm prior to being in the postgraduate transition. However, this accident of receiving the required Canadian experience did not help him obtain a job in London. When asked to elaborate on the rationale of not being the right “fit” in this case, Gittens remarked that the recruiter of the engineering firm could not claim that he did not have ‘Canadian experience’, which was when she resorted to a “fit” justification. The recruiter could not justify turning him down because he had a one-year internship in Canada. As Gittens continued:

[The recruiter] said I was not the best candidate for the job. I kept on asking [her] what does she mean by that [statement]. I also asked her where I fell down in the interview or what could I improve on. But she kept on telling me that I am just not the right fit that matches the position [outlined in the posting]. (October 25, 2017)

It is probable that recruiters such as this one used this discourse as an institutional practice to screen (im)migrants out of the recruitment and selection process, and eventually from being hired. This interpretation provides an anti-racist context for both the discourse of “fit” as well as of “Canadian experience”, which are routinely used as a ‘legitimate’ justification for labour market exclusion encountered by Canadian immigrant professionals (Bauder, 2006, Man, 2004; 2012; Foster, 2008a; 2015). When these discourses fail, a job can be denied on the basis that the applicant is “overqualified” for the position to which he applied.

Gittens’ experience illustrates what Foster (2015) refers to as the departure of employers from “hard qualifications” to “soft qualifications.” Gittens possesses a Canadian credential and labour market expertise which are clear evidence of hard qualifications. So, the recruiter in this case finds him or herself in a situation where, in seeking eliminate this applicant, it is impossible to use the traditional argument relating a dearth of Canadian institutionalized cultural capital to rationalize his
supposed ‘lack of fit’. This then raises questions about the soft qualifications? What soft qualifications are used to render this international student graduate unemployable? Are they related to historical and cultural background? Gittens’ experience also highlights how recruiters employ the use of non-racial language in order to evade any detection of racism or any possible implications that race may play in the hiring process (Goldberg, 1993; Miles, 1989).

For Gurratan Singh, another participant, the discourse of “not the right fit” allows the employer to use a sweeping statement with multiple interpretations. Singh, with an MBA credential, sought employment with two consulting and financial institutions. He noted that recruiters, in both instances, indicated that he “is not the right ‘fit’” or “person” for the job. To make sense of this vague labour market response, the 38-year-old participant of Indo-Canadian heritage consulted one of his friends who has expertise in Human Resources. Based on the advice of this colleague, Singh shared his understandings of what the recruiter is trying to convey by the “not the right “fit” discourse:

I understand that when [recruiters] say you are not the right fit that it can be very general … [because] assessing an applicant, [he or she] could be looking [for a few] things. Fit also [questions] whether [the candidate] works [better] on their own, with a team or [a] manager. (February 18, 2018)

The Human Resource employee advised Singh that recruiters also the evaluate whether the prospective candidate possesses the “technical and communication skills” needed to accomplish the tasks and responsibilities outlined in the job description. As it relates to international student graduates, Singh’s colleague in Human Resources warned that recruiters may evaluate the immigrant’s ability to communicate taking into account their accents and on how clearly they speak (from the recruiter’s perspective). Key informant and Human Resource Recruiter David Sands also sees the discourse of “not the right fit” as a handy rationale utilized by employers to maintain a racially segmented labour market. It can be used to limit the entry of immigrants and international student graduates into “good paying jobs.” With the multiple readings by the generalized discourse of “fit”, it can be used to restrict the labour market entry of international student graduates such as Singh. Because “fit” discourse, used as an explanation for one’s unfavourable labour market outcome, is vague, it is easier for the recruiter to discriminate against applicants in the recruitment process, couching the discriminatory practice
within the guise of “fit.” This also illustrates the points made by Goldberg (1993) and Leach (2015) on the subtness of racism in the new racism discourse.

Consistent with Singh’s account, Sands contends that the discourse of “not the right fit” is one of many “blanket statements or phrases” generally used by human resources specialists to inform candidates that the company is not interested in hiring them. As Sands points out, the discourse has more than one meaning. Sands, like Singh, maintains that the discourse “could assess the [international graduate students’] communication or the lack thereof”. If the “lack of communication skills” is merely a Caribbean accent, the use of blanket statements could mask the racism or other ‘hidden’ forms of oppression in the hiring process. Speaking from his experience working in three different prestigious firms in Toronto, Sands provided a detailed description of the interview process and the point at which recruiters in the firms where he works (or have worked), used the words. He maintained:

> Usually, when we [the recruiters] tell someone that they are not the right fit, … it means that we would have met them in person. They would have passed [a] telephone screening,” … “come in for an evaluation” [for example], a test [or] the first interview. (January 17, 2018)

Following this sequence of events, Sands explains that recruiters make “a decision or an overall evaluation of the person.” Applicants who are not favoured with an offer of employment, would, at this point, hear those words – “you are not the right fit” – through a personal contact in the firm. But the idea that international students successfully passed one or two rounds of the interview process challenges that notion that they have difficulties communicating with the employers or would have challenges communicating on the job. As Sands and Singh’s colleague explain, the discourse of “not the right fit” makes for an easier conversation between the recruiter and the international students being denied employment, even if the denial is on racist premises of, for example, accent, or looking different from others on the team. Again, this account exemplifies the new racist discourse in the labour market (Goldberg, 1993; Miles, 1989).

Focusing on soft skills such as communication in interviews plays an important role in evaluating the job applicant. On the importance of the communication skills, Sands commented that “[our clients]
demand that the people we recruit, or hire are able to communicate clearly…and present themselves professionally.” However, unlike a credential, the evaluation of soft skills such as communication is clearly subjective. While Sands insists that he himself does not discriminate against individuals with an accent, he admitted that he could not speak to all the processes that influence the “final decision” of the superiors with whom he worked. It is also important to note that Sands’ job description is that of a recruiter, while the verdict on “which candidate to select is the responsibility of the hiring manager.”

As Sands emphasized, the ability to demonstrate excellent communication skills is so important to some firms that they “unintentionally or intentionally” recruit and hire in a manner that reproduces a “certain culture or group of people in particular jobs.” Soft qualifications could include not only an evaluation of overall communication skills but also whether the individual is “poised” during the interview. This raises serious questions about the subjective nature of the hiring process. How does one objectively determine the soft qualifications of international student graduates when the recruiter-employer team has proclivities to reproduce the “work culture” in an organization? Based on my field notes, all the participants I interviewed were individuals who communicated well. Of course, I am cognizant that my opinion of good communication may clash with recruiters who react to candidates with and without a foreign accent. These are subtle, racist processes hidden in the practices of Human Resource employees that are almost impossible for applicants to detect.

If five of the 18 participants in my study had to leave the GTHA find employment, the question then becomes, could the other 13 who remained be considered the right “fit”? As indicated above, 10 of the 13 had at least some difficulties seeking “fit” in the labour market due to the lack of Canadian experience. In the end only three of the participants – Kumar, Ngo, and Phy - who remained in the GTHA appeared to be a “fit”. As Chapter 7 explains, these individuals are numbered amongst participants who found employment through the presence of an establish ethno-racial networks in the GTHA.
8.5 Race at ‘Work’ in Workplaces

8.5.1 Daily Manifestations of Racism in the Workplace

Participant Jackson encountered racism working in Halifax in the form of her work being constantly inspected by her White counterparts. The Black Caribbean health care worker noted that this discriminatory treatment was perpetrated by two of her White colleagues who “overly watched” and “scrutinized” her daily performance on the job. Reflecting on the interview for the position, she elaborated on the surveillance as well as her anti-racist praxis in the Halifax nursing home, in response to my question about whether she experienced any other hurdles while looking for jobs:

[T]here is kind of a barrier with trust. Sometimes my co-workers will have a keener eye [on me] just to see if [I was] working up to the [provincial] standard. … There was a time when I was overly watched; not just in the initial probationary period of my job but even months after. I noticed two older white ladies would also take turns to … double checking on seniors that I am assigned to, [They] double checked … the beds and [duties] I do. … [W]henever, I asked if everything was ok, they would say, “oh I am just doing my rounds.” And I keep wondering why [they] kept on doing that and [they are] not my supervisor. You know…. And things like being critiqued, being observed by co-workers who should not be necessarily concerned with my work as they are assigned to other patients on the floor. I caught them on several occasions, going out of their way to look for a flaw in my work. [So, what did you do about all this scrutiny and criticisms?] Hhhmmm…. what did I do about it? I observed their actions for a while. I made a note of it and recorded their actions [and] the things that they would do to make me feel uncomfortable … [and] I reported it to my manager. They were spoken to and since then I realized that they stopped. (December 05, 2017)

The exchange between the participant and other professional workers took place in a Halifax nursing home. The inter-racial judgement of competence of other workers is known from studies of medical professions (Jacobs, 1999; Muzzin, 1989). In this case, Jackson seemed to be surveilled by Caucasian colleagues to who suspected professional practice was beneath the provincial guidelines. The twin processes of gendered racism and professional surveillance that Jackson endured is reflective of the systemic and daily racial practices the anti-racist scholars argue characterize everyday nursing practice in Canada (Calliste, 2000:160; Das Gupta, 1996a; 1996b:24; Essed 2007; 1991). Jackson’s account above here illuminates her agency in combating this racism. While she did not elaborate much on her praxis, it appeared that the strategy of documenting, reporting and providing evidentiary incidents in the workplace to support her claims of the daily racism, was quite effective. She prevailed in the matter, as her superiors addressed the manifestations of discrimination in the work environment.
Another manifestation of everyday racism (Das Gupta, 1996a; 1996b) experienced in the work environment centres on what appears to be the preferential work schedules given to Whites. When asked about practices in the work environment, Johnson spoke about the scheduling inequity that he experienced on the floors of the call centre he worked for in Nova Scotia. He reported that he frequently works the unwanted hours or what is known as “graveyard shifts” which “start in the late afternoon” and end at midnight (Atlantic Time). In contrast to his own shifts, Johnson pointed out that younger White workers, including those with lesser months of seniority on his team, enjoyed “the [better] shifts” that see them reporting early for work and returning to their homes in the evenings. Cognizant of the almost 24-hour operation and the ‘flexible’ working hours which, in part, characterize the labour processes in the call centre industry (Good and McFarland, 2004), Johnson approached his supervisor to alter his schedule in hopes of receiving better shifts. However, his attempts were futile. As he puts it: “whenever I tried to get it changed, my supervisor would say [I am scheduled] based on business needs. It just did not make any sense.” From his perspective, this is clear evidence of everyday racism as it is evident in the supervisor’s everyday discrimination in scheduling him.

8.6 Conclusion

This chapter examined the processes that shape and structure the labour market transition and integration of racialized international student graduates in Canada. It discussed the observation that technical and professional positions were difficult to obtain initially by international student graduates, especially by those of Caribbean origins. The data collected indicated that these individuals tend to obtain their initial employment either precarious, low-skilled forms of employment. I also examined the how gender is reproduced in the workforce as well as the perceived willingness of non-whites to fill labour shortages in areas outside the GTHA. I then focused on the five out of 18 international student graduates who relocated to underserviced smaller centres – of Cambridge, Sudbury, Saskatoon, and the Maritime city of Halifax – due to the accessibility of jobs. I then described the experiences of 10 of 13 participants who remained in the GTHA and endured struggles in the labour market seeking to make the right “fit”. They lack Canadian expertise, but selected participants examined above revealed
that employers in the GTHA also did not value their prior expertise. In one instance, the international student graduate’s skill had to be “discovered” by employer.

Student migrants in the London and the GTHA encounter a labour market in which they are pitted against the locals with ‘Canadian’ experience. The chapter documents a variety of contemporary practices of epistemological racism surrounding them (Cochrane, 2008:3; Scheurich & Young, 1997). For example, employers in the larger cities perceive international student graduates as individuals who are ignorant of the “business culture” in Canadian workplaces. This ‘business culture’ argument coupled with the requirement of Canadian experience helps to explain why student migrants without experience in this country do not make the “fit” for prospective jobs. It also explains why a few the immigrants leave to seek employment in smaller white towns or cities. Despite the fact that participants in my study hold Canadian credentials, employers in London and the GTHA (un)consciously construct immigrants as beings possessing deficient labour market qualifications. Such a construct normalizes the discriminatory institutional or hiring practices which devalues student migrants. The chapter also raises questions about the place of student (im)migrants and their ability to “fit” in spaces or small centres that are culturally homogenously (white). Related to this is the observation that international student migrants encountered a discourse of “not the right fit” while seeking employment. This arguably helps employers to screen the participants out of the Canadian labour market. Other participants also experienced other daily forms of racism in the work places. These incidents include professional surveillance and what appeared to be preferential work scheduling. Only three participants achieved a “fit” without encountering a hassle in the GTHA. I focused on their experience navigating the labour market as their racial networks successfully helped them to find satisfying employment.
Chapter 9.0 Conclusions: The International Student Graduates Trajectory in Canada

9.1 Introduction

“Many rivers to cross, But I can't seem to find my way over
Wandering I am lost, As I travel along the white cliffs of Dover.

Many rivers to cross, And it's only my will that keeps me alive
I've been licked, washed up for years, And I merely survive because of my pride.”
- Many Rivers to Cross (Jimmy Cliff, 1969)

Embarking on this exploratory study, I intended to answer the question regarding how student migrants graduating from Ontario’s postsecondary system navigate the labour-immigration nexus in Canada. This chapter provides a summation of the main findings, including speculations as to what a seamless transition might look like for an international student graduate. It also includes my contribution to the literature and identifies a few areas that could benefit from additional research that considers the transition of international students to permanent residency in Canada. Towards the end of the document, I have included a brief personal reflection on the arduous journey that the international student graduate has to navigate in Canada.

9.2 A Summation of the Arguments

In answering the question regarding the difficult and complex transition of international student graduates in Canada, I organized the dissertation into four empirical chapters (5 to 8), each addressing a different component of postgraduate transition to the labour market for international student graduates. In chapter 5, I discussed the challenges that Black Caribbean and South/Southeast Asian participants encountered in applying for permanent entry and citizenship through so-called “neutral” economic immigration programs. Complexities of the NOC matrix and the LMIA form the basis of chapter 6, whereas chapter 7 discusses the networking and the labour market strategies that participants engage to find employment. Chapter 8 explores how processes of racialization and other minoritization structure their labour market integration into Canada. Taken together, these reveal the
inner workings of the postgraduate trajectory, a process which the case studies demonstrate is not a seamless progression to permanent legal citizenship in Canada.

My analysis of how the points system actually plays out in former international students’ lives reveals inequities in assessing age and work experience in the comprehensive ranking system (CRS) of the Express Entry system. Specifically, my analysis of the points system demonstrates that the immigration mechanism awards more points to young and single status applicants in the 20-29 age cohort, whereas more mature applicants in a spousal relationship or common-law union receive 5 points less per age category in the comprehensive ranking system. Because of this ageism, two of the mature female applicants in my study aborted the process of transitioning on the Express Entry system – Canada’s flagship economic immigration program for attracting skilled talent – and sought permanent residency via the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP). The Express Entry system not only penalizes immigrants on the basis of age, but my analysis illuminates serious contradiction when experience is coupled with age. Presumably, one would think that the “skill” that is valued increases with age; however, the CRS does not take this into account. It, instead, devalues foreign work experience, as it only considers three years of the applicant’s prior expertise, even if applicants possess either six or even 10 years experience in their occupational fields. Bauder (2006) had also drawn attention to this inequity. Using actual cases, I revealed the age-experience contradiction in the system, as none of the participants reported that they scored high in both categories of age and foreign work experience.

I then turned to the hidden problems behind the neutrality of the points system. The study illuminates the unmeritocratic nature of an immigration system that uses a ‘lottery’ which emphasizes the use of points and numbers to semi-randomly select ‘ideal’ immigrants from a pool of applicants depending who applies at any given time. Informed by colour-blind policies and discourse (Bonilla-Silva, 2014), contemporary Canadian immigration policies seek the “most fertile” and “ideal” immigrant. But my analysis suggests that there is what can be called a ‘new racist’ structure in the economic immigration program that masks the significance of race and other social identities as an organizing principle (Omi & Winant, 1993) in Canada. Examples include devaluation of older racialized
women in the study and irregularities in assessing language competence of racialized participants from English speaking countries. This also questions the “seamlessness” of the postgraduate trajectory for student migrants in Canada. The semi-random mechanism for immigrant selection in the Express Entry is hinged on the use of numerical values and as such has far-reaching effects for the majority of the participants, which are experienced as traumatic in view of the fierce competition for points and disincentives for remaining in Canada. Although ostensibly more fair than the racist immigration policy that predated it, the application of a points system based on a fluctuating numerical threshold is inherently unfair and the one-size fits all language test racializes applicants who mother tongue is English.

When I interviewed key informants and analyzed policy texts for the bigger picture within which these micro aggressions occur, the picture that emerged led me to also argue that the establishment of colour-blind discourse (and practice) in Canada’s immigration policy speaks to the normalization of exclusion within contemporary state policies. Drawing on responses of key informants, I demonstrated the degree of exclusion in recent state immigration regulation and the corresponding implications for the Express Entry system. A few related policies such as the Super Visa for parents and grandparents were described by key informants as emanating from policy recommendations aimed at reducing the processing “backlogs and wait times” in the immigration queue (Canada Parliament, House of Commons, 2012:10; 2015). But key informant Ngozi maintains that the regulation is intended to lower and eventually reduce the number of seniors who are admitted to Canada through the family class. Presumably, the penalization for the age of the former international students acts in the same way. Implemented in 2011, the Super Visa regulation granted parents and grandparents a 10 year multiple admission, which permits them to spend a maximum of two years on each visit to Canada while their application is being processed. Media reports also pointed to an applicant rejection rate of more than 20%. For another key informant, Lipinski, the Super Visa regulation which grants temporary entry to parents and grandparents amounts not only to an exclusion practice but rather a redefinition of traditional understandings of the family in Canadian immigration law. In my data, it is evident that similar discrimination by age is built into the current points system.
Another exclusionary mechanism in Canada's immigration policy is the randomized selection policy that is associated with the re-opened family class sponsorship for parents and grandparents. This parallels the fluctuating Express Entry cut off system, which introduces an element of disadvantage for the skilled applicants. This is because their wait times for processing may eventually be unreasonably delayed, as with many participants my study. Introduced by the Trudeau administration in 2016, the process presented a lottery mechanism for the selection of immigrants in the family class sponsorship. It is important to note that the immigration selection mechanism for the family class also formed the basis of the Express Entry System, without seemingly considering that merit was supposed to be the important determinant of selection.

Also, the participants and key informants revealed that the construction of the points system is so rigid that participants desiring to achieve a high score decided to re-take English language proficiency tests in order to distinguish themselves in the competition for points. This is a serious limitation experienced by applicants who interface with the Express Entry in fairly assessing their skills. The points awarded for some of the variables in the comprehensive ranking system (CRS), for example, age and education, are relatively fixed, and so there is not a good way to give better qualified international student graduates increased their points in those areas. Participants with accents also experienced the English language proficiency test as a hindrance both in the way they were seated during the test and the necessity for low scoring student migrants to re-sit it in order to maximize their points. Respondents from English-speaking countries, in particular, questioned the purpose of the English language proficiency tests which they contend is a discriminatory practice based on one’s country of origin. For select participants from the Anglophone Caribbean, the requirement to demonstrate mastery in the areas of speaking, writing, reading and listening on English language proficiency tests amounts to a process of “othering” and reveals hidden assumptions that people from countries where the spoken English does not sound “Canadian” enough are not proficient in English. But the participants from the Caribbean (and others from South/Southeast Asia) were all able to communicate very well in the interview with me in English, one of Canada's official languages. In fact, participants originating from both regions indicated that that English has been their language of
instruction in their home country. Whereas one Indo-Canadian participant (Navdeep Bains) sees the tests as satisfying a “skills” rationale, Bains observes that the tests are less rigorous when compared to the depth and breadth of the English language to which his college courses exposed him. However, to the extent that the kind of English spoken by English-speaking international student graduates has to be assessed by an examiner raises questions around “foreign accents” and the construction of Whiteness in Canada.

As noted, several international student graduates in my study also experienced long wait times for responses to their application to Canada’s economic programs. Some Express Entry participants even experienced difficulties finding clarity in the description of the labour market requirements to satisfy the one year full-time labour market experience requirement, whereas others were unable to meet the points threshold. The use of points in the Express Entry system position the state as being a fair player to all applicants, which makes it almost impossible for individuals to challenge their exclusion or inadmissibility not only on the basis of race but also gender and class. It goes without saying that a transition to residency that takes up to two years is hardly “Express” and certainly is not “seamless” as promised in the discourse. Arguably, the system shifts the burden from the state onto the individual applicants. Each applicant is susceptible to protracted wait times as a part of his or her failure to be selected in the bi-weekly selection of applicants. It has been noted that under neoliberal globalization that the focus is shifted from the state to the individual as reflected in this system (Swarts, 2013). For applicants to the PNPs, in my study, the protracted waiting period can be linked to policy inconsistencies and the bureaucratic processes that deliver permanent resident status to the applicant well beyond its mandated 18 to 20 month period. Other than the fees associated with acquiring permanent residency, participants may also be off-ramped in the process because of the inconsistent and ambiguous information on the IRCC website, which forces them to engage immigration professionals who offer the immigration services at a cost. It is possible that the Express Entry applicants who are racialized as White might experience similar bureaucratic hurdles for immigration to Canada in view of the rigid, quasi-random points system. However, my guess is that they would not
be off-ramped as often by advisors who whittle away their finances and sometimes provide erroneous advice.

This then raises the question: to what extent do the current immigration policies have a positive consequence in Canada? As outlined in Chapter 2 and confirmed by the findings Chapter 5, Canada has abandoned its overtly racist immigration policies in exchange for regulations with covertly racist manifestations. Canada uses a points system for immigrant selection that purports to ensure equality individuals still experience challenges immigration. Although Canada commits to upholding the democratic/egalitarian principles of fairness, the study indicates that the stereotypes about immigrants continue to linger in the society (Zong, 2007).

In Chapter 2, I gave a brief history of the origins of the use of the NOC codes and in Chapter 6, I showed how these codes and a recent addition, the LMIA, do or do not facilitate the transition of “skilled” immigrants to permanent residency. In my study, it appears that the facilitators of on-campus postgraduate transition seminars (at international student centres) do not emphasize the salience of NOC codes in the transition process. My observations at an hour-long immigration information session facilitated by a Toronto-based university as well as responses from two participants suggest that this critical information is not communicated to international students desiring to embark on the postgraduate trajectory to permanent resident status in Canada by fulfilling their one-year work requirement. In fact, a few of the participants in my study were either of the impression that their jobs satisfied the NOC-specific requirement(s) associated with the immigration programs or did not understand the significance of the codes. Three racialized women participants (Hortense Clue, Chevon-Marie Naipaul and Lydia Merchant) misinterpreted the significance of the NOC codes. Consequentially, this presented them with difficulties that interrupted and delayed their transition to permanent residence. Three different participants (Nyesha Jackson, Kirk Johnson and Sacchin Ventakaraman) who had more knowledge about the Express Entry requirements and the functioning of the NOC made the trek to the provinces of Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan. Despite their confusion (and mine before completing the study), what emerged is that there exists no predetermined pathway through this part of the transition process. Further, there were problems presented by Ontario’s
adherence to Express Entry NOC requirements that the applicant obtain 0, A or B level experience for a year, while facing, at the same time a “saturation” of the skilled job market in the GTHA.

Three of 18 international student graduates used PNPs as an alternative to overcome the protracted processes associated with finding a route to become permanent residents in Ontario. My analysis indicates that the specific NOC criteria as a text does not activate until the participant in Ontario decides to take advantage of the state’s polices to immigrate to Canada (which may happen late in the student’s time in postsecondary studies). At this point in the transition, it may become difficult for students to acquire skill level 0, A and B jobs for various reasons. And so, my study indicates that further research needs to be undertaken on participants who relocate or are driven to other provinces where they may obtain skilled level C and D jobs to satisfy the PNP immigration requirements in those Canadian regions. I find it ironic that these applicants who are supposed to be skilled applicants are forced to fill semi-skilled and low-skilled jobs for the sake of acquiring permanent residency.

Another recent policy meant to facilitate seamless immigration for skilled applicants, the LMIA, actually was a structural barrier or challenge that participants encountered. This was mentioned by key informants (two immigration lawyers, an immigration consultant and a human resource recruiter) and former international students. Participants outlined the restrictive nature of the politics and power relations that structure access to this government document. Sixteen of the participants interviewed reported on the reluctance of employers to support their petition for permanent residency with a LMIA, whereas only one was able to access this government document and she experienced being challenged about her temporary work permit by the potential employer.

When I examined the structural barriers that racialized international student graduates face on their trajectory, it was clear that their troubles are not just simply about the problems that state has created; their failures and successes also have to do with interracial networks (in my study Black and South/Southeast Asian linkages with White) that international students can muster as capital. Participants call upon networks or network contacts, to advise them on whitening their resumés. However, the process was distinct between each group of racialized participants. A few network contacts encouraged South/Southeast Asians to ‘whiten’ their resumes so that they retained the value
of their expertise, whereas most Black Caribbean participants ‘doctored’ their resumes to such an extent that the value of their prior experience become concealed. I argue that this structural barrier in the system is also associated with the stigmatized communities in which my Black Caribbean participants live. Network contacts (across both groups) seem to be aware of the discrimination that takes place. And the system is constructed in such a way that participants are forced to depend on their networks to ‘whiten’ their resumés to some extent to improve their prospects for interviews, and ultimately obtain employment with a ‘whitened’ resume that conceals their stigmatized identities. I have argued that this exemplifies the new racism highlighted in Chapter 3.

It is also quite evident in my study that intersectionality played an integral role in racial networking and labour market integration processes. While both groups of racialized participants experienced disadvantages in obtaining skilled employment, the South/Southeast Asian participants were able to leverage their labour market outcomes by accessing pre-existing cultural/interracial networks to find employment. However, it is interesting that the longest waits to fulltime employment in my study were experienced by racialized women – Giang (Daisy) Phang, Bernadette Berry, Imelda Aquino and Lydia Merchant. Despite their credentials and experience, these participants had difficulties either obtaining interviews and/or employment. This not only highlights the intertwined gendered and racialized components to labour market networking in the postgraduate transition to permanent residency but also questions the generalized notion of “seamlessness” in the trajectory of these highly skilled applicants.

Relatives are also important in the networking/labour market integration process. This is exemplified through the cases of two Indo-Canadian participants (Navdeep Bains and Bhushan Kumar). Both international student graduates were fortunate to have obtained employment either through an uncle or cousins who seemed to be well connected in Markham’s automotive sector and the banking industry respectively.

Finally, I discuss in more detail how processes involving race and racialization are experienced and structure labour market integration of participants who have completed postsecondary studies in Ontario, Canada. Of great importance was the observation that half of all participants at first were only
able to obtain customer service jobs or other precarious jobs in the GTHA. For example, Merchant, who holds a college diploma in fashion merchandising had to work multiple low-wage jobs in London’s manufacturing sector. Upon relocating to Brampton, she was only able to obtain low-skilled factory and warehouse jobs. Despite earning postgraduate degrees in Canada, other student migrants, such as Ventakaraman, not only held two part-time jobs; he worked in a call centre and waited tables at a banquet hall. Bains also worked the midnight shifts baking cookies at a factory for minimum wages. This shows a devaluation of skilled labour while the graduates are shunted into situations of precarity and perhaps exploitation of cheap labour (Bauder, 2006; Bonacich et al., 2008). Disadvantaged in finding the required jobs for permanent residency, these few consider returning home, but not before moving halfway across the country for work.

Black Caribbean participants seeking employment in culturally homogenous areas outside the GTHA also experienced covert forms of racism in the hiring process. Employers in these culturally homogenous and White regions denied the international student graduates employment opportunities on the premise that they were either “overqualified” or using the opportunity as a “stepping stone” to advance their careers. This happened to participants (for example, Dimple Cooke) who had interviews with engineering firms in Kitchener and Brantford, Ontario. I have argued that the use of these “abstract” codes and cultural discourses speak to the subtleties of the ‘new racism’ (Goldberg, 1993; Inwood, 2015:415; Leach, 2015; Miles 1989) in Chapter 3. The covert racism experienced in hiring for engineering positions can also be read through the advice that an internship supervisor provided one participant (Zacchaeus Gittens) His supervisor implored him to accept an offer of employment in Cambridge and not wait to find employment in London’s engineering industry, as he (the internship supervisor) claimed one particular company there was notorious for recruiting racialized immigrants for contract and internship positions. This questions in general the seamlessness of the transition for these two engineering graduate migrants, but also the willingness (or reluctance of employees) to embrace racial minorities in communities outside the GTHA or in culturally homogenous and White Canadian regions. In particular, the experience of the student warned by his supervisor also suggests neoliberal racism (Roberts & Mahtani, 2010) discussed in Chapter 3.
The myth that participants will not remain in predominantly White areas for the long-haul must be challenged. While racialized immigrants may demonstrate a preference to remain in the culturally diverse GTHA, five of 18 participants in my study demonstrated a willingness and the agency to, and actually have relocated permanently to Dartmouth (Nova Scotia) and predominantly White spaces of Cambridge and Sudbury (in Ontario), and Saskatoon (Saskatchewan). These participants left London and GTHA because of the unavailability and inaccessibility of jobs in their preferred geographical spaces. In future research, it will be important to see whether the situation of racialized immigrants can be compared to graduates who can pass as Whites seeking employment in London or the GTHA. But it is clear that participants do move to these Canadian regions or provinces where they may find the requisite employment needed to satisfy immigration requirements.

International student graduates also experience the not being the hired because employees see them as being the right “fit” in labour markets/regions outside the GTHA. Thus, student migrants moving to predominantly White or culturally homogenous regions complain that they encounter a lack of diversity. Thus, while these cities provide economic opportunities for international student migrants to support themselves, their experiences in these areas raise questions about their acceptance and “fit” in these host communities (Mickleborough & Peters, 2015). It is also important to question the notion of “fit”, because even participants who remain in the GTHA encountered challenges integrating into the labour force. These structural barriers include the dearth of full-time positions offering Canadian experience in the GTHA and the process of deskilling when graduates settle for customer service work.

The fact that participants reported that employers used a discourse of “fit” to rationalize not offering them employment opportunities needs to be closely examined. Did employers utilize this covert, vague and subtle discourse at the end of the hiring process to inform individuals in my study of their unfavourable outcomes to hide their full intentions? This is suggested by the observation that participants were also provided this blanket statement or discourse of not being the right “fit” even in instances where they had conducted follow-up interviews or successfully passed online tests which formed a part of the interview process. One participant employed the use of an internet platform to
help her adjust her resumé and improve her chances of being selected for interview. But it did not prevent her from being told by employer that she “was not the right fit”. While the internet platform improves one’s chances of being selected for an interview, when the individual later appears, in person, it does not guarantee that the racialized individual will secure the job. Recruiters can still use the vague justification of “fit” as a rationale to decline an application. The subtleties of the new racism can operate easily within “fit” discourse (Goldberg, 1993; Leach, 2015; Miles, 1989) as highlighted in Chapter 3. “Fit” is a discourse that steers clear of racial ideologies as well as gender, age, and disability, providing an “easy out” for an employer.

Given my summation of the thesis, one may question what a seamless transition for an international student graduate would entail? To return to my earlier assumptions (outlined in Chapter 1), a “seamless” transition for student migrants in Canada suggests that participants would experience an uninterrupted trajectory upon exiting postsecondary studies. Once participants obtained a postgraduate work permit and gathered the one year full-time or two years part-time experience, they would become eligible to apply for permanent resident status via one of Canada’s economic immigration programs. As indicated in Chapter 5, the Canadian state could also ensure that the economic immigration system improves transparency. For example, a age criterion in the Express Entry system need to be amended so that they award the student migrant points at the age at which they enter Canada and not when the applicant decides to apply following the completion of postsecondary studies. Improving transparency could also include abolishing the quasi-random floating cut off points selection process built into the current regulations and replacing it with a quota system that gives immigrants opportunities to fill specific labour demands in the economy. Smooth transition also necessitates that federal and provincial governments provide clear and concise immigration information via their websites for students transitioning via the Express Entry and Provincial Nominee Programs. Finally, a seamless transition for international student graduates also means that the government would implement measures to address protracted wait times experienced by applicants, especially provincial nominee applicants. In a nutshell, student migrants will only realize
a seamless transition when the immigration regulations (Express Entry and Provincial Nominee Programs) actually do for applicant what they imply that they will do.

9.3 Contributions to the Literature

Given the discussion throughout this dissertation, it is clear that the postgraduate transition for international student graduates in Canada has not been ‘seamless’. My main contribution to research on this topic is to demonstrate how international student graduates desiring to immigrate to Canada can experience structural problems at different points in their labour market-immigration trajectory: application to economic immigration programs, hiring, networking and “fitting” (either in the labour market or areas within/without the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA). These problems begin to occur in the process of obtaining points via the Express Entry system, applying to PNPs, with NOC alignment and LMIA. There are also problems of racialization and hiring, and the use of networks. This is compounded by the ambiguous and inconsistent data provided on the IRCC website. Previous studies have also examined the implications of the points system for the integration of immigrant professionals and the family-sponsored class of immigrants in Canada (Bauder; 2006; Guo; 2009; 2010; Man, 2004; 2007; Mojab, 1993; Simmons, 2010). My study fills in some of the details missing from extant literature as well as the details that racialized international students graduating from Ontario’s postsecondary system need to access the labour market-immigration trajectory in Canada. It specifically complements research already undertaken by shedding light on the process through an examination into the lived experiences of these international student graduates (Inwood, 2015; Roberts & Mahtani, 2010).

The research is a ground-breaking study that offers an in-depth inquiry into how the national occupational classification codes (NOC) and the labour market impact assessment (LMIA) facilitate the trajectory of international student graduates (or skilled individuals) in Canada towards permanent residence. Drawing on the lived realities of Black Caribbeans and South/Southeast Asians, I demonstrate the significance of the NOC in the immigration-labour market relationship. As demonstrated in Chapter 6, the transition to Canadian permanent residency hinges on the participants’
awareness of the NOC as well as the intricacies with economic immigration programs (i.e. the Express Entry System and other provincial/territorial nominee programs) and the (mis)alignment of credentials in the Canadian labour market. As it relates to the LMIA, I discussed the power relations that structure and/or place constraints on access to this coveted government document that aids in the international student graduate’s trajectory to obtaining permanent legal status in Canada. The study also depicts the LMIA as constructing boundaries in the immigration system due to its fluidity in application across the different Canadian provinces.

It is widely known that the system facilitates the movement of these participants from the labour market to the permanent resident status, operating through a points system or a paper-based provincial nominee application. But my analyses in this dissertation also tell us that transition in the postgraduate trajectory is reliant upon the alignment of the international student graduate’s credential with what the employer expects. I also argue that for international students, the postgraduate trajectory is characterized by systemic racism which is largely hidden in “polite” discourses such as “fit”. But I am not convinced that we have all the answers as to why the participants from South/Southeast Asia are more successful in comparison to their Black Caribbean counterparts. Previous studies have examined the challenges that immigrants with prior experience and foreign credentials encounter upon integrating into the labour market owing to the lack of Canadian experience (Bolaria & Li, 1988; Guo, 2009; Man, 2007; Man & Preston, 1999). However, what is different in this thesis is that I examine the labour market integration of a group of participants who have acquired their credentials from universities and colleges in Canada. And so, if such participants still have to ‘whiten’ their resumés to integrate in the labour market, this not only points to the myth of Canadian exceptionalism in the story of the Great White North, but also to how racialized bodies are read in space and marked for discrimination regarding the Canadian ‘integration’ through Canadian postsecondary success (Baldwin, et al., 2011; Razack, 2013). Hence, this study makes explicit the idea that the patterns and processes – of exclusion and marginalization of non-White bodies - associated with the colonial period have been perpetuated and extended into 21st century Canada.
In addition, my study also indicates that when gender, class and age are taken into account, along with race, a fuller accounting of the challenges of transitioning into Canada can be made. An anti-racist approach throws into question the comparatively simple assumptions of the Bourdieusian conceptualization which emphasizes that the accumulation of different kinds of capital will help the individual to overcome the challenges to reproduce him/herself in the society. The Canadian postsecondary credentials of participants in my study are not necessarily accepted by employers and this suggests that there are still missing pieces to this puzzle. The cases in this dissertation examine scenarios of participants who are considered “best” for Canadian permanent residency, at least according to prevailing discourse. They are skilled workers that the economy needs, and they possess credentials from Canadian postsecondary institutions accumulating the necessary points to transition to permanent residency. However, many of them are having trouble transitioning not only to the labour market but also via the points system.

I would also suggest that a social closure perspective as has been developed in the literature on professions might be useful in understanding the inequity and power structures encountered in the student migrants’ trajectory to permanent resident status beyond its customary use to explicate the boundaries, social exclusions or institutional equities experienced by immigrant professionals (Bourgeault et al., 2016; Gieryn, 1983; Nestel, 2004; Witz, 1992). This literature suggests that the institutional inequities which appear fixed are constructed through the implementation of regulations established by respective professional associations. I would argue that like professional bodies, gatekeepers (for example, the state) in the form of immigration policies, establishes boundaries that operate akin to a closure mechanism. More specifically, the state has established boundaries or policies that determine or structure access to specific documents (for example, labour market impact assessment - LMIAs) that have the potential to expedite the transition to permanent resident status. The establishment of these policies could be viewed as boundaries to be negotiated. Specifically, the idea of availability or access to these government documents cannot be equated with the power of accessing them.
I also find the concept of racing neoliberalism fruitful for future research, as it provides a lens for the researcher to interpret how the embeddedness of race shapes labour market outcomes (for example, internships, part-time work and customer service work) that racialized participants obtain in a neoliberal environment. As demonstrated in chapter 8, international student graduates, despite obtaining their academic credential at Canadian universities and colleges, had difficulties obtaining professional and technical jobs. These jobs were quite elusive for them. Their prodigious participation and representation of racialized participants in precarious, low-skilled and customer services jobs confirms that the deep-rooted nature of the capitalist expansionism in the sustaining the racial structure in the Canadian society; it reifies the significance of racialization as principle that maintains a tiered and racially systematized labour system which readily attracts, exploits and/or flourishes from the inexpensive, low-priced labour produced by non-White bodies (Bonacich et al., 2008; Roberts & Mahtani, 2010). Thus, theoretically, the manifestation of racing neoliberal this study undercuts or challenges the TINA – there is no alternative – argument espoused by neoliberal discourse. It not only lends itself to a critical reading of neoliberalism but also questions the conventional refrain TINA is indeed ‘manufactured’.

Consequently, using anti-racist/postcolonial, closure theory, racing neoliberalism and social capital theoretical perspectives are all fruitful for explaining the transition of ‘skilled’ international student graduates, who, after leaving postsecondary studies, decide to immigrate to Canada as ‘skilled’ workers via the Express Entry or the Provincial Nominee Programs. I use an interconnected framework as the tenets of each perspective illuminate particular challenges or phenomena experienced by the participants at the various points along the postgraduate trajectory - from the labour market to the immigration system - in Canada. This approach could also help to interpret the experience of those participants who have relatively easy access to the institutions of labour and the immigration system. And finally, my decision to use these perspectives emphatically questions the “seamlessness” of their residency trajectory in a system historically structured to reproduce inequitable hiring practices in Canada’s labour market-immigration connection.
By connecting four sets of observations on international student graduate trajectories towards permanent residence, my work makes more visible the racialization of the immigrant labour force in Canada. As outlined in my study (Chapter 8), half of the international student graduates initially obtained precarious employment upon completing postsecondary studies in Canada. Similar to the situation of foreign-trained doctors (El-Hashemy, 2017) and other internationally educated professionals, the participants in my study encountered structural inequities navigating the labour market. This prevented them from participating in the occupational fields in which they are certified. Arguably, the process contributes to the deskillling of immigrant professionals and confirms findings emphasized in the studies on the racialized Canadian immigrants in the labour market (El-Hashemy, 2017; Man, 2004, 2007; Mojab, 1999). As outlined in Chapter 2, Canada generally does not extend an invitation for permanent residence to temporary foreign workers (TWFs) and seasonal agricultural workers but rather uses these state policies to sustain and legitimize the ‘temporariness’ of racialized migrant labourers from the South (Calliste, 1993; 1993/4; McLaughlin, 2010:81-83; Satzewich, 2007;1991; 1988; Sharma 2006; 2001; Walia, 2010). However, it is salient for us to recognize not only how the temporary foreign worker situation plays into the historical racialization of Caribbean workers but also the practice of resumé ‘whitening’ for skilled/professional workers in the contemporary context. As indicated in my study, the whitening of resumés by Caribbean participants and their subsequent movement outside the GTHA to find work challenges us to see that racialized workers are disadvantaged across the work spectrum in various sectors, from professional to skilled and unskilled.

9.4 Area(s) for Future Study and Anti-racist Praxis

Having completed the study, I find that I am still seeking answers to questions that arise as to how the transition system functions for international student graduates. For example, I am convinced that gender and race together played significant roles in the interracial networking and labour market integration processes, which suggests that there needs to be more intersectional research in this area. While interracial/diasporic networks were able to connect participants with employers, this was not the case for female participant Phang (See Chapter 7). I understand from the interviews that Phang had
a child, and so I wonder whether her gender identity and role as a mother both might have influenced her outcome. Aquino also has a child, and this also was important in her labour market decision.

Another promising area in which more research could be undertaken is in unregulated professional fields in the labour market represented by my participants. As mentioned earlier, the closure perspective has been applied to self-regulated professions, but not the other broad fields of engineering and business. Further “business” as an occupational field cuts across different sectors of the economy. Also, the labour market transition of graduates of Canadian college programs have not received much attention. Engineers find employment in different industries and it is now widely seen as more organizationally than self-regulated (Evett, 2003; Noble, 2017). Similar to previous studies (Bauder, 2005; Porter, 2005; Waldinger, 1994), I have demonstrated how individuals obtain employment through networks which appears to most associated with successful labour market integration. And so, it would be promising to see more research on this topic. Finally, research that examines the kinds of boundaries, if any, that are constructed in unregulated professions and how do they assess the value of different credentials would be of value.

In my findings, using a theoretical lens that directs attention to how international student graduates have to navigate structural inequities in the transition holds promise in future research. I would further suggest that there needs to be organizing at various levels to combat these challenges. Based on the reports of my participants, individuals in our society - at least their networks and other international students - are aware of structural problems that have been constructed in the immigration system. This necessitates the development of clear and effective strategies that can be used to lobby the state and employers to bring about regulatory changes that lessen these structural inequities in the transition system. Anti-racist organizing could also take the form of community groups engaging the services of the legal community to pressure the government to remove the ambiguous and inconsistent immigration information from its website and update it with clear and concise instructions that could guide international students desiring permanent resident status in Canada. The whole areas of consultants “advising” such graduates also needs to be problematized and/or regulated.
A future study on this nature would also benefit from the incorporation of White international students. I intended on including this cohort of students. However, my efforts to reach them were futile. Nonetheless, a study with these individuals would be quite promising. It would be interesting learn about their experiences navigating the different levels of the postgraduate transition system in Canada.

9.5 ‘Many Rivers to Cross’: A Final Thought on Transition of International Student Graduates
As I close this thesis, which documents the trajectory of Black Caribbean and South/Southeast Asian international student graduates in Canada towards the labour market and citizenship (permanent resident status), I thought it would be timely to share my personal reflections on the conversations that I had with 18 participants and five key informants throughout the research period. After listening to the stories of these participants and the experience of these individuals in Canada's labour market-immigration nexus, I am reminded of “Many Rivers to Cross”, a song written and sung by Jimmy Cliff. Recorded and released in 1969, the song emerged from the Jamaican reggae singer's lived experience navigating racialization in the musical industry across the United Kingdom. Despite having enjoyed a budding career at an early age in his homeland, Cliff had difficulties reaping success in the musical scene of his host country. For him, the song expresses the economic hardship and the trauma of regularly crossing the English Channel to other European nations seeking for musical opportunities. Cliff's lyrics, noted in the epigram, appropriately underscore the many obstacles that the supposedly 'seamless' postgraduate transition system presents to racialized international student graduates.

As evidenced throughout the pages of this thesis, the trajectory of each participant originating from the Caribbean and South/Southeast Asia has been structured by the subtle forms of racism and structural inequities in the different phases of the transition. And until these challenges are addressed, the pathway to labour market integration and permanent legal status for many will remain, as Cliff penned it, “many rivers to cross.”
References


MacDonald, M. (2016, May 10). Canadian government signals renewed openness to international students: International graduates of Canadian universities are “the perfect candidates” for citizenship, says immigration minister. *University Affairs.*


Wikan, V. (2015). What is’ neoliberalism‘, and how does it relate to globalization. E-International Relations Students.


Appendix A1: Recruitment Letter for Government Official, Immigration Officials and Other Experts

July 31, 2017

Dear _______________________

I am Everton Ellis, a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education program at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT) in Toronto, Canada. I am in the process of writing my doctoral dissertation and am collecting data for that purpose. My PhD thesis is being supervised by Dr. Linda Muzzin, Professor in the department of Leadership, Adult and Higher Education at OISE/UT.

My research investigates how former international students negotiate the migration-labour market nexus in Canada. This necessitates speaking with key informants or stakeholders in institutions immigration policy (and practice) as well as the labour market. Your participation in this study will enhance that part of my understanding of the transition experiences of former international students in Canada. Therefore, the purpose of this letter is to formally request an interview with you of about 60-90 minutes.

Throughout the months of August 2017 – November 2017, I will be conducting interviews with other officials and former international students across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA). I am hoping you might be willing to set up an information interview at a time of your convenience around the time I am expected to be in the GTHA and would be happy to meet with you at your office.

You are invited to participate in this study because of your status as a key informant in the labour market or immigration policy circle who is in a good position to provide insights on this topic. The contribution of your perspective is an important means by which to generate a rich understanding of how Canada’s economic immigration programs facilitate the transition of international students to the labour force and then permanent legal status.

This information will also help me to better understand the role of institutions and the relationship between the different institutions and how they shape the experience of former international students who decide to immigrate to Canada after graduation. The results from this research may also help to influence government policies in order to make the system better for international students who desire to become a permanent resident in Canada.

I can be reached at telephone number XXX-XXX-XXXX or at the following email address: xxx@mail.utoronto.ca to answer any questions you may have about the interview.

I appreciate the value of your time and your interest in matters concerning the (former) international students.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Everton Ellis  
Ph.D. Candidate  
Leadership, Adult and Higher Education  
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education  
University of Toronto

Dr. Linda Muzzin  
Professor & Research Supervisor  
Leadership, Adult and Higher Education  
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education  
University of Toronto
Appendix A2: Recruitment Poster for Participants

Are you a former international student in Canada?
Did you complete postsecondary studies (College or University) in Ontario, Canada?
Did you graduate between 2012 and 2016?
Are you employed or looking for employment in Canada?
Have you/do you intended to apply for permanent resident status in Canada?

❖ You will participate in face-to-face or Skype interview approximately 60 -90 minutes to share your labour market and immigration experiences in Canada.
❖ Your participation is voluntary. All information that you provide will be remain anonymous and confidential.
❖ Each participant will receive CAN$10.00 Tim Hortons gift card as a token of appreciation
❖ The study is conducted by Everton Ellis, doctoral candidate, Ontario Institute for Studies, University of Toronto

If your answer is “yes” to all the questions, then I invite you to participate in my study.

If you are interested in participating in the research and/or would like more information about the study, please feel free to contact me, Everton Ellis, by email xxxx@mail.utoronto.ca or phone: XXX-XXX-XXXX
Appendix A3: Email Script for Recruiting Participants

Dear __________________

I am Everton Ellis, a doctoral candidate at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) of the University of Toronto. You are invited to participate in my research that explores the employment and immigration experiences of former international students.

My research examines the transition experiences of (former) international students from post-secondary studies to immigration in Canada.

I am currently looking to interview a minimum of 30 key informants including former international students who are White, who are from the Caribbean or who are from Asia and have graduated from post-secondary institutions in Ontario, Canada. Participants will take part in face-to-face interview (or a Skype interview), for approximately 60 – 90 minutes, that covers several aspects of their labour market and immigration experience in Canada.

The data collected will be kept confidential and you will be interviewed at a mutually agreeable place and time that is convenient for you. Participants will also have the option of being interviewed over Skype. As a token for your participation in my study, you will receive a CAN$10.00 Tim Hortons gift card as a token of appreciation. You may choose to withdraw from the study or decline to answer questions at any point in the research process, without any negative consequences. Despite the outcome of the interview, each participant will keep the token of appreciation.

Your contribution to this study will provide an opportunity to share your immigration and labour market experiences with researcher. The contribution of your perspective will also help policy makers to better understand your experiences and to influence policies that affect international students.

I hope to complete the interviews with former international students over the months of August – November 2017.

If you are interested in participating in the research and/or would like more information about the study, please feel free to contact me, Everton Ellis, by email xxxx@mail.utoronto.ca or phone: XXX-XXX-XXXX

Sincerely,

Everton Ellis
Ph.D. Candidate,
Leadership, Adult and Higher Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto (OISE/UT)
Appendix B1: Draft Interview Questions for Participants

1 Where did you first attend college or university and what program did you do?
2 What discipline did you study?
3 Prior to coming to Canada, what were your thoughts on the purpose of getting a postsecondary education?
4 Why did you choose to study in Canada?
5 When did you find out that studying in Canada provides you the option of becoming permanent resident?
6 Did the chance of becoming a permanent resident influence your decision to stay in Canada? How so?
7 Tell me about your Canadian postsecondary program(s) including their relevance for preparing you for the labour market (practical and theoretical).
8 Have you been able to find a job in your field? What does this tell you about the relationship between postsecondary education and finding a job in Canada?
9 Describe your job searches (providing years) since completing your fulltime studies? Have you found fulltime employment? If not, what are some of the hurdles that you experience while looking for work?
10 Did you network (for example, with people in ethnic communities or in particular industries) in order to find employment?
11 At what organizations have you volunteered since you have been in Canada and do you include these on your resume?
12 Where in the city do you live?
13 How do you document your hours and what documents do you use to prove on your application that you have acquired these hours?
14 To which pathway program did you apply? How and where did you first learn about this program? How has your experience under this program been the same or differed from what you have been told or read about it?
Appendix B2: Draft Interview Questions for Immigration Lawyers and Consultants

1. Can we start by explaining how you became employed in this line of work?
2. Describe the kind of representation or services that you make on the behalf of applicants?
3. What are some of the challenges that applicants to the express entry immigration process have been encountering?
4. What are some of the hurdles/problems that they might encounter in the process for those international students who would like to stay in Ontario or Canada?
5. On the immigration website, the government list the job categories from which it selects applicants. What does this suggest about the immigrants or workers that Canada is looking for? What does it tell you/about the definition of permanent residents or about who can become a permanent resident in Canada?
6. The points system is considered an important tool for recruiting skilled immigrants. In your opinion, does it still work despite its problems?
7. What has your experience working with applicants told you about the kind of consultations (or the lack thereof) between the different stakeholders on the implementation of the express entry system?
8. How have students been interpreting the words “express entry” in the express entry system?
9. Why do you think the Stephen Harper government changed the previous regulations?
10. What recent changes have the Liberal government made to the express entry system? How are they improving the chances of former international students in the labour market to becoming permanent residents?
11. What are some the challenges that individuals on the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program face?
12. Tell me about a case or cases that have gone well vs one where it became legally impossible to help this/these applicants. What were the outcome(s) of such case(s)? from what countries or background are these individuals attempting to emigrate?
Appendix B3: Draft Interview Questions for Government Official(s)

1. Can you give me a little background on why the government places an emphasis on recruiting international students?
2. How would you describe the kind of workers that Canada is looking to recruit through its economic immigration programs?
3. Why were the policies which seemed to be working well in terms of recruiting former international students changed? Was the option to expand the previous program as opposed to starting a new system considered?
4. When the express entry policy was being crafted, who were the different stakeholders and what were their contributions?
5. Why did the government decide to place international students (who are educated in Canadian institutions) in the same pool with other categories of skilled applicants? How has the inclusion of all categories of skilled application into one pool disadvantaged any category of applicant? How does it benefit Canada?
6. Why do former international students (who are educated in Canada and in some cases worked in Canada) need to get more experience before becoming eligible to apply for permanent resident status?
7. Why is it that skills acquired by international students (holder of Off-Campus Work Permit) do not count towards their application for permanent residence? When students have been participating in Canadian work force while pursuing their studies, is there a rationale for why this does not count?
8. The government claims that the points system is an important tool for recruiting skilled immigrants. But do you see any problems? What would you ideally like to see these policies look like?
Appendix B4: Draft Interview Questions for Human Resource Professional

1. What challenges does your organization face employing an individual or former international student on a work permit with a temporary social insurance number?
2. What background do these individuals with a work permit and temporary social insurance card that you have hired generally have?
3. How important is the resume and what do you look for in a resume?
4. Have you heard of the post-graduate work permit? What do you know about the post-graduate work permit?
5. Tell me about your rate of success as well as turnover for the international students in your organization?
6. What information do you review or scrutinize the work permit for?
7. What benefits do international students bring to your organizations?
Appendix C1: A Diagram Indicating the Transition Routes for International Student Graduates in Canada
Appendix C2: Initial Construction of the Transition Routes for International Student Graduates

Sample I
Appendix C3: A Subsequent Construction of the Transition Routes for International Student Graduates

Sample II
**Appendix D:** A Picture Indicating One of the Participant’s Results Obtained on the English Language Proficiency Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Type</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Signature: Donald Wehrung  
Date of Signing: 09-Sep-2015
**Appendix E: Job Description of a Mutual Fund Processing Associates as Advertised by Hortense Clue’s Employer**

**POSITION:** Mutual Fund Processing Associate  
**REPORTING TO:** Manager, Registered Products  
**LOCATION:** Toronto, ON  
**STATUS:** Full-time  

**OVERVIEW**  
We are currently recruiting for a Mutual Fund Processing Associate to join our Operations team. In this role, the successful candidate will be responsible for reviewing and processing various transaction requests on client accounts in an accurate and timely manner in order to maintain good relations with our dealership community.

**WHAT YOU WILL DO**
- Review all trade requests such as purchases, redemptions, switches, transfers, systematic plans, and non-financials for proper documentation and authorization
- Process all valid trade requests in a timely and efficient manner while rejecting not in good order items to CI’s outbound call centre
- Review and administer various government forms and internal reports
- Resolve telephone and email inquiries from internal departments in an efficient and professional manner

**WHAT YOU WILL BRING**
- High School graduation or equivalent
- CSC and/or IFIC courses an asset
- Mutual fund experience a desired asset
- 1–2 years’ experience within the financial services industry an asset
- Able to work well under pressure and demanding workloads
- High degree of accuracy and attention to detail
- Routine office environment requiring incumbent to be on a computer terminal for majority of a scheduled workday
- Must be flexible and able to work overtime during specific times of the year (i.e. RSP season)

If you are a passionate, committed and dynamic individual, please submit your resume in confidence by clicking “Apply”. Only qualified candidates selected for an interview will be contacted.