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FOREIGN CREDENTIALS IN CANADA'S MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Lorne Foster

York University

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1) Learning about contemporary immigration patterns and the connection between these patterns and globalization.

2) Consider the racialized, downward shift in employment patters for immigrants.

3) Examine how many highly educated immigrants of colour encounter credential barriers that prevent them from entering their chosen professions.

4) Discuss how credentials barriers limit equity for immigrants in the labor market.

5) Think about the impact of rapid social change coupled with growing diversity through immigration, and the significant implications and challenges this poses for race relations and employment within in Canadian society.

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the issue of immigrant accreditation barriers, as a form of credentialism, with a special focus on visible minority immigrants. It argues that credentials barriers are one of the key factors preventing immigrants of colour from access and equity in the labor market, which in turn is one of the primary sources of newcomers' dissatisfaction with living in Canada. And so, finding ways of improving access to the trades and professions in order to make the best use of the talent that comes to this country is the place where economic productivity and social progress converge. While over half of Canada's 200,000 immigrants enter as independents or skilled immigrants each year, many find their university degrees and trade diplomas of little value. Upon arrival, these immigrants often encounter a variety of barriers that lead to their under-employment or unemployment – from exorbitantly expensive credential assessments and qualifying exams, to the various rules of the provincial bodies which regulate access to professions and trades through licensing and registration requirements, to the requirements of education institutions and the hiring and promotion rules of employers, to the Catch-22 demand for that unobtainable Canadian experience. The result is, a Canadian workplace environment where untapped talent-pools can lie dormant and ineffective, leading to a decline in social capital and in Canada's overall economic well-being.

The utilization of immigrant skills and Canada's immigration program presents and ideal laboratory for exploring and identifying the issues surrounding Canadian multiculturalism in the context of increasing ethnocultural and racial diversity. I argue that the difficulty of striking a balance between well-established standards of professional competence, and anti-discriminatory employment practices is Canada's most daunting 21st century challenge and requires an exceedingly collective imagination and dexterity. This challenge implies, as the labour force becomes increasingly composed of workers with foreign education and experience, an accurate understanding and evaluation of the skills, knowledge and experience plays a key role in enabling these workers to find jobs in which this preparation can be used to full advantage. It also suggests, until institutions and workplaces are broadened in their scope to embrace proportional representation of the multicultural mosaic, the search for political unity, social coherence, economic prosperity, and cultural enrichment will remain elusive.

Introduction: The Contemporary Social Problem of Foreign Trained Professionals

The issue of equity and fair practice in the contemporary Canadian workplace has a public intersect with the problem of the proper assessment and recognition of immigrants' foreign-acquired credentials. Foreign credentials barriers, or "credentialism" in an immigration context, can be defined as people not being able to get work for occupations they are qualified to the same extent as the natural born. However, a comprehensive understanding of foreign skills accreditation as a social problem, requires a focus on both a structural and racial nexus. As the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, *Employment Systems Review - A Guide for the Federal Public Service*, states:

> "credentials barriers (credentialism) may be found in educational requirements
> that are constrained by a practice of considering only "recognized" educational
> institutions, or that do not recognize knowledge and skills acquired through means

other than formal education. Credentialism often unjustly excludes visible minorities from the candidate pool." (http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/index_e.asp 1999-02-01).

The social problem of non-accreditation of immigrant skills is made even more insistent by the fact it is also segmenting along colour lines. Today three quarters of new immigrants come from developing countries and are people of colour. These immigrants are better educated than native-born Canadians, yet they're having a tougher time finding the work they're trained to do, and their incomes are falling further and further behind.

In 1980, the average newly arrived immigrant man earned about 80 per cent of the average Canadian's salary; 20 years later, he's earning only 60 per cent as much. Foreign-trained immigrants are also more likely to be unemployed, even at a menial job. In 1980, 86.3 per cent of immigrant men were employed, compared with 91 per cent of Canadians. By 2000, only 68.3 per cent of newcomers had jobs, versus 85.4 per cent of the native-born (Reitz, 2005).

Thousands of individuals, and disproportionately people of colour, who immigrate every year find their university degrees and trade diplomas of little value in Canada, creating a social-economic environment where untapped talent-pools can lie dormant and ineffective. Even though Canada has officially moved towards creating immigration policies that seek to eliminate the use of racially discriminatory admission criteria, Canada's racially infused hierarchy of power has not been reduced and is still in practice through its active exclusion of racialized immigrants in the labour and educational markets (Sharief 2005). The current credentialism process not only degrades non-Western countries who are more than likely to be non-accredited, it also forces professionally trained immigrants to take on jobs of 'lower socio-economic statuses' in order to survive. Even more disquieting is the fact that there are indications as well that the discounting of immigrant educational qualifications may be increasing in Canada along with the increasing numbers of people of colour (Reitz, 2001, 2003), a trend which also suggests the potential significance of institutional and social changes related to increased visible minority social distance and marginalization (Ornstein 2000).

In this chapter, I will begin to explore the social problem of foreign accreditation barriers and its social consequence in the context of Canadian immigration policy and the knowledge-based political economy. In particular, I will explore Canadian immigration policy and the discounting of foreign credentials as an illustration of the the link between immigration and the political economy in the context of a colour-coded national and international division of labour. The main objective of this chapter is to examine the hierarchical relationship between racialized individuals and groups as the new recurring theme in Canada's vertical mosaic, and is the postindustrial base for class and power. This, of course, is a very large topic and so my treatment of it in this chapter will be limited. Stated generally and briefly, I argue that race is the new foundation for the social construction of twenty-first century global reality.

In Canada, the increasing urbanization of immigration and lack of effective immigrant settlement polices is resulting in the racialization of poverty (Shields, 2002). The racialization of urban poverty warns of a looming crisis of social instability and political legitimacy for Canadian society (Galabuzi, 2001). The term "democratic racism" best describes the deep tension between the reality of racism and the ideology of democratic liberalism and (Henry & Tator, 2000). At the same time, however, the discourse on democratic racism, and race as "foundational" to the creation and maintenance of the contemporary Canadian political economy, is not recurrently acknowledged (Enakshi Dua, 1999). It is my hypothesis that this is caused by the invisibility of Whiteness and the erasure of race in political economy discourse. Negating visible minority experiences of racialization in the workplace provides justification for the downward shift in

career mobility and income inequality for people of colour. As Hamani Banerji (1995: 77) points out, "the erasure of the factors "race," racism, and continual immigration prevents an adequate understanding of the Canadian economy." Similarly, this chapter will show that ignoring the social fact of international migration flows that are both multicultural *and* colour-coded is also a kind of erasure that negates visible minority experiences of racialization in the workplace and prevents a coherent comprehension of Canada's political economy.

Consider that the very intelligibility of the prevailing discursive geo-political categories of "Global North" and "Global South" today is only a small indication of the entrenchment of the obscured dialectic between race and political economy operationalized by worldwide capitalism.[1] Yet, at the same time it is the contextual referent point for the euphemistic erasure of race in contemporary political economy discourse. There is a persistent effort in contemporary public discourse to classify people along silent racial lines, reconfiguring the new world order into a new North-South Dichotomy (Brandt Report 1980; South Commission 1990). The use of disembodied language parameters for an embodied world is where racialization and racism begin, because the new world order geo-political definitions of the situation mask and cover over the process of global empowerment and disempowerment on the basis of the body – "white bodies versus dark bodies." In the contemporary world, race matters, not because of innate characteristics, but because racialized individuals and groups are treated as though certain characteristics of their bodies matter in certain unspoken ways. However, even when race is not spoken in the postindustrial world, it looms large. Moreover, in many cases because it is not spoken it looms even larger.

Canada's Demographic Frame of Reference

For the next several decades, Canada will face two demographic processes that frame the social problem of discounting immigrant skills. First, the population growth rate has slowed to an all-time low. The country's population reached 30,007,094 in 2001, representing a 4-per-cent increase since the 1996 census, which matches the lowest five-year growth rate in Canadian history. In light of the census data, statisticians forecast that the population will stop growing entirely without increased immigration. In fact, just to stand still in terms of population, we are going to have to increase our immigration every year, because Canada's fertility rate is just 1.5 children (the average number of children a woman will have over her lifetime), well below the rate of 2.1 children per woman needed to sustain the current population. Forty-five years ago, the average Canadian woman had four children over her lifetime. Today, approximately half of Canada's current population growth comes from immigration. However, given the decline of domestic birth rates, by 2011 newcomers will likely account for all the growth in Canada's labour force. By 2026 they will be responsible for all growth in the country's overall population.

The second demographic process is the aging of Canada's population. Again, if current trends continue, there will be relatively few people working age to support relatively greater numbers of retired people. Projections indicate that the proportion of the total population of the country 65 years and older is expected to increase from 8.7 percent in 1976 to 20.2 percent in 2031. Left unabated these two demographic processes could have have dire social and economic consequences in Canada – related to a capital accumulation and wage crisis; strain on the welfare state accentuating a fiscal crisis; a declining tax base; and increased expenditures on the elderly (Myles and Boyd, 1982; Satzewich, 2000).

Against this backdrop of the potential social and capital accumulation issues associated with declining fertility and population aging, Canada's Minister of Immigration publicly

announced that as we moved deeper into the new millennium the country faced a shortage of up to one million skilled workers within five years (CP, May 4, 2003). Of course, this presupposes that foreign-trained workers are actually going to be able to practice their professions and contribute meaningfully to Canadian society. While the attraction and integration of skilled professionals and tradespersons to Canada is acknowledge to be central to the success of national development, this objective continues to be jeopardized by the many barriers faced by foreign-trained immigrants in having their skills and credentials recognized. The fact of the matter is, for instance, nearly 40,000 highly skilled immigrants have arrived in Ontario in each of the past 10 years, yet many immigrants with PhDs have been left driving cabs or hustling pizzas, as opposed to being gainful employment in their chosen vocations.

A Statistics Canada (2004) census study provides a conspectus of the characteristics and experiences of recent immigrants residing in Canada's metropolitan areas in terms of the settlement patterns and the labour market experiences and earnings. The research shows that virtually all immigrants coming to Canada in the 1990s -- about 1.8 million -- have settled in one of Canada's 27 census metropolitan areas. These immigrants also have higher levels of educational attainment than people born in Canada. Yet, in virtually every urban region, a far higher proportion of recent immigrants were employed in jobs with lower skill requirements than the Canadian-born. In addition, recent immigrants were less likely to be employed in occupations typically requiring a university degree. In fact, recent immigrants with a university degree were much more likely than their Canadian-born counterparts to be working in occupations that typically require no formal education. Finally, in most urban centres, recent immigrants were at least twice as likely as Canadian-born workers to earn less than $20,000 a year. They were also much less likely to have high earnings, that is, more than $100,000 a year. This reinforces the findings of previous labour force studies showing that recent immigrants were much more likely to work for low wages, were less likely to be high-wage earners and had higher unemployment rates. The result is a drain on social programs and public transportation in the country's largest cities (Statistics Canada, August 2004).

In 2001, the unemployment rate among recent immigrants was 1.5 times that of the Canadian- born unemployment rate (11.4% compared with 7.4%). As education levels increase, the relative difference between the unemployment rates of immigrants and the Canadian-born also increases. Consider recent immigrants with a bachelor's degree; they have unemployment rates that are three times greater than Canadian-born degree holders (11.8% compared with 3.9%). The highest ratios occur among recent immigrants with Masters degrees or earned Doctorates. Their unemployment rates are more than 3.5 times higher than Canadian-born with graduate level degrees. Even though the demand for post-secondary credentials appears to be high, recent immigrants with university education have roughly the same rate of unemployment as those who did not complete high school (The Canadian Labour and Business Centre. 2004).

More than ever before, it is acknowledged that comprehensive policy strategies in the area of immigration and immigrant accreditation barriers are vital to Canada in keeping pace with the new market challenges set by the always changing and dynamic domestic and global economy. However, while attracting and integrating skilled professionals and tradespersons to Canada is a central topic on national development, the human capital and human resource contradiction is that many immigrants with professional qualifications trained outside of Canada continue to encounter barriers in the workforce. In terms of the strict economics of the situation, the Conference Board of Canada estimates that over 500,000 Canadians would earn an extra $4.1 to $5.9 billion annually if both their experiences and credentials were recognized (Committee on Citizenship and Immigration 2003). Similarly, studies collected by the World Education Services (WES) show comparable annual income losses in the $5 billion range for underemployed

immigrants in Canada, which would generate $1.5 billion in income taxes, assuming a 30 per cent tax rate. Additionally, WES -- which is a not-for-profit organization that produces evaluations of foreign degrees and diplomas -- determined more than 75 per cent of foreign credentials it evaluated in 2003 in engineering, health care and IT matched or exceeded Canadian standards (World Education Services http://www.wes.org).

This empirical disparity supports the contention that barriers in Canada inhibiting foreign-trained individuals are not only an abominable waste of talent, but are also strongly influenced by variables of ethnic origin, ancestry, race, colour and/or gender; and so, constitute systemic discrimination. Such discrimination is not only unlawful under both the governing provincial/territorial/federal human right legislation and under section 15(1) of the Canadian Charter of Right and Freedoms, but also leads to debilitating social costs of both an economic and non-economic nature, such as: 1) slower movement of professional services, 2) community frustration, 3) weaker immigrant integration, 4) human rights complaints and 5) macro-economic costs. All of these societal costs have direct impacts on productivity levels as well as on societal cohesion.

Meanwhile, in the context of Canadian multiculturalism, and increasing urbanized ethnoracial diversity, the groups most adversely affected by skills underutilization are composed of people of colour. According to a 2001 report by the National Anti-Racism Council (Saidullah 2001) entitled, "The Two Faces Of Canada," racially visible persons born in Canada earn almost 30% less on average that other native born persons. ... racially visible persons, native-born or not, are better educated than the native-born White population, they are underemployed to a disturbing degree, creating a large pool of highly qualified labour, ripe for exploitation ... [and] the cost of the low participation of racially visible persons in the Canadian workforce is $55 billion. In addition, the Ornstein (2000) report, "Ethno- Racial Inequality in the City of Toronto- An Analysis of the 1996 Census", released in May, 2000, indicates that despite their educational qualifications, unemployment rates for "Africans and Blacks" and South Asians have skyrocketed. Among Ethiopians, Ghanaians, Somalis, and the "other African nations," the overall unemployment rates respectively are, 24, 45, 24 and 23 percent, while the Pakistani and Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan, Tamil and "Multiple South Asian" groups have unemployment rates above 20 percent. This is in stark contrast to Toronto's average unemployment rate of 11 percent.

There is increasing evidence that visible minority immigrants are at a greater risk than non-visible minority immigrants to experience higher underemployment and unemployment levels and lower incomes returns due to credentials devaluation (Smith and Jackson 2002; Balakrishnan and Hou 2004). One major reason is thought to be related to the fact that the institutions which are targeted for non-accreditation are for the most part unexplainably non-Western and consequently non-White (Simmons 1998; Sharief 2005). This discrepancy in outcome has not only had a significant economic affect on racialized immigrant professionals, but has taken a psychological toll as well – in terms of the erosion of skill, loss of self-esteem, increased tensions both within and outside the alienated community (Brouwer 1999).

In the light of these formidable public policy and social justice challenges, it is argued by some observers that improving the utilization of immigrant skills must be addressed in terms of both "human capital" and "human rights" needs; and due to the complexity of the task, time pressures and underlying racial attitudes, major institutional innovations are necessary (Foster 1998; Reitz 2004). Hence, this recommends that the issue of immigrant skills utilization must be viewed through the lens of competence and the lens of equity rights. This first involves moving away from the current credential or certificate-based system to a competency-based system that reflects clear and concise criteria, and applies the same occupational standards to all. Secondly, it involves eliminating the double standard between citizens and immigrants in the workplace by

moving away from seeing their skills as a regulatory and assessment problem to envisioning them as an equity problem that requires treating professional licensure of foreign professionals as a right rather than simply a privilege. Finally, it is argued that this human capital and human rights format should be a priority and purview of immigrant-settlement policy. Recalibrating Canada's immigration program is the most cogent and cost-effective policy option to augment Canada's institutional capacity to improve the utilization of immigrant skills, and to monitor the administration of equity and fair-play (Foster 1998; Reitz 2004).

Postindustrial Canada and the New Recurring Theme of Race

Once upon a time Canada was described as a White-settler colony (Abele and Stasiulis 1989; Stasiulis and Jhappan 1995). Canada never had a formal "Whites Only" immigration policy as Australia had. However, it is well known that what was lacking in explicit policy was implemented through immigration practices such as the head tax on Chinese immigrants, the "continuous journey" provision on immigrants from several Asian and African countries knowing fully well that there were no ships plying directly between those continents and Canada and excluding Black immigrants from the Caribbean alleging that the Canadian winter would be too harsh on them. Indeed, the Eurocentrism of immigration was perhaps epitomized and made legendary by Sir Clifford Sifton, who as Minister of Interior responsible for lands administration and immigration from 1896 well into the twentieth century, uttered the famous words — "When I speak of quality ... [immigrants] ... I think a stalwart peasant in a sheep-skin coat, born on the soil, whose forefathers had been farmers for generations, with a stout wife and half-a-dozen children ..." (Dafoe, 1931: 319). Sir Clifford's words reflected the unproblematic focus in early immigration policy on racial homogeny. From the very first Canadian Immigration Act of 1869 through to the late twentieth century the flow of what state officials deemed to be "desirable" immigrants from "preferred countries" was mainly made up of White people from Britain, Europe and the United States. Even after the Second World War, according to Li (1996:106), between 1954 and 1967 about 83 percent of immigrants who came to Canada were from Europe while only 4 percent were from Asia, and 1 percent was from Africa.

Since the 1960s, following the introduction of the "universality" of immigration policy informally by the Progressive Conservative government in 1962 and by the Liberals formally in 1967, social scientists have documented increases in the demographics and frequency of migration flows around the world; they have analyzed the varying factors that shape immigration policies, and they have recognized the growing complexity of contemporary immigration flows. As Satzewich and Wong (2003: 378) have observed, contemporary migration flows in Canada not only involve the sanctioned movement of highly skilled professionals and technical workers who fill well-paying and socially desirable jobs; they also involve the movement of unskilled workers who fill undesirable, low-wage jobs that are hard to fill with domestic labour; and this all occurs essentially in urban labour markets where most immigrants are destined. The global masses now comprise a variation of the Marxian reserve-army thesis regarding flexible sources of labour. The conception of flexible labour continues to be relevant to contemporary world migration. As Satzewich and Wong (2003: 365) put it, "... While the phenomenon of 'runaway shops' has moved many industrial production sites to places where cheap labour is located, there are now large movements of professional, skilled, and unskilled labour into industrialized, developed countries such as Canada, the United States, and many other European countries." So, while in the past the "reserve army" consisted essentially of unskilled or semiskilled workers, today it also consists of highly skilled and technical workers.

In the late-twentieth century there was a paradigm shift in advanced Western economies from an economic system based primarily on the manufacture of physical goods (cars, television sets, refrigerators) to a economic system based on "knowledge goods" (computer software, global media and telecommunications information systems, virtual financial and other cyberspace markets, etc.,) at one end, and on "personal services" (fast-food restaurants, for example) at the other. The knowledge-based economic sector in the primary labour market tends to be associated with relatively high-status, well-paid occupations requiring high levels of education and training. While the service sector in the secondary labour market tends to be associated with low-status, low-paying and dead-end work. This trend toward the a dual economic system signifies what many writers refer to as a "postindustrial" political-economic order with a segmented labour market (Bell 1973; Hage and Powers 1992; Esping-Anderson 1993; Clement and Myles 1994).

The postindustrial economy of the 21st century is crosscut by what is often described as a the forces of "professionalization" at the high-end of the scale, and the forces of "McDonaldization" (Ritzer, 1998) at the low-end of the scale. Although it might seem a contradiction, or merely a function of a transition from the old industrial society based on unskilled or deskilled jobs to the contemporary society based on an increasingly skilled labour force, in fact both trends are indelible features of postindustrialism.

Today, one of the most striking features of contemporary skilled and unskilled immigration flows to postindustrial Canada is their ethnoracial diversity. The Global North, primarily the United States and Europe, now provide Canada with less than 30 percent of all immigrants in any given year, with the balance coming from the Global South – Asia, the Caribbean, South and Central America, and Africa. Indeed, the list of countries that now constitute the top ten sources of immigrants to Canada was unfathomable in Sir Clifford's old "Euroentric-social-class-universe" — comprised of English and French charter groups at one end of the social scale and supplemented by White ethnic peasants in sheepskin coats at the other.

As Castles and Miller (1993) note, virtually all highly-developed countries in the Western World have experienced relatively large-scale immigration since the mid-twentieth century. In comparing these countries they found the following common characteristics: (1) a dynamic process of migration, which transforms the temporary entry of workers and refugees into permanent settlers who form distinct ethnic groups; (2) economic and social marginalization of the immigrants; (3) community formation among immigrants; (4) increasing interaction between immigrant groups and the local population; and (5) the imperative for the state to react to immigration and ethnic diversity (Castles and Kosack 1984). In this connection, the 2001 Census of Canada enumerated hundreds of ethnic groups defined by their ancestry. So, while up to twenty years ago, people of colour made up less than 5 per cent of the population, demographic projections indicate that fully 25 per cent of Canada's population could soon be foreign-born (Statistics Canada, 2003).There are now large movements of multicultural and multi-coloured migrants from the Global South into postindustrialized countries such as Canada, the United States and many other European countries in the North, altering and transforming the global territorial format, and challenging nation-states to address diversity issues related to political and economic accommodation (Foster, 1998).

There is another important feature associated with the global immigration era. In most postindustrial countries, including Canada, there has been a general increase in the importance of higher education for access to employment opportunities across a wide range of occupations (Hunter 1988; Hunter and Leiper 1993; Baer 1999). The changing role of education and credentials in the labour markets has been referred to as a "knowledge economy," and is

reflected in a range of institutional developments, including change in the organizational role of personnel and its professionalization of the form of human resource management, changing relations between corporations and educational institutions in employee recruitment for certain critical occupation, rapid expansion of education institutions themselves, and the development of professional schools oriented toward the needs of local labour markets through increased control over the professions (Reitz, 2003: 5).

While many people in Canada's knowledge economy consider the attainment of jobs and social standing in the knowledge economy a reflection of personal talent and effort (that is, a "merit system"), the fact is they typically exaggerate the extent to which people control their destinies. For instance, Reitz (2003) framed the institutional and occupational changes associated with the emergence of today's knowledge economy and flexible labour force, and argued that the attendant influx of talented, skilled, unskilled and semi-skilled workers to Canada can be analyzed in terms of three distinct categories: regulated or licensed professions (like medicine), managerial occupations, and occupations where employees now have university degrees (BA-level qualifications). He examined differences between professional, managerial and other occupations in the immigrant skill assessment process in Canada, using census sample data for immigrants arriving between 1970 and 1996. Reitz found that over time, despite increases in educational requirements and professional standards in many occupations, immigrants appear to encounter increased skill discounting, including outside the professional and managerial occupations, where the educational qualifications of native-born competitors have risen most rapidly.

According to Reitz's research, although immigrant education and skills are frequently discounted in professional fields, the extent of such discounting is actually greater in the management of the growing knowledge-based industries, and greater still in occupations at lower skill levels. This seems to indicate that the underemployment of immigrants is magnified at various skill-levels, and exasperated by an escalating downward pressure and movement of immigrants from higher to lower skill-level occupations. As a result, in our increasingly knowledge-based economy, the non-recognition of immigrant qualifications is not only a prevailing workplace dysfunction, it is continuing to increase as one moves downwardly the labour force.

In terms of a human capital perspective, the promotion of meritocracy in an education-based economy should create pressures toward a more functionally-appropriate assessment of all credentials, including the foreign-acquired credentials of immigrants. At the economic level, human capital theory emphasizes that where education-based skills affect productivity, employers are under competitive pressure to seek the most highly educated skilled workers, and to disregard personal characteristics irrelevant to productivity, such as gender, birthplace, ethnic origin and race. Here, the impact of any prejudice or discrimination against immigrants, and in particular racial minority immigrants, would not necessarily be eliminated by such competitive pressures, but would be expected to diminish significantly. At the institutional level, codification of hiring and promotion procedures focusing on objective knowledge-based criteria for achievement could guard against arbitrary and potentially discriminatory practices. This would mitigate against undue and arbitrary dismissal of the relevance of foreign qualifications, and ensure fair and equitable hiring in the workplace on the basis of achievement.

However, despite the commonsense notions in everyday life that contemporary Canada is a society where anyone can get a good job and get ahead if only she or he tries hard enough, one of this country's most salient sociological features is that it has historically been highly stratified along ascribe rather than achieved lines. Canada is, in John Porter's (1965) original and instructive terms, hierarchical consortium of ascribed group status that is both at cross-purposes

with and undermines equal opportunity and cultural democracy. In his seminal study of "The Vertical Mosaic" over forty years ago, he contoured the hierarchical relationship between modern Canada's many cultural groups as a recurring theme in the formation of class and power. As he put it then,

> In a society which is made up of many cultural groups there is usually some relationship between a person's membership in these groups and his class position and, consequently, his chances of reaching positions of power. Because the Canadian people are often referred to as a mosaic composed of different ethnic groups, the title, "The Vertical Mosaic," was originally given to the chapter which examines the relationship between ethnicity and social class. As the study proceeded, however, the hierarchical relationship between Canada's many cultural groups became recurring theme in class and power. For example, it became clear that the Canadians of British origin have retained, within the elite structure of the society, the charter group status with which they started out, and that in some institutional settings the French have been admitted as a co-charter group whereas in others they have not. The title, "The Vertical Mosaic," therefore seemed to be an appropriate link between the two parts of the book (Porter, 1965: xii-xiii).

Porter's twentieth-century Canada was a system of graduated differential ethnic privilege entrenched in an unequal distribution of valued resources. It has more recently been suggested, however, that the ethnic group disparities encountered by Porter have decreased continuously first in education, then in occupation over the last several decades in Canada. The existing ethnic income disparity, as a remaining vestige of the charter-group-sanctioned ethnic elitism that once drove the Canadian society in all socioeconomic elements, is believed to be similar to those in education and occupation has declined over time (Herberg 1990: 218). Some subsequent studies have indicated that any privileged position that the charter groups may have had historically in the occupational structure has been effectively challenged by other European ethnic groups (Tepperman, 1975; Darroch, 1979). The sociological implication here, is that in our 21st century, postindustrial and cosmopolitan world, simplistic claims of ethnic identity as a hindrance to social mobility must be rejected because the causal relationship between cultural identity and social mobility today is minimal to non-existent (Isajiw, Sever, and Driedger, 1993).

In short, Canadian society's recurring theme has changed. Yet, it is imporatant to grasp the fact that the sociological objective is still the same as when Porter first introduced the "ethnically blocked mobility thesis" (Hou and Balakrishnan, 1996) – that is, to examine a system of privilege where higher occupational levels are preserved, or tend to be preserved, for particular social groups.

In order unpack the recurrent theme(s) of contemporary cosmopolitan and postindustrial society, some sociologists have hypothesized "the discrimination thesis" (Hou and Balakrishnan, 1996), which attributes the inferior position that exist today for some visible minority groups to the socio-economic structure of the society. Discrimination is the actions or practices of dominant group members that have a harmful impact on members of subordinate groups (Feagin and Feagin, 1998).. For instance, given that despite higher educational levels and occupational attainment of immigrants, visibility and social distance manifest themselves in income inequality which impact the degree and speed of integration into Canadian society (Li, 1988; Reitz, 1990); it can be hypothesized that visibility has replaced cultural group status as a recurring theme and focus of discrimination and differential rewards in the hierarchical structure of power and class

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in Canadian society. Visibility (or colour) and invisibility (or Whiteness) have replaced ethnic culture as the primary base for the new system of privilege that is also primarily manifest in contemporary occupational structures.

In postindustrial societies, like Canada, there is evidence to suggest that the relationship between dominant and sub-dominant groups does not usually extend over diverse ethnoracial relationships in a way that reinforces institutional realms across the institutional spectrum of society. On the contrary, today in the social sphere, everyday life does not reflect a "back of the bus" formal segregation and hierarchy, and there are no public spaces designated for "Whites Only" or "Coloured Only." This pattern in social institutions gives contemporary pluralism a non-caste-like public image in which the society looks as though it is not resistant to change or to the social mobility of people of colour. Instead, visible minority progress from accommodation to assimilation into the mainstream appears to be, and is presented as, a straightforward "first come, first serve queue" and "point system" proposition – a matter of individual merit and personal initiative. However, the fluidity of the social institution realm does not necessarily correspond or interface with the political economy, where the subtlety of racial domination and discrimination in the workplace is glossed over and hidden by the informality of unassuming policies and practices that are woven into the framework of economic institutions, and function to restrict or exclude people of colour from material rewards and privileges.

Canadian immigration policy is an example of a political economic institution that reveals specific racialized biases. Like many other social problems, racialized immigration signals a discrepancy between the ideals and realities of Canadian society today. While equality of opportunity and freedom for all – regardless of country of origin, body colour, creed, or language – are stated ideals of this country, many subordinate minority group members experience discrimination on the basis of racializing factors, regardless of there statuses. So, although passage of employment equity legislation, human rights legislation, official promotion of multiculturalism, and the introduction of "universality" in Canada's immigration system are aimed at eliminating overt institutional discrimination in and by Canadian society, often people of colour, and particularly visible immigrants, are force to take up residence and stay on the periphery of the economic centres of society (Foster 2002). Accordingly, in the contemporary workplace, while there are variations between visible minority groups in terms of income levels, research has consistently found earnings disadvantages are particularly large for immigrants from non-European backgrounds most distant form the mainstream population in terms of racial characteristics (Reitz and Sklar 1997).

In the end, body colour is the source of the first dialectical tension of the contemporary postindustrial political economy, albeit obscured by the naturalization and normalization of White privilege. Here, discrimination persists in institutional settings created by White people for White people, which are based on White people's experiences, with the result that corporate institutional structures and cultures rarely accommodate the value systems of people of colour, their styles of interacting, or the complexities in their lives. Mainstream institutions are crafted by the dominant group and either deliberately or inadvertently reflect and normalize dominant values, priorities, agendas, and practices as superior, necessary or inevitable (Fleras and Elliott 1999). As a result, some institutions or individuals may control and limit rights or access to resources for certain minority groups by deliberately or otherwise imposing sets of unfair entry restrictions.

The Profile and Study of Individual and Structural Barrier

Although the facts may not be in dispute, the reasons for credentials devaluation and skills discounting are still vigourously contested. (Basran and Zong, 1998). The major debate in sociological literature today revolves around the extent to which individual factors or structural factors contribute to the social problem of the integration if immigrant skills into the Canadian workplace.

The Social Facts: Before engaging the sociological research debate, here is a review of the social facts. In the 1960s, immigration policy reforms eliminated preferences for immigrants of European origin and implemented a points-based system for economic immigrants as a strategy to ensure quality-control for maximum employability in an economy where skilled labor was becoming a priority. The point system allowed immigrants to be chosen on the basis of suitability to Canada and the Canadian labor market needs, and to ostensibly mitigate against any discrimination owing to religion, race or country of origin (Foster 1998: 72-74). Immigrants gained points on such individual factors as occupational attainment or skills, educational level, knowledge of English or French and age. Consequently, the source countries of immigrants became more diversified even while admission requirements became more refined around economic, value-added criteria. Statistics Canada's (2003) most recent release of the demographic trends from the 2001 census confirming that visible minorities now make up 13.4 per cent of Canada's population. In total, 58 per cent of the immigrants arriving since the prior census in 1996 came from Asia, 20 per cent from Europe, 11 per cent from the Caribbean, Central and South America, 8 per cent from Africa and 3 per cent from the United States. Chinese people are now Canada's largest visible minority group, with a population of more than one million. They now make up 3.5 per cent of Canada's population, followed by those of South Asian origin (3 per cent) and Black (2.2 per cent). Up to twenty years ago, minorities made up less than 5 per cent of the population. However, demographic projections indicate that fully 25 per cent of Canada's population could soon be foreign-born. Underlying this contemporary social context are questions arising from the interrelation between immigration issues and increasing ethnocultural and racial diversity. So, while surveys often deal with foreign-trained professional immigrants in general de-racializing the discourse, it can be noted that visible minority foreign-trained professionals have a distinctive cultural background and experience that differs from White foreign-trained professionals, and may tend to be more disadvantaged even in a contemporary labour market in which education-based skills are accentuated and meritocratic practices are espoused.

In this connection, sociological research in the Durkheimian spirit, has clearly recognized the "social fact" (Durkheim 1964a/1895) that contemporary immigration to Canada in its link to the political economy is both urbanized and racially segmented. That is, a large number of foreign-trained professional immigrants have experienced downward social mobility after immigrating to urban Canada, and that the significant human capital brought in by immigrants has been underutilized. Further, it is also a well established social fact that at the heart of this dynamic, the economic returns to human capital — education and labour market experience — appear to be lower for immigrants who belong to visible minorities, than for White ethnic immigrants or native-born Canadians (Baker and Benjamin 1994). Richmond, for example, found that despite high levels of education, visible minority immigrants from Third World countries appear to be particularly vulnerable in the Canadian urban labour market (1984: 253). These contemporary social facts are not in dispute: immigrant skills are significantly discounted in urban Canada, and the groups affected by skills underutilization are primarily composed of racial minorities (Reitz, 2005).

The Sociological Debate: Yet, a debate has arisen regarding the reasons for credentials devaluation and skills discounting (Basran and Zong, 1998). This debate has several research sub-sets and is organized around the issue of whether individual factors are mainly responsible for immigrants' occupational disadvantages, or whether it may be attributable to structural and institutionalized barriers. For example, some research studies have accentuated the focus on individual attributes, such lacking Canadian experience and inadequate command of English as major occupational limitations for immigrant professionals (Ornstein and Sharma, 1983; Basavarajappa and Verma, 1985). A focus on individual factors in determining occupational disadvantage looks at differences in "***achieved***" social and economic characteristics, acquired through personal attributes and efforts. In other more structurally focused studies, barriers are depicted as institutions failing to recognize credentials of foreign-trained professionals, and professional organizations acting as gatekeepers to disadvantage professional immigrants. These studies suggest that control of entry to the professions has caused systematic exclusion and occupational disadvantages for professional immigrants (Boyd, 1985; Trovato and Grindstaff, 1986; McDade, 1987; Ralston, 1988; Beach and Worswick, 1989; Rajagopal, 1990; Kraun et al. 2000). A focus on structural and institutional factors in determining occupational disadvantage looks at differences in "***ascribed***" status of individuals, such as differences attributed to ethnicity and race.

Hence, the problem complex for contemporary research is as follows -- Given that there are occupational disadvantages for immigrants that cross colour lines, is it primarily the result of the structural and institutional resistance in society, or is it primarily the result of more complex demographic or motivational factors?

The First Research Theme Stresses Individual Factors Approach: In an open society that sanctions achievement and merit in the form of education-based skills, how do we account for occupational disadvantage across colour lines? Much research suggests, the fact that racial minorities experience greater problems of skill underutilization is not conclusive or unproblematic evidence of racial discrimination. Some researchers argue, particularly in the context of a diverse multicultural and multiracial society, that the influences of confounding factors on income differences are complicated; therefore, without careful controls of demographic and motivational influences, structural factors (such as ethnicity and race) in income differences (and therefore, discrimination) may be exaggerated. Different rates of occupational return may relate more to personal qualifications than to blocked mobility. In this regard, it is argued that multivariate analysis is essential in adjusting the effects of other influential factors, such as schooling, age, sex, nativity, language, occupation, and labour-force activity (Boyd, 1992). From an individual factor approach, without giving adequate attention to such demographic and motivational factors as age at immigration, period of immigration, official language proficiency and so on, it is suggested there can be a propensity to misread discrimination, and therefore, offer inadequate solutions.

One general finding in the literature is that after controlling for various factors that affect earnings, including years of education and labour market experience, immigrants appear to start at a significant disadvantage relative to native-born Canadians when they enter the country, but then catch up over time – the well-known "years since immigration" effect. Virtually, all ethnic groups have experienced overall improvement in educational attainment over the last three decades and generations. Hence, the relative differences among ethnic groups have attenuated (Herberg 1990; Shamai 1992). The implication here, is that at some point in the individual experiential process the immigrant gap is, or could be, fully eliminated. The expectation of better prospects for the second generation is based, in part, on the importance attached to education by

highly educated immigrants, which they likely pass on to their children. Also, employers are more likely to accept this second generation, because their education, unlike that of their parents, will have been acquired in Canada. Previous studies on the offspring of immigrants generally confirm this optimism (Boyd 1992). However, in the most recent work there seems to be general agreement that for non-White immigrants who have arrived in Canada since the 1980s, the initial earnings gap has widened and the catch-up rate has slowed down (Baker and Benjamin 1994), and visible professionals may find it difficult to obtain Canadian accreditation for the professional standing they held in their country of origin. Black men of Caribbean origin, for example, seem to carry a long-term disadvantage and may never reach the wage level that one might expect (Simmons and Plaza, 1995).

One group of researchers found evidence that minorities who have at least one degree from Canada and one from abroad have a very significant income premium, even when compared to White immigrants with the same mix of credentials (Alboim, Finnie and Ming 2005). Further, this research argues, minority immigrants with multiple degrees do exceptionally well; immigrants of colour with only a foreign degree do very poorly, whereas similarly educated White immigrants earn substantial returns to their schooling; there is very little difference between White and visible minority immigrants who obtain their university degrees in Canada; there is, similarly, little difference in the returns to a Canadian degree between White and nonwhite native-born Canadians. The latter two sets (i.e., immigrants with Canadian degrees and the native-born — visible minority or White, in either case) all do about the same as each other (Alboim, et al. 2005).

What conclusions do the researchers draw from these results? First, they suggest it is evident that a foreign degree held by an immigrant who belongs to a visible minority group is heavily discounted in the Canadian labour market, which is consistent with the sociological research consensus findings. However, they go further to suggest that there is little difference in the (substantial) returns to degrees obtained in Canada on the part of immigrants of colour and White immigrants (the returns are actually estimated to be slightly greater for people of colour) and that native-born members of visible minority groups holding degrees do about as well (again, actually a little higher) as their White cohorts. From this, the researchers conclude that direct racial discrimination seems unlikely to be the reason — or at least the sole reason — for this gap. That said, the researchers can not say why non-White immigrants with foreign degrees earn such a low return to their schooling, and cannot rule out some sort of prejudice towards foreign education obtained in certain countries, although differences in the type and quality of schooling, or simply an inability on the part of Canadians to accurately judge the worth of foreign degrees (i.e., an information problem), seem to be more likely explanations (Alboim, et. al. 2005).

Other "confounding factors" research has found that while foreign-born visible minority members are at a disadvantage in the wage labour force, visible minorities who are native-born and self-employed do substantially better than the general self-employed Canadian-born population (Maxim, 1992). It has been suggested that with the decline of manufacturing jobs in contemporary Canada and the erosion of the standard employment relationship,opportunities for upward mobility for more recent cohorts of immigrants are tied to self-employment or entrepreneurship within an ethnic economy (Satzewich and Wong, 2003). This situation is somewhat akin to earlier times in Canada when entrepreneurship was chosen by groups like the Chinese and Jewish communities because of blocked mobility in the mainstream labour market. There is some evidence to suggest that contemporary ethnoracial entrepreneurship is also consistent with the new global formation of the "transnational" actor (Portes, 1999), and the related formation of the international approach to social life and citizenship (cultivating

networks, activities, economic enterprises, patterns of living, and ideologies that span national borders). Rather than the old paradigm of immigration where international migrants broke radically with their ancestral homes to start life afresh in their new homeland, in the new paradigm of transnationalism emphasizes the link that immigrant and ethnic communities retain and cultivate with families, institutions, and political economies abroad (Satzewich and Wong, 2003). Ethnic entrepreneurship and the relate transnational economic enterprises may offer opportunities to immigrants of modest backgrounds to escape dead-end menial jobs and make their way into the middle class or petite bourgeoisie (Portes 1999, 471). On the surface, this would seem to support the individual-factor focus and approach to the examination of immigrant earnings inequality. Based on a simple overall structural-group comparison of total incomes, certain visible minorities, particularly those who cultivate a transnational entrepreneurial spirit, have higher incomes than some White ethnic groups.

Some research has referenced demographic and motivational factors in regard to the selectivity of immigration procedures. For instance, it has been found that as a group, Asians have experienced the greatest social economic advancement in recent years. On one hand, this social fact appears to imply that there is a place in Canada's vertical mosaic for upward mobility of some visible ethnic groups (Shamai, 1992). On the other, there are also studies that attribute this apparent success to the selectivity of the immigration point system, and an increase in the number of Asian immigrants over the last three decades (Beaujot, Basaarajappa, and Verma 1988: 32-35). It has also been suggested that new immigration regulations may have been more stringently applied in the selection of non-European immigrants, thereby increasing there entry levels of human capital (Kalbach and Richard, 1988). In view of all of these potential variables and variants, it is possible that some minority groups may have high educational attainments, due either to the selectivity of immigration or to high aspirations and individual efforts.

Hou and Balakrishanan (1996) found, however, that the selectivity of immigration only contributes partly to the achievement of visible minorities in education. They argue that income inequality on the basis of qualifications is most probably related to discrimination as opposed to demographic factors such as immigration status and language, and motivations as manifested in the improvement of education. This finding is substantiated in two ways. The first substantiation for this argument is that while there is some evidence of variability within both non-visible minority groups and within visible minorities in terms of the effects of various individual factors on their income levels, the patterns and processes of integration into Canadian society for non-visible minorities and visible minorities are different and clearly distinct. The second substantiation (which is admittedly closely related) is that while income equality has materialized in spite of educational differences for some European groups, it has not for visible minorities. All in all, in Canada, income differentials exist between and within non-visible and visible minority groups. However, as opposed to non-visible ethnic minorities, after adjusting for variations in educational and occupational distributions, most visible minorities receive less income return from educational and occupational achievements. The fact that all visible minorities experience a certain amount of income inequality, indicates that visibility has an additional effect on income inequality in Canadian society. Notwithstanding the remarkable and diversified accomplishments in education and occupational attainment, people of colour are generally disadvantaged in income. In this sense, as Hou and Balakerishan (1996: 282) argue, we can say that visible minorities follow a different path of integration into contemporary Canadian society.

The Second Research Theme Stresses Structural Factors. Accentuating the importance of higher education in postindustrial societies like Canada is thought to be consistent with an "open society" concept based on the principle of equality of opportunity, which holds out

rewards to develop the talents and encourage the efforts of everyone. This mandates that an individual's accomplishments are basically determine by personal attributes and efforts. Earnings, for instance, are the rewards for an individual's investment in human capital. Therefore, income differentials among individuals should simply reflect their differences in education, occupation, age, and other achieved social and economic characteristics. The ascribed status of individuals, such as visible ethnicity and race, should not enter into the equation. In this sense, any racialized pattern differences in income may be an important indicator of discrimination.

The second research theme stresses structural factors and racialized patterned differences as indicators of discrimination in the recognition of foreign credentials of professional immigrants. This suggests, in conjunction with "the discrimination thesis," that control of entry to the professions has caused systematic exclusion and occupational disadvantages for professional immigrants (Boyd, 1985; McDade, 1988; Trovato and Grindstaff, 1986; Rajagopal, 1990; Ralston, 1988; Beach and Worswick, 1989). For instance, Boyd provides an analysis of differences between Canadian-born and foreign-born workers in the acquisition of occupational status. Boyd argues that the Canadian-born receive a greater return for their education compared to the foreign-born because of "difficulties of transferring educational skill across national boundaries" (Boyd, 1985: 405). Several studies use census data to demonstrate the difficulties in translating educational achievements into occupational advantage that are faced by selected cohorts of immigrants (Trovato and Grindstaff, 1986; Grindstaff, 1986). Pendakur and Pendakur's research (1996: 26) suggests that even when controlling for occupation, industry, education, potential experience, CMA, official language knowledge and household type, visible minorities earn significantly less than native-born white workers. Reitz (2001) argues the cause of low earnings among immigrants is overwhelmingly pay inequity, with some underutilization of skills. Employers often do not recognize foreign education and experience (Reitz, 2001).

Such discrimination may not only be unlawful under both the governing provincial/ territorial/federal human right legislation and under section 15(1) of the Canadian Charter of Right and Freedoms (See Access! Task Force Report 1989), but also leads to debilitating social costs of both an economic and non-economic nature, such as: 1) slower movement of professional services, 2) community frustration, 3) weaker immigrant integration, 4) race relations tensions, 5) human rights complaints and 6) macro-economic costs. All of these societal costs have direct impacts on productivity levels as well as on societal cohesion.

Dynamic interplay of social forces and the collective experiences of individuals: Although the individual approach has elucidated some personal difficulties, it cannot explained how the structural factors pertaining to policies, criteria, and evaluation procedures also contribute to occupational disadvantages for foreign-trained professionals. In a Durkheimian sense, failure to locate individual barriers in social conditions and structural arrangements tends to blame immigrant professionals themselves for failing to acquire professional jobs in Canada. Individual attributes can be influenced by structural conditions. However, individual behaviour does not evolve in a vacuum. For example, lacking Canadian experience is an individual attribute, but it is related to employers refusing to recognize foreign credentials and to hire immigrants in jobs suited to their training. Samuels (2004) notes that the use of "Canadian experience" most likely is used as a euphemism for racism. From the vantage point of visible minority foreign-trained professionals, it would not be accurate to consider their occupational disadvantages as resulting from two types of barriers in isolation. Instead, their visible status can have the effect of precluding a smooth transition into Canadian society, while public reaction to their physical appearance and cultural differences can only complicate the settlement process.

Faviola Fernandez, of the Policy Roundtable Mobilizing Professions and Trades (PROMPT), affirmed that earnings disadvantages can be particularly egregious for visible minority immigrants, whose physical appearance and cultural backgrounds are most distant from the White mainstream population. Immigrants from Non-European, racialized communities face the steepest downward shifts in career mobility and the highest levels of poverty (Second Annual Law and Diversity Conference 2004).

Fernandez recounted the personal baptism in social and economic inequities and the racialization of poverty she encounter in Canada that eventually shocked her into a greater community involvement. After immigrating to Canada three years ago in possession of an honours degree in Literature and Linguistics from the University of Singapore and a Masters degree in Applied Linguistics from the University of Essex, UK, Fernandez discovered her foreign-acquired degrees where not recognized toward the procurement of an Ontario Teaching Certificate. Instead, since her arrival she has struggled to work in part-time and contract positions as an ESL teacher, and after-school program co-ordinator and a recreation project co-ordinator for newcomer children. As is common among visible minority job-seekers, both native and newcomer, Fernandez first experienced employment discrimination in a unique form of Canadian "low-grade racism," embodied by (as she put it) "people who could be polite even when they were being impolite." (Second Annual Law and Diversity Conference 2004).

Both visible minority natives and newcomers are regularly exposed to subtle and informal exploitation in the Canadian workplace that can lead to a demoralizing sense of despair and loss of dignity. However, visible minority newcomers are further exposed to the immobilizing catch-22 of the "Canadian experience" rule – which holds that you need Canadian experience to get a job, but you can't get a job because you don't have Canadian experience. All of this means that immigrants from racialized communities, at the remotest distance from the White mainstream population, are typically relegated to the most "vulnerable place in society ... where there is a loss of control over your life ... with a limited right to participate in the processes to gain a right to participate," as Fernandez put it. (Second Annual Law and Diversity Conference 2004)

It has be noted that a "Catch-22" for visible minority foreign-trained professionals is a constant: Without Canadian experience, many cannot get certified even with extensive training; without a certificate, they cannot get the experience to secure employment or peer acceptance (Van Rijn 1999). Reitz (2003: 5-6) argues that even when transferability is not at issue (i.e, when occupational or education standards or institutional differences in the immigrants place of origin are not questioned) traditional prejudice may be operant, and the institutional development of society may present barriers. Education may be valued for reasons other than its purely functional relevance, such as its prestige or authority-enhancing capacity, attributes with foreign credentials, and foreigners themselves, my lack. Some employers may tend to distrust the relevance of foreign qualifications because they lack familiarity with them, and because of a fear of the risks involved in "taking a chance" on what may be seen as an unknown quantity. Bureaucratic procedures in hiring may be tailored to local or "conventionally esteemed" educational institutions, disadvantaging the foreign-trained. Since these traditional prejudices and conventional standards of authority tend to breakdown along geographic and colour lines, they represent a form of racialization of skill-recognition that would compound other individual obstacles faced by immigrants, such as those based on language and motivation. It is even been suggested that the contemporary workplace phenomenon of "managerial cloning" (Arrow, Bowles and Durlauf 2000) is a possibly related tendency, which further functions to ensure and entrench Whiteness at the level of corporate power and decision-making.

A Conference Board (2004) briefing report, entitled "The Voices of Visible Minorities: Speaking Out on Breaking Down Barriers," summarizes seven focus group discussions with successful immigrant and Canadian-born managers
and professionals. Participants in Conference Board focus groups, reported that organizations in Canada have regularized use of duplicitous terms like "lack of fit" to exclude talented visible minorities from senior positions. Immigrants of colour face particularly daunting, albeit unspoken, barriers to achieving career success that go way beyond psychometric career counseling strategies – from lost opportunities because they speak with an accent to non-recognition of their work experience or credentials. Many immigrants felt that in Canada, speaking with an accent or owning a foreign credential is often used by employers an excuse to screen them out of job competitions. As a consequence, many talented immigrants are routinely prevented from working in their fields, even in professions where labour shortages already exist.

The low valuation of foreign credentials together with the demand for Canadian experience is ethnocentric and cannot be separated from the ethnoracial dimension of disparity. European and American credentials are easily translatable because they are part of the dominant "whitestream" culture. Furthermore, as Keung (2005) observers, visible minority immigrants who are forced to compete for menial jobs are shaped negatively in public perception, which in turn takes the onus off of the government who responds with cutbacks while skilled jobs go unfilled, this vicious circle also creates heightened competition for menial jobs. Immigrants living in poverty could create pressures – or at least the perception of pressures – on the social safety net. This could lead, in turn, to public demands for a reduction in social programs and other support for immigrants. Here, we can expect perception of visible immigrants as a liability or social problem to become more widespread (Keung 2005).

Finally, even those visible minority immigrant women and men who have "made it" continue to feel undervalued and underappreciated, looked down upon by the dominant sector, and torn between the cross-cutting pressures of affirming their distinctiveness while accepting the norms and practices of White middle class society (Fleras and Elliott, 1999: 276).

So, while it is sometimes difficult to separate individual factors from structural factors, ethnoracial stratification does need to be examined dynamically. In the end, we live in a world were the dynamics of human enterprise and social outcomes are primarily filtered through a techno-coloured lens – which is not always responsive to individual skills, aptitudes, values, personality traits and/or interests. By contrast, objective research consistently reveals that a commitment to social justice has to recognize the need for collective over individual initiative when the situation demands. It also endorses the principle of social intervention for true equality, since equal outcomes in the workplace are unlikely to arise from competitive market forces.

Two key approaches used to study structural barriers

The first approach to the study of discriminatory barriers focuses on the policies, regulations and procedures that control entry and advancement in the work place. Even in a labour market in which education-based skills are significant, and meritocratic practice is espoused, immigrants may experience structural difficulties. The first key approach to the study of these difficulties focuses on policies, regulations, and procedures which are evident in government reports concentrating on specific components of the accreditation process (Task Force on Access to Professions and Trades in Ontario, 1989; Alberta Task Force on the Recognition of Foreign Qualifications, 1992; Manitoba Working Group on Immigrant Credentials, 1992; Employment and Immigration Canada, 1993). Access to information on

accreditation procedures, agencies involved in the assessment, and the nature of the evaluation itself are some of the aspects that have been studied by this approach.

Culminating with Ontario's 1989 ACCESS! Report and the 1997 federal government Not Just Numbers Report, all reputable structurally-oriented research now seem to agree on the acknowledged barriers faced by foreign-trained immigrants in having their skills and credentials recognized - including the various rules of the provincial bodies which regulate access to professions and trades through licensing and registration requirements, the requirements of education institutions and the hiring and promotion rules of employers. The report concludes that the current problem is not so much identifying the barriers, but rather establishing effective strategies for their elimination.

The 1989 Access! Task Force Report (1989) also looks at whether the Charter of Rights and Freedoms applies to licensing bodies. It reviews admissions criteria, appeal requirements and additional examinations for internationally trained candidates and concludes that the Charter may apply if the licensing practices are found to be discriminatory. The report acknowledged the primary obligation of occupational bodies is to protect the public interest with respect to health, safety, and welfare. However, in fulfilling this obligation, the bodies must also consider the duty to respect an individual's right to equality of opportunity and to equal treatment without unreasonable discrimination. The report goes on to review the barriers to entry, including:

- Lack of clear information about professional standards and registration requirements
- Problems getting academic qualifications and experience recognized
- Registration exams may not give a full or fair reflection of individuals' actual knowledge and skills
- Language tests may not test the skills actually required to practice the occupation
- Lack of upgrading and bridge training opportunities
- Lack of internal appeal mechanisms

According the ACCESS report, the assessment of equivalency is the stage that is the least standardized and most difficult for applicants. It recommended a Prior Learning Assessment Network (PLAN) to address the problems in assessing equivalency. The PLAN proposal was recommended as a move away from a certificate-based system toward a competency-based system.

Subsequent analysis into the problem in assessing equivalency has built on this recommendation. In the medical profession, for example, Joan Atlin, Executive Director, Association of International Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, has emphasized the importance of focusing on the doctor shortage in Ontario through a lens of competence and a lens of rights – human rights and the Charter of Rights. The question is, as Atlin put it – Why is medical licensure a right for Canadians and a privilege for internationally trained physicians? (Second Annual Law and Diversity Conference 2004).

At present, internationally trained physicians have to compete with each other for the limited assessment and training positions available, and only about 10 to 15 percent of the talent pool find a placement. At the end of the process, those who do succeed in obtaining a licence to practice also have to fulfill a five-year return of service contract with the government. This means that the present licensure system is creating two classes of Canadians – one class with full access and the other class who have to compromise and compete before they can gain access to the steps to prove competency. So, according to Atlin, Canada's doctor shortage is not only a regulatory and assessment problem but an equity problem as well, that requires a "paradigm shift" to eliminate the double standards that are embedded in the medical profession and society.

Internationally trained physicians are "treated like labour market commodities and not like citizens with equality rights." Yet, the possibility of a self-sufficient system that can provide adequate service to all Ontarians and Canadians lies precisely in organizing social policy principles around equity and fair practice, actualizing our already existing human resources (Second Annual Law and Diversity Conference 2004).

The Council of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario have recently taken steps toward tackling our proverbial health-care problem, and has forwarded recommendations to the health ministry proposing a new assessment program for foreign-trained physicians created at the province's five medical schools, which includes a the new "fast-tracking process" to be coupled with other state initiatives like "location incentives" for under-serviced areas and "medical school tuition subsidies."

However, from the perspective of internationally trained physicians, Atlin argues for a new "equity rights" action plan as well. This recommends (1) a focus on an adequate number of training opportunities, and (2) a focus on competencies that reflect clear and concise criteria and apply the same standards to all. In this perspective, anybody who can perform to the standard that is accepted by society should have an opportunity to practice medicine. Atlin notes, for many internationally trained physicians this was the working assumption about this country before they emigrated. It was only after their arrival that they realized that they had been seduced and abandoned (Second Annual Law and Diversity Conference 2004).

Seeing the issue of immigrant skills utilization through the lens of equity rights as well as the lens of competencies recommends a systemic solution for vulnerable immigrants that goes beyond such things as an ad-hoc individual complaints processes, or even rules-tinkering by self-governing professional organizations or state officials. Some sociologists maintain that the removal of overt and covert systemic barriers in a way that preserves human rights and professional standards would involve the implementation of programs like a "licensing equity plan" by regulatory and licensing bodies and/or the implementation of an "employment equity plan" by employers, under the coherent supervision of the state's immigration program and a national immigrant-settlement policy (Foster 1998).

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The second approach to the study of discriminatory barriers focuses on experience and perceptions. An attitudinal survey conducted in 1990 by Decima Research Ltd. (cited in Reitz and Breton, 1994: 68) showed that 90 percent of Canadians agreed with the statement, "All races are created equal." Yet, while Canadian attitudes may conjure up images of a cohesive and egalitarian diversity, in a 2005 Ipsos-Reid poll conducted on a randomly selected sample of 1,001 Canadians it was found that one in six adults, or 17 per cent of those surveyed, said they had experienced racism personally. The survey also found that seven per cent, or 1.7 million Canadians, would not welcome someone of another race as a next-door neighbour. As well, 13 per cent (3.1 million Canadians) said they would never marry or have a relationship with a person of another race, and 15 per cent (3.4 million Canadians) said skin colour makes a difference in their workplace (CTV.ca News Staff, Mar. 21 2005).

Today most Canadians tend to believe that all races are created equal, and the dominant White majority are generally open to residency and citizenship and commingling with and among other ethnic and racial minorities in public places and social events. But these studies also indicate that this same dominant majority are hesitant about minorities marrying into their families, and they also strongly resist the admittance of minorities to the higher occupational structures in the work world. Hence, a report released by the Canadian Race Relations Foundation (2000), entitled "Unequal Access: A Canadian Profile of Racial Differences in Education, Employment and Income," confirmed that ethnoracial diversity is generally seen at

the bottom and middle level of the labour force pyramid, but, "the higher the pyramid, the less diverse and the Whiter it becomes."

Immigrant surveys and immigrant-serving agencies also suggest that the accreditation process in the professions/trades are not inclusive. The professions/trades would prefer to restrict the supply of those who are in the profession/trade so that its members can continue to enjoy a higher level of income. This has been particularly true among physicians and surgeons, dentists, and veterinarians among the professions (Samuels, 2004).

In many survey research projects, foreign-trained professionals are typically asked to describe their own perceptions of credential problems and occupational disadvantages (Ontario, 1980, 1984; Basran and Bolaria, 1985; Fernando and Prasad, 1986; Taylor, 1987; Szado, 1987). Based on such an approach, for example, Fernando and Prasad report that among professional immigrants interviewed, particularly doctors and engineers, 71 percent had perceived barriers to full recognition (Fernando and Prasad, 1986).

Basran and Zong's (1998) research emphasized the importance of personal experience and perceptions in understanding both individual and structural barriers. In their study of 404 Indo and Chinese immigrant professionals residing in the Vancouver area found only 18% of them at the time of the study worked in their own profession in Canada. Only 6% agreed that the provincial governments had conducted a fair recognition of their foreign credentials. When asked about the possible sources of discrimination in the accreditation process, 65% reported colour, 69% nationality or ethnic origin and 79% the inability to speak English.

Samuels (2004) interviewed nine (not necessarily representative) foreign-trained graduates of various disciplines from developing countries in Ontario. All except one considers that they are excluded from becoming accredited because of undertones of racism prevailing in various practices by accreditation agencies. Veterinarians and Dentists are particularly affected. Veterinarians interviewed state that there is a "strong element of exclusion" felt by graduates from developing countries since internship positions are very limited and there are not many visible minorities who own animal hospitals. The lack of Canadian experience, accent and culture of visible minorities prevent them from getting internship positions even when their help is offered free of charge, they maintain. Most of them say "somewhere race is coming into play".

The Ethnic Diversity Survey (2003) offers a portrait of the entire ethno-cultural make-up of the Canadian population in regard to the experience and perception of discriminatory barriers. The survey asked respondents how often they felt out of place in Canada because of their ethnicity, culture, race skin colour, language, accent or religion. The research found that several distinctive ethno-cultural patterns emerged. First, visible minorities[2] were more likely than others to say that they felt uncomfortable or out of place in Canada at least some of the time because of their ethnicity, culture, race, skin colour, language, accent or religion. It also found that one in five visible minorities (20%) experienced discrimination or unfair treatment "sometimes or "often," while only one in 20 (5%) of non-visible minorities reported experiencing discrimination or unfair treatment sometimes or often because of the same ethno-cultural indicators. Further, among the indicators of discrimination or unfair treatment, race or colour was the most common reason for perceived discrimination or unfair treatment. Finally, the research found that discrimination or unfair treatment was most likely to occur in the workplace.

In total, 24% of all visible minorities in Canada said that they felt uncomfortable or out of place because of their ethno-cultural characteristics all, or most or some of the time. This was almost three times the share of people who were not visible minorities who felt uncomfortable. Generational differences also indicate that visible minorities may feel uncomfortable for a longer period of time than do their non-visible minority counterparts after they or their families arrive in

Canada. First generation visible minorities who had arrived between 1991 and 2001, 29% said they felt uncomfortable or out of place in Canada some, most or all of the time. This proportion was only slightly lower, at 23%, for visible minorities who came before 1991. In contrast, among the population who were not visible minorities, a higher proportion of recent arrivals than of those who had resided here for over 10 years (18% versus 9%) felt uncomfortable or out of place in Canada because of their ethno-cultural characteristics.

Finally, the Stats Can Ethnic Diversity Survey ask all respondents who had reported discrimination or unfair treatment because of their ethno-cultural characteristics in the previous five years whether they had experienced such treatment on the street; in a store; bank or restaurant; at work or when applying for a job or promotion; when dealing with the police or courts; or somewhere else. No matter what the location, a higher proportion of visible minorities than non-visible minorities reported discrimination or unfair treatment in Canada in the previous five years. The survey identified about 35% of those 15 years and older who had sometimes or often been discriminated against; and about 26% of the population report sometimes or often experiencing discrimination in the streets in the last five years. However, among the places and situations asked about, the most common situation where perceived discrimination or unfair treatment was experienced was at work or when applying for a job or promotion. Overall, 56% of those who had sometimes or often experienced discrimination or unfair treatment because of their ethno-cultural characteristics in the past five years, said they they had experienced such treatment at work or when applying for work (2003:25).
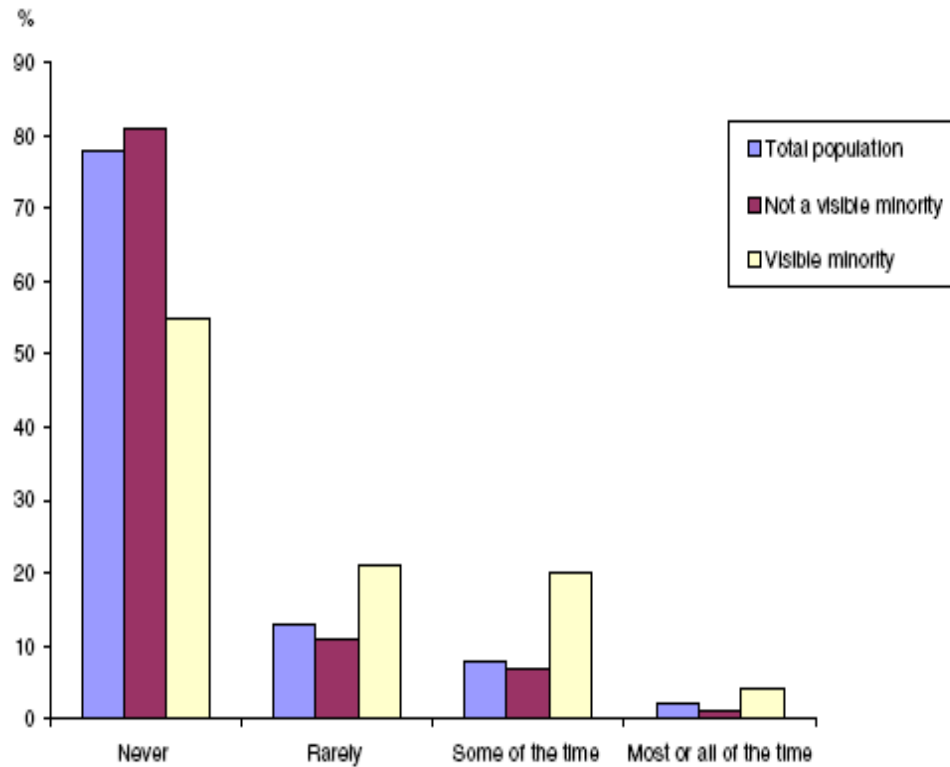
Population reporting discrimination or unfair treatment in Canada in the past five years because of ethno-cultural characteristic, by generation in Canada and visible minority status, 2002

		Frequency of discrimination		
	Total population	Sometimes or often	Rarely	Did not experience discrimination
	'000s	%	%	%
Total population	22,445	7	6	86
Not a visible minority	19,252	5	5	90
Visible minority	3,000	20	15	64
First Generation	5,272	13	10	77
Not a visible minority	2,674	5	6	89
Visible minority	2,516	21	14	65
Second Generation or more	16,929	6	5	89
Not a visible minority	16,349	5	5	90
Visible minority	480	18	23	59

Note: Refers to Canada's non-Aboriginal population aged 15 and older.
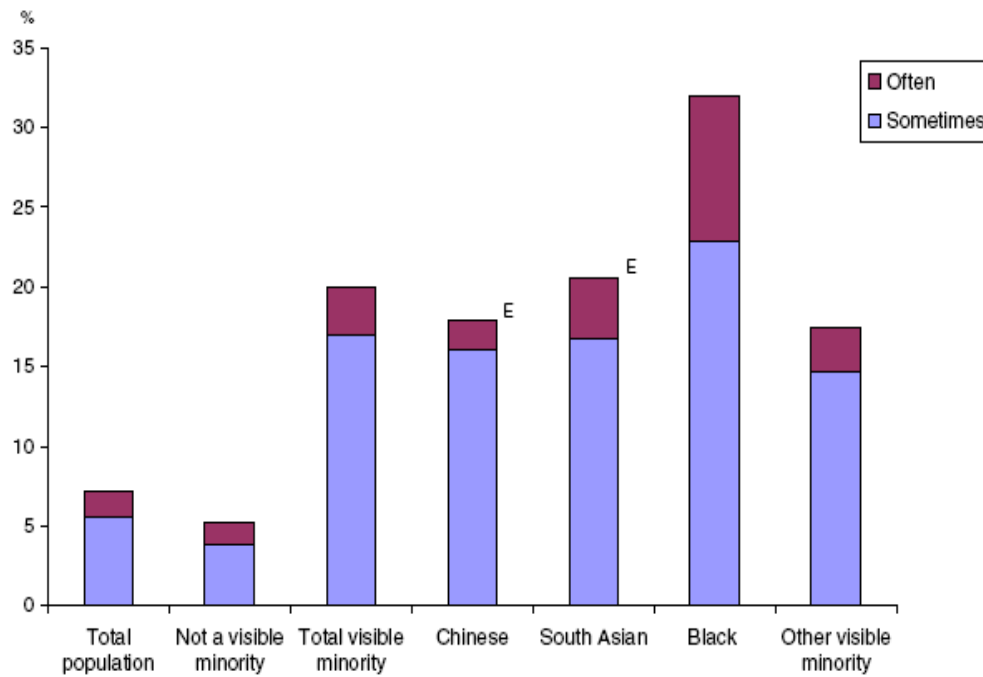*Source*: Statistics Canada, Ethnic Diversity Survey. 2002.

Figure 7. Frequency of feeling uncomfortable or out of place in Canada because of ethno-cultural characteristics, 2002

Note: Refers to Canada's non-Aboriginal population aged 15 and older.
Source: Statistics Canada, Ethnic Diversity Survey, 2002.

Figure 8. Percentage reporting discrimination or unfair treatment 'sometimes' or 'often' in the past five years, by visible minority status, 2002

ᴱ use with caution
Note: Refers to Canada's non-Aboriginal population aged 15 and older reporting discrimination or unfair treatment in Canada because of ethno-cultural characteristics.
Source: Statistics Canada, Ethnic Diversity Survey, 2002.

The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and the Definition of "Skilled" Worker

According to the demographers like, Joseph Chamie, Director of the United Nations Population Division, immigration will become one of the most crucial issues of the century for countries such as Canada that have declining birth rates. He predicts a kind of global immigration selection and recruitment contest in the not so distant future, where we will have to compete with other countries for "talented, skilled, unskilled and semi-skilled workers" (Foster 2002). Nevertheless, the Canadian state's overriding goal of the selection system has always been to conscript workers who supposedly will make the greatest contribution to the labour market and have the best opportunities for economic establishment.

In the context of Canadian immigration, entry restrictions are authorized by by the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and the accompanying regulations which came into effect in Canada on June 28, 2002. Part of the last Act addressed Canada's immigrant selection system and revamped the criteria for the admission of skilled workers. Today, independent immigrants who want to come to Canada as skilled workers are now accepted for entry on the basis of the number of points they score out of 100 in the following categories: education (25), age (10), language abilities (20), employment experience (21), arranged employment (10) and adaptability (10). These are some of the changes that have been made to the selection grid for skilled workers: Education increased from 16 to 25. More points have been allocated for applicants with a trade certificate or a second degree. More points have been allocated for language proficiency. The maximum number of points available for proficiency in both English and French combined has been increased from 20 to 24. Workers who are proficient in both languages will score more points. A new assessment level that recognizes "basic proficiency" has been added to the three existing levels (high, moderate and none). These changes are expected to result in more bilingual (English and French) workers being admitted to Canada.

The total number of points available for "experience" has been reduced to 21 from 25, and more points will be awarded for one to two years of work experience. This is expected to attract younger workers who may have higher levels of education but fewer years of experience. The "age factor" has been adjusted upwards, so that workers between the ages of 21 and 49 will score the maximum number of points (10 points). This is expected to make it easier for older workers to gain entry to Canada under the skilled worker class. Finally, the pass mark is currently set at 67 points from previous levels of 70 and 75, purported to respond to concerns raised by the provinces and territories and others that a high(er) pass would bar many skilled immigrants.

Some researchers argue that even though the category of "race" is no longer a formal criteria of immigration control in Canada, and even thought there are increasing numbers of immigrant arrivals from outside Europe, questions remain regarding the informal influence that racism has on the process of immigration control. Changes to Canada's immigration policy, which place greater emphasis on the selection of immigrants on the basis of their ability to speak either English or French, have been interpreted by some as a way that the government is trying to cloak racial selectivity under the facade of more politically acceptable criteria. The Conference Board (2004) conducted focus groups of immigrant visible minorities participants said becoming proficient in Canada's official languages and adapting to Canadian cultural norms are required ingredients for success. But many immigrants felt that even speaking with an accent gave employers an excuse to screen them out of job competitions.

Simmons, (1998) argues that Canadian immigration policy may be non-racist with respect to the formal procedure of immigrant selection. The increasing focus on highly skilled

immigrants, however, means that people who have low levels of schooling due to racist oppression in their country of origin or in the international system are less likely to be accepted to Canada. This outcome reinforces racial inequality in the world and is a **neo-racist** element in policy. He further observes that racism can covertly influence various operational levels and aspects of immigration policy as well including: (a) selection and recruitment of immigration targets, (b) access of foreigners to Canadian immigration information and services, (c) selection of immigrants from all those who apply, (d) the settlement and economic integration of immigrants, and (e) the expulsion or deportation process of undesirable immigrants. Thus, he concludes, the impact that racism continues to play in shaping the process whereby immigrants are selected to come to Canada needs to be assessed more fully. Informal procedures, standards and practices may have detrimental outcomes on visible minorities that also need to be examined closely even in the context of officially non-racists immigration policy (Simmons 1998: 99).

It is worth noting, however, that for the first time in recent history the most recent policy regulations changes incorporate a broader notion of "human capital" beyond specific occupational designations (i.e., the abolition of "the occupations list," which the previous standard measurement for entry derived from the "Canadian Classification and Dictionary of Occupations"). For instance, not only have points for education increased, but an applicant can also gain additional points if their spouse has a post-secondary education. At the same time, some thoughtful observers argue that even conceding a slight improvement flexibility, Canada's new selection process still does not go nearly far enough in its attention to human capital resources.

Given that Canadian society is in the process of being re-tooled by an information economy that has produced a state of rapid occupational change - where the knowledge base is expected to double every 18 months, and so, many of the jobs of tomorrow have not yet been invented - the ability to adapt to new skills is becoming increasingly more important than the acquisition of existing ones. Because the educational system often cannot adapt immediately to the changing needs of information technology and related industries, many sectors experience periodic shortages of trained professionals. In this regard, contemporary history has placed a premium on a learning-based rather than skill-based immigration and population planning; and future dividends are expected to be reaped through a prevailing focus on life-long learning and "human capital" development strategies (Foster 1998: 76-112). This presupposes, of course, the shift in focus to the skills development from within Canada, as opposed to skills acquisition from abroad. Citizens and newcomers alike are profited by a transferable skills-set that is conducive to a cradle-to-grave learning model for postindustrial society.

Yet, in the face of historical trends and the rapidly changing occupational structure, the latest Act actually ratchets up Canadian policy to place greater emphasis on human capital skills-acquisition through refined front-end admission requirements, rather than back-end human capital development.

This policy focus is an extension of the neoliberal restructuring in the 1990s that saw the advent of "designer immigration" (Foster 1998) – i.e., the selection of immigrants who can "hit the ground running." In recent years, there has been substantial sociological and economic literature that criticizes the state's view towards "value-added" immigrants in the economic model of designer immigration. For, as is noted, a value-added system where newcomers are required to add to the national skills-pool is limited and potentially counterproductive to effective postindustrial population planning. In the context of a constantly evolving postindustrial workplace, a continued focus on immigrants' entrance status as opposed to settlement and integration mechanisms is thought to be a form of culture lag – a hopelessly out-of-date and untimely perspective when considered in the historical context of an expanding

knowledge economy. So, instead of a value-added immigration system that relies primarily on the importation and recruitment of skills, some researchers propose the shift to a "value-generating" system that reaches out to empower people through effective settlement support programs that contribute to success and performance patterns of immigrants overtime from within Canada (Foster 1998; Simmons 1999).

Also in recent years, there has been substantial literature that criticizes the state definition and understanding of "skilled" worker itself. It does not, for instance, take into account the barriers to formal education and skills acquisition that some ethnoracial groups and women face in source countries. It also excludes an appreciation of the different kinds of occupational experience and skills, such as those associated with "women's work" (child-rearing, kin-keeping, small-scale agriculture, market work, etc.).

Relatedly, the state's definition of skilled worker continues to informally reinforce certain kinds of stereotyping and discrimination, particularly for many people of colour, a large portion of whom are women, designated for nonstandard and contingent work. (Conceived broadly, contingency work including those forms of employment involving atypical employment contracts, limited social benefits and statutory entitlements, job insecurity, low job tenure, low wages, and high risks of ill health.) Contingency undermines the standard of living, self-fulfillment and contributions to the social good, and recent studies confirm that it is persistently taking on a gendered and racialized character. (Krahn, 1995; Ornstein, 2000; Zeytinoglu and Muteshi, 2000).

The most noteworthy example is the continuation (to the present) of policies regarding the movements of "skill-devalued" foreign domestic workers in Canada (maids, nannies and Live-in Caregivers who work in private homes) who are relegated to a tenuous and exploitative status through the racialization of women's household work. Those admitted are primarily women of colour who generally work for very low wages and often long hours and frequently experience abuse. Studies of the Live-in Caregiver program have noted the way in which it is grounded in sexist and racist stereotypes, and by its outcomes, tends to reinforce these stereotypes (Silvera 1989; Calliste 1991; Aray-Koc 1989, 1992, 1997; Maklin 1994). This research reveals the intricate interplay of social forces and the collective experiences of individuals, in the context of a racialized immigration and an international division of labour. More recent work focuses on resistance and the negotiation of citizenship rights (Stasiulis and Bakan, 1997a, 1997b; Fudge, 1997). In the case of Filipina domestic workers, participatory and policy-oriented research has emerged resulting in proposed short- and long-term policy proposals dealing with the dilemma of this form of labour migration (Grandea 1996; Satzewich and Wong, 2003).

In late 2004, for instance, eight Filipino community groups in and around the Greater Toronto Area developed a common position paper, along with hundreds of signatures, recommending widespread changes to the federal program that brings nannies and caregivers to this country. The recommended changes include scrapping two of the federal Live-in Caregiver Program's (LCP) key requirements: that nannies "live-in" the home of their employers, and that they fulfill two years of work within a three-year period to qualify to apply for permanent residence status. Eliminating the obligatory live-in requirement and facilitating landed status are recommendations also supported by prior research studies and national consultations identifying a number of equality and human rights issues resulting from the LCP, including increased vulnerability to abuse, including rape, because of the mandatory live-in requirement and their temporary immigration status. Community activists and advocates have found that some nannies are financially exploited and even sexually abused. But because they're concerned about jeopardizing their immigration status (the paperwork to switch jobs can take months), some

remain in unhealthy situations. The position paper also wants a crackdown on unlicensed, unregulated "agencies" that charge thousands of dollars for their services, by having federal and provincial governments step in and regulate those agencies, and institute a body to monitor employers to ensure they're following the terms of the contract they signed with their nanny or caregiver. At present, it is noted that some of the more shadowy outfits bring people for jobs that don't exist, filing elaborate but fake applications from "employers" which somehow slip by federal scrutiny (Simmie and Leong 2004).

The Racialized "Other"

Sociologist who subscribe to "the discrimination thesis" have focused on the concept of "race"as an ideology and a ***discourse*** (a way of mapping out the world that confers meaning and status). Through discourse, the participants come to have a shared "knowledge" about the world. To the extent there is "racial discourse" in Canada, it is part of a dominant cultural/ideological discourse in our society that provides the conceptual models for people around which they map the world. This dominant discourse on race maps a form of polite "social biology" as an assumptive reality -- meaning it is often assumed (and often without malice of intent) that *certain "bodies" cohere to certain "patterns of action."*

The concept of ***racialization*** refers to the assigning of racial connotations to activities and place. Many sociologists prefer to use the term racialization as opposed to race in order to emphasize the fact that racial categories are social constructions that change in time and space and circumference (Backhouse, 1999). In Canada, for instance, as Constance Backhouse clearly documented, for the first Canadian census of the twentieth century in 1901, civil servants charged with surveying the nation where instructed by the federal government to designate and discoursed the races of men by the use of "w" for White, "r" for Red, "b" for Black, and "y" for Yellow (1999: 3).

> The whites are, of course, the Caucasian race, the reds are the American Indian, the blacks are the African or Negro, and the yellows are the Mongolian (Japanese and Chinese). But only pure whites will be classed as whites; the children begotten of marriages between whites and any one of the other races will be classed as red, black or yellow, as the case may be, irrespective of the degree of colour. [*Dominion Census, Introduction to the Census Report of Canada for 1901, Fourth Census of Canada 1901*, (found in Backhouse, 1999: 3)].

Backhouse further deconstructs the idea of race:

> The primary colour scheme selected by the officials, with bold brush strokes of reds and yellows, was a curious choice. The census palette stretches beyond these vivid hues right to the margins of the colour charts. It splashes literally off the spectrum to the black tones, representing the absorption of all the colours of the rainbow, and white tones, incapable of colour absorption at all. As most observers would likely have admitted if pressed, the categories are also highly inaccurate. Human beings simply do not come in any of these colours (1999: 4).

As Backhouse (1999) argues, Canada has a colour-coded legal and immigration history, but history reveals that race is not a stable or homogeneous category but rather a dynamic

relationship integral to the construction of contemporary social life. The fact that race is often treated as an immutable "thing" – the same yesterday, today and tomorrow – is testimony to the socialization process sanctioned by the powers of the status quo social order. However, to see race, whether at the beginning of the twentieth century or the twenty-first, is to be engaged in a thought process which biologizes people by attaching status to the physical. People are the subjects and objects of "racialized formations" -- meaning people do not see "race" rather they observe certain combinations of real and sometimes imagined somatic [of the body] and cultural characteristics to which that they attribute meaning. A difference in skin colour is not essential to the process of "marking" here, it actually goes beyond the biological. Race is a social differentiation process of attributing superior-inferior status involving the complex relationships of exploitation, control, and exclusion grounding the differences of race, and giving rise to (the ideological construction of) "the racialized other."

Sociologists who subscribe to "the discrimination thesis" have also focused on racism as a form of "othering" that defines and secures one's own positive identity through the stigmatization of an "other." Distinctions of race are made for "othering" people - making people into the "not-us." When they are not-us they lack something; when they lack something then they are "less than us". To be othered is to be defined as the thing that deviates from the norm. In short, othering is a way of protecting status from acquisition by others, and justifying its being deprive from others. Othering often involves mental images in which people who have some distinctive physical attributes (such as skin colour) and who may also have associated ethnic characteristics (accent, mannerisms, or style of dress) are viewed as different, less deserving, suitable only for low-wage jobs and as outsiders with respect to the normal benefits of membership in a given society.

In this connection, Anthony Richmond (1990: 158) argues that our current immigration policy are designed to protects our borders from the otherness of undocumented migrants. He states "restrictions are intended to reduce competition for scarce resources such as jobs and housing, to limit overcrowding in schools and avoid excessive demands on health services or the welfare system. He suggests that none of these considerations are "racist" in themselves, but they assume that immigration controls are a necessary pre-condition for social harmony. However, these restrictive policies explicitly collect and implicitly label non-White immigrants as less desirable and provide legitimation for racist attitudes. Because immigrants are seen as a "problem," policies are then rather directed toward exclusion, instead of addressing the root cause manifestations of racial prejudice and discrimination.

Today, social differentiation on the basis of race is a strategy for self-affirmation that depends upon the denigration and/or stigmatization of the other group. In post-colonial theory, at a global level, [the other] can refer to the colonized others who are marginalized by the imperial discourse, identified by their difference from the centre and, perhaps crucially, become the focus of anticipated mastery by the imperial 'ego.' At the everyday level in Canada, most people in the dominant culture don't go out of their way to assert power and privilege (the imperial ego). It is all ready assigned and anticipated – "built into" the structure and organization of society as a given, through the naturalization of White privilege. In the dominant cultural discourse on the political economy in Canada, Whiteness stands outside of race as a unmarked category, and tacit measure by which all else is judged. Whiteness is routinized and the Other is racialized. The irony of othering, however, is that it is fed by the illusory inferiority of the Other – and is thus constantly at risk of being discredited. That is, it is a discreditation system that constantly risks its own intervention. For, there is nothing given about the inequitable status of minority women and men. Rather, the prevailing political economy discourse on race in Canada is "colour-blind" to the "colour-coded" inequities that are embedded within institutional and structures, or imposed

by those with power to make these decisions within the structural frameworks. These inequities are racialized in that they adversely affect those who are most visible. Thus, contemporary society is pervaded by undeclared race-based advantages and disadvantages that are taken-for-granted and treated as unproblematic.

For instance, Simmons (1998) notes that Canada abandoned an explicitly ethnocentric and implicitly "racist" immigration strategy over forty years ago, and officially adopted a "non-racist" discourse. But Canada's non-racist contemporary immigration policy is not free of racist outcomes or "neo-racist" elements. Consider the difference between formal and informal racial barriers in the context of Canadian immigration's own institutional infrastructure. Indeed, even after the introduction of the "points system" in the 1960s, it has often been noted that the racialization of immigration was a factor in having up to seven immigration offices in the UK in the seventies while there was only one each in China and India thereby restricting the access of citizens of those countries to Canadian immigration processing. While three Canadian embassies service the entire continent of Africa.

The concept of "the racialized other" produces complex interlocking discourses that are used to justify the power wielded by those who do the defining, often in an imperialistic and re- or neo-colonizing way. For instance, more recent studies show there is an emerging immigrant underclass, made-up of mainly visible minorities, in Canada's major cities. During the last two decades, visible immigrants and refugees who have arrived to Canada are experiencing severe difficulties in the Canadian labour market. For many, it has been a life of underemployment or unemployment, low income or poverty and lost hope. In the 1980s and 1990s, immigration from traditional source countries slowed, and those coming to Canada were mainly non-European visible minorities. Although between 1991 and 1996 poverty levels increased for all immigrants, visible minorities were most disadvantaged. In Toronto, the destination of almost one-half of all newcomers, visible minorities showed the largest increase in poverty levels in that period from –20.9% to 32.5%. They are also at higher risk for long-term, persistent poverty (Harvey & Siu, 2001).

The non-racist discourse of Canadian immigration here, does not avoid racist and denigrating outcomes, nor does it achieve the level of anti-racist practice. The discounting of foreign credentials and skills of visible immigrants is an example of how othering is functions today in the disempowerment of "neo-colonialized" people. Even though the category of "race" is subject to erasure in contemporary context of society, and no longer a denotative criteria in immigration control in Canada, and even though there are increasing numbers of immigrant arrivals from outside of Europe, questions remain regarding the informal influence that racism has on the process of immigration control. Borrowing Simmons (1998) analytic continuum, Canadian immigration policy and selection procedure is neither explicitly racist nor anti-racist; instead the immigration policy field has within it the space for the expression of neo-racism to influence who get into Canada. As he argues, eliminating all signifiers of race from immigration selection procedures does not necessarily mean that racism has been fully removed from immigration policy, nor that anti-racist programs are receiving support. Immigration selection policies which ignore race may still be partially racist if the "intended or unintended consequence is to put certain ... groups at a disadvantage while making it easier for others to gain admission..." (Richmond, 1994: 155). Similarly, Bolaria and Li(1988) argue that any immigration practices that result in some ethnic minorities being ghettoized and restricted to low-wage jobs are part of a systemic pattern of racial discrimination. When such racist influences and outcomes are common, yet ignored or denied within a "non-racist" discourse, it is more appropriate to refer to the resultant immigration policy as "neo-racist." (Simmon, 1998: 90).

Or to put it another way, neo-racism is a form of ideological "colour-blindness" in the Canadian political economy that conceals "colour-coded" social and material consequences, not only for professions, but also for the nation as a whole.

White Power and Privilege

 In Canada, ideological colour-blindness is associate with the reality of **White privilege**, or the unreflexsive privilege that accrues to the people who have "white" skin, trace their ancestry to Northern and Western Europe, and think of themselves as European Canadians. McIntoch (1995: 76-77) has self-reflexively deconstructed the phenomenon of White privilege as "an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was 'meant' to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear, and blank cheques."

It is the transparency of Whiteness that is misleading and contributes to the masking of the political-economic privileges that attach to membership in the dominant race (Backhouse, 1999: 9). As Grillo and Wildman (1991) note:

Transparency may be the defining characteristic of Whiteness: to be White is not to think about it ...White supremacy makes Whiteness the normative model. Being the norm allows White people to ignore race, except when they perceive race (usually someone else's) as intruding upon their lives. ... Indeed, for many Whites their racial identity becomes uppermost in their mind only when they find themselves in the company of large numbers of non-Whites, and then it does so in the form of a supposed vulnerability to non-White violence, rendering Whiteness in the eyes of many Whites not a privileged status but a victimized one (Grillo and Wildman, 1991).

In the study, "Deconstructing Whiteness," Bedard (2000: 45) makes the point that in Canada, Whiteness holds political, economic and moral power. It is a hegemonic force where objectivity becomes the dominant White culture's subjectivity. In short as Fleras (1999: 33) observes, "being White is a privilege that is stamped into your skin. Whiteness is a kind of "passport" that opens doors and unlocks opportunities just as identity cards in South Africa once defined who got what. The privileges associated with Whiteness are neither openly articulated nor logically deserved, but assumed and universalized as the norm and beyond definition, scrutiny or criticism." Normalization of privilege manifests itself when all members of a society as well as potential newcomers, are judged against the characteristics or attributes of those who are privileged, and typically this is seen as a neutral process – the standard is typically invisible to those who do the judging and deeply embedded in every institutional sphere, as well as immigration policy. Society's members and potential newcomers are subject to the hidden rules and unconscious procedures of Whiteness that inadvertently distort the process of recruitment, entry, treatment, promotion, and/or reward allocation in favour of one group rather than another. In this system, when people – usually the most privileged – succeed, it is seen as the result of individual effort or merit, not due to privilege (Wildman and Davis, 2002). This has been called "internalizing dominance" -- i.e., all the ways that White people learn they are normal, feel included, and do not think of themselves as "other" or "different" (Sawyer, 1989). White people carry this privilege around with them at all times and in everywhere that go and are generally unaware of it. As Judith Levine (1994) put it:

Whiteness purports to be nothing and everything. It is the race that needs not speak its name. Yet it define itself as no less than whatever it chooses to exclude. To grow up White is to be the ground zero from which everything else differs... (quoted by Fleras, 1999: 33)

By way of contrast, people of colour represent the antithesis of Whiteness in terms of privilege and entitlement – a visible stigma (or marked category) by which others are denied, excluded,or exploited. Unlike Whites who rarely experience Whiteness or even see themselves as White – they just are – people of colour have little choice except to experience "Blackness" or "Asianness" on a daily basis (Fleras and Elliott, 1999: 33). As M Nourbese Philip (1996: 21) put it:

> Like blackness, whiteness is highly visible (to Blacks and all those upon whom it impacts negatively) while being simultaneously visible. Invisible, because in a society steeped in racism and ethnocentric ideology, white and whiteness become equated with normalcy, while its effects – primarily negative (for White people as well) – remain visible for all those who care to look.

Those who do care to look at the invisibility of Whiteness and the de-racialization of political economy discourse, will see that the advantage/disadvantage and power/exploitation relationships in this country are deeply rooted in the normalization of patterns of racial prejudice and discrimination in the workplace.

In this regard, since the 1980s many vulnerable populations of visible immigrants have been over-represented in the secondary labour markets and face an eroding employment norm -- in conjunction with the state's gradual retreat from equity policy and its continuing deregulation of the central labour market institutions. So, for example, as workplace restructuring and the standard employment relationship continued to erode in Canada, there was a major shift in the garment industry as sweatshops moved into the homes of immigrant women who turned to home working. Roanna Ng's (2001) research on Chinese immigrant women garment workers in Toronto finds that the public an private spheres are merged as these women cope with the demands of paid work and family responsibilities in the same space. Ng situates this phenomenon in globalization and the "recolonization" of Chinese women as the forces of continental trade agreements, such as NAFYA, deepened the exploitation they experience.

This same recolonization dynamic is operant in many sectors of visible immigrant labour, where racial job ghettos are a pervasive component of past and current labour markets in Canada. Job ghettoization refers to the social fact that once they occupy racialized low-wage sectors of the secondary labour market, it is difficult for many visible immigrants to escape.

In Ontario, for instance, when the Conservative party came to power at the end of the last century it instituted a minimum wage freeze that magnified job ghettoization. Under the ensuing Conservative regime we witnessed the gradual entrenchment of a colour-tiered stratification system in Ontario, scandalously defined as a "Commonsense Revolution." Since the onslaught of that Conservative Commonsense Revolution, racialized minorities in particular have descended into a massive cycle of poverty -- impacting native and naturalized citizens of colour, as well as new and recent immigrants -- in correlation to increasing and disproportionate levels of unemployment and under-employment. With a dramatic increase in the number of part-time and casual jobs in the urban service industry, wages at the lower end of the scale fell well behind inflation and rising living costs (including huge increases in rents); and the chasm between the marginalized poor and the privileged Whitestream reached historical dimensions. In this

connection, as Statistics Canada notes, while Toronto has not only become the most racially diverse city in the country, it has also become "a city of economic extremes" where the gap between the richest and poorest residents is now the widest in the country; where average income of the city's top 10 per cent earners was $261,000 in 2000, compared with $9,600 for Toronto's poorest citizens. This means that for every $1 earned by the marginalized poor, the wealthy mainstream drew $27.30. (Foster 2003b).

Panjwani (2005) reported that many skilled immigrants who are forced into non-standard and contingency work and low-paying jobs as a result of the Common Sense Revolution have had to turn to food banks as a means of survival. Almost half the food bank's users are now immigrants. According to a survey by the Daily Bread and North York Harvest Food Bank, 60% of immigrants using Ontario food banks have a university education or trade certification, while only 9% are working in their field of study. As a result, many food banks are now attempting to adapt to the changing ethnoracial mix and multicultural make-up of their contemporary clientèle. In urban centre like Toronto, the typical North American staples like macaroni and cheese, pasta, and tins of tuna and fruit aren't on the menu of many immigrants who show up at the Daily Bread or the North York Harvest. Food bank officials have observed that their immigrant clientèle often don't know how cook or eat the bank's typical food stuffs, and that it is daunting for many immigrants to be faced with an array of food that they simply don't know how to use. So, now international staples such as stacks of long-grained rice, canned eel, dried octopus or ackee fruit, lentils, curry paste, Chinese noodles and other ethnic products share space along with regular pasta and soup. Moreover, perhaps, much of the old traditional staples are culturally and religiously inappropriate for some communities. South Asian immigrants, for example, are often hesitant to use the food bank because of a sense of shame associated with accepting free food. There may be a cultural barrier insofar as it is a part of one's belief among many South Asians that you eat what you earn. Food banks, for there part, are now being pressed to adapt operationally to the ethnoracial dimensions of income disparity in Ontario. As a strategic longer-term solution to the increasing poverty levels among the increasing multicultural and multiracial population, the Daily Bread Food Bank in Toronto is reported to be working on various innovative urban initiatives and campaigns focusing on the acquisition of international and culturally specific food, and broadening their donner base by forging new partnerships with multi-faith and multicultural organizations to aid in future food drives.

It is no coincidence that among some 10,000 new additions to an updated version of the latest Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary was the term "McJob," defined as "low-paying and dead-end work." McJobs are now an integral part of the postindustrial political economy. It is also no coincidence that people of colour are over-represented in these jobs – nearly one quarter of employees in fast-food industry jobs are non-White; and they are configured at the low-end of this low-end economic world. For White people, "the McDonaldization thesis," as George Ritzer (1998) dubbed it, is often thought to be a starting point, not an end point in society. It represents an entry level position, where new workers gain invaluable basic experience and develop strong work habits. This is why the vast majority of employees are part-time workers. The average work week in the fast-food industry is 29.5 hours. In addition, there is a high turnover rate, where only slightly more than half the employees remain on the job for a year or more. However, for people of colour, the McDonaldization thesis makes reference to what is often a contingency work dead-end and social holding pattern, that accentuates their lack of relevant social capital, their social exclusion, and subsequent social marginality.

The Commonsense Revolution in Ontario, which introduced both the minimum wage freeze and and the elimination of employment equity legislation in 1995, was part of the general and continuing capitalist restructuring neo-liberal policies connected to the processes of

globalization. It was also, as Fleras and Elliott (1999:34) argue, a cleverly victimized concept of Whiteness as an endangered or persecuted form of life, threatened by "assertive" minorities pushing quotas or "reverse discrimination." But challenges to the supremacy of Whiteness have hardly resulted in any significant shift in power or privilege, which continue to persist albeit along increasingly contested lines. For example, the parchment ink was hardly dry on ***The Employment Equity Act*** of 1993 – which was officially designed as a set of practices to accommodate the ethnoracial diversity and enhance the rich texture of the Canadian mosaic in the workplace – when it was legislatively abolished by ***The Job Quotas Repeal Act***, and the Harris Common Sense Revolutionaries.

After the Royal Assent of The Job Quotas Repeal Act in Ontario on December 14, 1995, the Alliance for Employment Equity, a group representing hundreds of community and labour groups who support mandatory measures to eliminate discrimination in employment, immediately filed suit, arguing that the government had a positive duty under the equality provisions of the Charter or Rights and Freedoms to enact employment equity legislation. In the alternative, they argued that, even if it had no positive duty to enact the legislation, the government was obliged to leave existing employment equity legislation in place. Finally, they contended, the repeal of the legislation had resulted in a "poisoned environment" which contravened their Charter rights. On December 9, 1999, at the end of the judicial due process, the Supreme Court of Canada confirmed two prior lower court decisions and dismissed the application by the Alliance for Employment Equity, holding that there was "no constitutional duty" on the government to enact laws in a certain area. The application of the Charter was confined to government "action as opposed to inaction". The court determined that societal discrimination was not of the government's creation and the government was not under a Charter obligation to address it. Nor was there a right under the Charter to force the government to retain intact previously enacted legislation. As to the poisoned atmosphere argument, any distinction that may have arisen following the repeal of the Employment Equity Act was indistinguishable from that which existed prior to its enactment. Such distinction was not legislative, but societal and the repeal of the Act did nothing to alter its intrinsic character.

Upon its vaunted legal victory of the Job Quotas Repeal Act, the provincial government described the exercise of its prerogative not to provide remedies for racial inequality, as "rebalancing labour laws" (righting the ship, so to speak, on reverse discrimination by minorities); and, as a clear-cut sanction and opportunity to "stimulate job creation" (denuded, of course, of racial considerations).

Since the triumph of the Common Sense Revolution there has been collateral damage to visible minority communities, involuntarily exposed to radiating and consequential forces beyond their control. For instance, in the last decade, although Canadian-born Blacks between 24 and 54 were just as likely to be university educated as all other Canadians in that age group, their average income was much lower – $29,700 compared with $37,200 in 2001; and the unemployment rate of all Black adults is now conspicuously higher than that of the general population.

Since 1995, and the inauguration of the Job Quotas Repeal Act, there have been more Blacks in Ontario without jobs every year, and many, especially young males, are dropping out of the labour force entirely. More and more Black youth, including many who are no longer in school, are obtaining no job experience at all. Meanwhile, given that research shows joblessness during youth has a harmful impact on one's future success in the job market, the problems of the 21st century urban Black underclass are guaranteed to be crippling for decades to come (Foster 2003a). In a related immigration context, Hall (1975) has argued that accreditation blockage imposed on foreign-trained professionals can have another deleterious effect on all visible

minority youth whose parents were trained abroad: "it sets limits to the likelihood that minority professionals could serve as effective role models for succeeding generations," and so, conditions succeeding generations to accept a cycle of social nullification and stigma.

Today, over a decade after the Common Sense Revolution and ***The Job Quotas Repeal Act***, any map of Toronto showing the distribution of public and low-income housing in the city, can be identically superimposed on a map of the concentration of children living in poverty, which in turn can be identically superimposed on a map showing the locations of gun-related deaths and the proliferation of patterns of Black-on-Black gang violence. Amos Wilson (1993) has hypothesized that the intolerable pressure and frustration of political and economic powerlessness has finally transformed Blacks into "surrogate ventures of themselves." Instead of reaching out and attempting to destroy the oppressor, many Blacks now seek to annihilate that which has been humiliated - Black humanity itself. This is soberingly highlighted by the fact that young Black males are not only murdering one another at an alarming rate, but the frequency of suicide is also on the rise.

In this regard, the neo-liberal ideology that epitomized the Common Sense Revolution in Ontario also covered over the fact that White privilege is implicated in the underprivileging of otherness. As hooks (1995) put it, to exclude Whiteness as a unmarked category that stands outside history or convention is to redouble its hegemony by naturalizing it. Such a naturalization makes it doubly important to decolonize the definition of normalcy by racializing the taken-for-grantness of Whiteness. For in the final analysis, making the invisibility of Whiteness visible reinforces the notion that all discourses about reality are from somewhere (a "standpoint"), regardless of intent or awareness. So, while the standpoint of Whiteness is that it stands outside of the dynamic of race, critical thinking can and should intervene on this status quo reality.

From the standpoint of Whiteness, the workplace is viewed as a competitive meritocracy that is fundamentally "colour-blind" and "race-neutral" – where individuals vie for jobs and resources based on natural talents and abilities, with the best usually rising to the top regardless of creed or colour. Here, workplace inequalities are a feature of natural justice, where everyone finds their own level or rung on the socioeconomic ladder. Racism, insofar as it does exist, is viewed as an aberration from the normal functioning of society – the result of a small bunch of "bad apples" in an essentially sound social "barrel" – that can be isolated and eradicated. This coincides nicely with prevailing microeconomic models that regularly deny the persistence of racial occupational disparities as a market-based phenomenon. They argue instead that persistent racial differences in economic outcomes are a result of induced capital deficiencies in a competitive market system, and any racial discrimination is a deviation rather than the rule. In this perspective, market forces can only yield differential outcomes between groups in the long term if these segments are fundamentally different in attributes that predict performance and that government intervention only disturbs the healthy mechanism of competition. For instance, in a microeconomic perspective since the average education level of Blacks overall (including all age categories) is lower than that of the average for the total population; and Canadian-born Blacks have the smallest proportion with university education (Hou and Balakrishnan 1996), differential incomes between Blacks and other is indicated.

On the other hand, from the standpoint of Black men and women who have been racialized, the workplace is often not experienced as a healthy competition, it is experienced as a covert "race war" that has been internalized as well as externalized as a normal living condition. So, it is the social "barrel" itself that ensnares them into a world that imposes diminishing definitions and structures on them over which they have no resources to influence, deflect or defuse. Consequently, the socioeconomic figures are not about natural justice, they are the result

of the power dynamics of ethnoracial cultures and contain the definitive record of the of war. Over two decades after the Multiculturalism Act and the introduction of Employment Equity legislation in Canada, the race war continues to be manifest in the levels of drug addiction, family breakdown, crime, imprisonment, welfare dependency, community decay, rising suicide rates, and the perverse self-hatred of Black-on-Black violence – wanton devastation virtually unrivaled in scale and severity in the annals of history.

The prevailing microeconomic model notwithstanding, if we consider the fact that even those Blacks who do have university educations are still less likely to acquire and retain managerial and professional jobs then their White counterparts (Hou and Balakrishnan 2004), then this would indicate that the persistence of racial occupational disparities is not simply a competitive market phenomenon. Instead, from the standpoint of men and women who have been racialized this attests to a more complex, covert and nuanced workplace reality – often characterized by subtle policies and practices like seniority hiring and contract jobs and other non-standard and contingency employment characteristic of the postindustrial economy – that can indirectly function to marginalize, casualize, diminish and dismiss minority labour power, while functioning to ensure and defend White privilege. Reitz and Verma (2004) found that even unionized labour is not a buffer against racialized income disparities. In a study using data from a 1997 Statistics Canada survey, they analyzed the hourly wages of 32,634 workers. Unionized men took home nearly 29% more overall than their non-unionized counterparts. But visible minorities earned 12% less in unionized and non-unionized jobs than Whites in similar jobs. Hence, quite apart from competitive market forces, one can locate the entire issue of occupational income disparities in the context of a discriminatory system, replete with racialized incentives and disincentives, advantages and disadvantages.

Again, from the standpoint of the dominant White mainstream majority, equality in the political economy is devoid of racial referents. Instead, it tends to be conceived as an *impartiality* issue, and the term treated as equivalent to sameness. In this definition of the situation, equality means treating everybody the same regardless of their background or circumstances. Or, to put it another way, there is an erasure of race as a cause of occupational and income disparities. In this prevailing perspective, no one or group is ascribed special privileges in a system designed around equal opportunity and individual ability. So, equality is colour-blind, if you will. This type of "formal" equality focuses on a belief in a system of open access to social institutions and services, and envisions a society based on competitive meritocracy. Hence, the goal of managing society's diversity is not to create a representative workforce and balanced social institutions, but rather, to foster a natural hierarchy based on merit and aptitude.

On the other hand, from the perspective of those men and women who experience racialization in the workplace, equality in the political economy tends to be seen as a *inclusivity* issue, and the concept is typically reserved to the condition of "proportional" equivalence. This definition emphasizes equality of results rather than opportunities, taking account of the unique circumstances of a person or group as a basis for entitlement. Here equality is viewed as a dynamic social parity. This type of equality focuses on a belief in full access in Canadian society in the form of balanced association of ethnoracial groups and a representative workforce. Hence, in this minority perspective, the goal of managing society's diversity is to ensure a system of equitable participation by removing any entrenched historical and structural barriers to a level playing-field.

Formal and Informal Inequality

The process of naturalizing White privilege is one of the major reasons that many anti-racism activists and researchers today argue for "statistical equality" (that is, hiring on the basis strict population numbers and ethnoracial percentages) to be scrupulously applied in the workplace. While fair employment laws and public policies such as affirmative action and employment equity may be enshrined into the fabric of society to promote a representative workforce, no amount of formal legislation or political ordinance can neutralize the inequality caused by informal and hidden cultural bias that is embedded in the standards and measures for job selection, recruitment, promotions and rewards. Formal and informal barriers to employment negatively impact people of colour in different ways. The overt "***formal barriers***" to income equality occur at the level of institutions – when the system-wide operation of the workplace rules, procedures, and practices deliberately exclude minorities or place them at an unreasonable disadvantage in accessing job opportunities. Many anti-racism experts would concede that formal discriminatory barriers in public workplaces have been virtually eliminated, legislated out of existence under the provisions of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms as well as various provincial human rights codes. And it is specifically prohibited by The Employment Equity Act (1995) and Regulations (the EEA), which came into force on October 24, 1996. But the covert "***informal barriers***" preventing people of colour from having full and equal involvement in society occur at the level of norms and values – when the dominant White culture maintains control of the job-skills assessment and appraisal process, and ensures its monopoly ownership and entry control of high positions within organizations.

Anti-racism experts are coming to understand that invisible and informal employment barriers attendant to the invisibility of Whiteness and the naturalization of White privilege still prevail in the Canadian work world, erasing race as a causal factor in political economy discourse, and acting like an odorless toxin to minority social mobility and the goals of multicultural democracy.

For instance, informal barriers can arise from the use of criteria (and some examinations) that are neither job-related nor required for the safe and efficient operation of an organization. Some employment practices are described in personnel manuals, laid out in directives or guidelines for managing human resources or prescribed in collective agreements. Others tend to be more tacit and are based on traditional practice or departmental culture that is seldom written or questioned — "That's the way it has always been done around here." (Fleras and Elliott 1999). These employment barriers contribute to the lower hiring and promotional rates of immigrant and native-born people of colour in comparison to other employees. They also manifest themselves in the under-utilization and concentration of people of colour at the lower levels of an organization and in non-decision making positions. As Hou and Balakrishnan (1996) note, visible minority groups as whole generally have higher educational attainment than the average of the total population and the charter French and English groups. However, the percentage of visible minority groups working in managerial and professional occupations are generally smaller than for French and British. This suggests that informal systemic barriers may evolve from historical practices or assumptions of convenience (for instance, staffing primarily through personal networks or favoured campuses or racially biased credential assessment) and invariably exclude people of colour or place them at an unreasonable disadvantage in accessing job opportunities.

For more recently immigrated visible minorities, these informal systemic barriers can be even more aggravated and daunting. Take for example the difference in accreditation between former British colonies. Prior findings document that while doctors licensed to practice medicine

in South African could do so in Canada (consisting of predominantly White immigrants), those from Ghana could not (consisting of predominately non-White immigrants), notwithstanding the fact that the colonial British education was standardized throughout its empire with exam criterion set by Cambridge or Oxford (Battershill 1993; Musisi and Turritin 1995).

Many barriers may be hidden in the way the employment system works. Many arise from the almost imperceptible and seemingly neutral practices entrenched in day to day operations; for example, things as simple as incomplete or inadequate information, or inadequate access to information, for potential immigrants about professional standards and criteria. Or information about application forms or job competitions being available only in centralized or difficult to access (visible minority-less) locations.

Consider also that job entry procedures may seem non-discriminatory if they are only written examinations. When it comes to interviews or obtaining internship positions, visible minorities are at a definite disadvantage since the interview boards and hiring panels typically have no or few visible minorities. Numerous employment systems reviews in the federal departments (e.g.,. Privy Council Office, Department of Justice, CIDA, Department of Industry, Public Service Commission, Natural Resources Canada, Finance, Environment, etc.) show that visible minorities do not get an equal consideration if the board is without adequate visible minority representation and if the interviewers are not trained in bias-free interview techniques.

In 2003, an internal audit report of the contemporary hiring practice of the federal government (which, of course, both makes and subscribes to hiring laws based on merit) conducted by the research division of the Public Service Commission found that managers in the federal public service continue to hire people they know – including spouses, siblings and cousins – rather than comply with prescribed rules to ensure all Canadians have a fair chance at government jobs. According to the report, in 51% of placements it was unable to conclude competency and fairness were respected, because key documents were missing. The commission also found in many cases the files had no evidence at all. And attempts made to locate the missing information were unsuccessful. The report sites recurring examples in which managers avoided hiring employees through an open competition. In 115 cases where individuals were referred by name for a job, 110 were listed as if they had been hired through a public competition. The consequences of this troubling managerial procedure are not only anathema to a fair and equitable work environment, but also, as the report indicates continued bureaucratic patronage has a decidedly negative impact employee morale (Public Service Commission Audit of the Office of the Privacy Commissioner 2003).

The upshot here is, even departments of the federal government, which created hiring laws and practices based on merit, are not immune to nepotism, patronage, and other informal dynamics of undue privilege and unfair advantage. Moreover, since people of colour cannot as a rule even engage in the discretionary, non-merit intrigues of nepotism and patronage – having no uncles or other close relatives to speak of who occupy high places in the first place – this further surreptitiously increases racial marginalization in the workplace.

Some other related examples of informal systemic barriers include:

- **Unnecessary job requirements** (e.g., excessive focus on experience as opposed to abilities in the statement of qualifications in selection processes as a way to narrowing the job pool and exclude new immigrants of colour).
- **Non-job related (or inappropriate) screening criteria**. (e.g., undue emphasis on either years of experience or over-qualifications as ways to limit job candidate-pools and exclude people of colour)

- **Unequal access to organizational systems**.(e.g., people of colour may be excluded from access to systems that are important for career advancement, such as acting appointments, feature assignments, high-profile special projects, etc.).
- **Unequal access to training & development (**e.g., differential access to job-related training as well as training that enables the learning of new skills for advancement).
- **Lack of diversity knowledge among staff and managers** (e.g., failing to support and prioritize a diverse workforce).
- **Non-supportive work culture and environment** (e.g., failing to be respectful and inclusive of differences).
- **Lack of reasonable accommodations** (e.g., failing to support the entry and full participation of people of colour in the workforce).

Informal barriers to employment equity that continue to covertly contribute to the lower hiring and promotional rates of people of colour compared to their White counterparts has led to the under-utilization and concentration of visible minorities at the lower levels in the occupational structure and in non-decision making positions throughout the Canadian work world. For more recently immigrated visible minorities, these informal systemic barriers that lead to downward shifts in career mobility and greater income inequality can be even more aggravated and marginalizing. Meanwhile, given the interplay and impact of rapid change and growing diversity in the postindustrial economy, the projections are for increased levels of visible minority immigration in the future, which has significant implications and challenges for race relations in Canadian society in the 21st century and beyond.

Re-thinking Accreditation

Anti-racism activists and sociological researchers are now in the process of trying to re-think Canadian society and global-international migration in terms of ethnoracial reality — from the standpoint of men and women who have been racialized; as well as the other political economy stakeholders including governments, regulating bodies, employers-associations-unions, educational institutions and academic credential assessment servers. Alboim (2003), for example, explored the social implications related to under-utilization of immigrant skills at the individual, ethnoracial and societal level for the design and conduct of public policy. In conjunction with prior research, she found that when large numbers if visible immigrants are blocked in their entry to trades of professions the accumulated societal effect of higher levels of inter-group tensions, individual and collective alienation as well as generalized perceptions of 'institutional' discrimination. From a public policy perspective, Alboim argues this recommends we should begin a public discourse in society by talking beyond "competency assessment" to "qualifications recognition," in a collective bid to solve the problem and formulate workable strategies for implementing an national action plan.

In this connection, Alboim disclosed a (Maytree Foundation) ten-point action plan aimed at some concrete initiatives that could be implemented by the New Ontario government, as well as by governments in other provinces, that will allow these jurisdictions to integrate immigrant skills into the Canadian economy:

1. Create an (Ontario) Internet portal to information for skilled immigrants.

2.   Improve collaboration on the assessment of academic credentials to increase employer confidence.
3.   Provide incentives for educational institutions and licensing bodies to develop competency based assessment tools.
4.   Review post-secondary funding formulas and the statutory framework so educational institutions are encouraged to provide bridging programs as part of their "mainstream" services.
5.   Work with the federal government to expand student loan programs.
6.   Fund labour market language training to be delivered by employers and educational institutions.
7.   Provide incentives to employers, employer associations, and labour to become more active in the integration of immigrant skills.
8.   Sustain the collaborative efforts of Ontario self-regulated professions to improve access for international candidates.
9.   Initiate multi-lateral discussions to create 5-party agreements on the labour market integration of immigrants [including governments, regulating bodies, employers-associations- unions, educational institutions and academic credential assessment servers]; and
10.   Support local initiatives to integrate immigrant skills.

In the end, the Maytree Foundation national action plan is one example of a holistic and dynamic approach to the contemporary social problem foreign accreditation barriers that emphasizes both skills utilization and fair practice. Assuming the "equity paradigm" that all who are qualified should be able to work, also assumes that all the jurisdictions who adopt this premise and appropriate plan of action should be able to reap the benefit of all immigrant skills and experience.

Conclusions

Only the identification of the central bases of social inequality that arise from the exercise of power in Canada and other modern societies can provide the foundation for adequate understanding of the political economy (Krahn 1998: 159). I submit that the erasure of the factors "race" prevents coherent understanding. Where the prevailing discourse on political economy is colour blind at the ideological and attitude level, perception can be blinded to many colour-coded activities and material consequences in the workplace.

In the age of modern globalism, transmigrational phenomenon such as "racial profiling," "ethnic cleansing," "flying while Brown," and the "foreign credentials gap" have arisen and become part of an international discourse and political economy of the body. However, global stratification in the new world order has come to be primarily defined and narrated as a geo-political dualism between the "Global North" and the "Global South" (Brandt Report 1980; South Commission 1990). The use of disembodied language parameters for an embodied world is where racialization and racism begin, because the new world order geo-political definitions of the situation mask and cover over the process of global empowerment and disempowerment on the basis of the body – white bodies versus dark bodies.

The new world ordering as we know it today, and have come to define as the "Global North" and the "Global South" is a world where the phenomenon of racial profiling, ethnic cleansing, driving while Black, flying while Brown, and the foreign credentials gap are replete

and disputable at the level of everyday Canadian life. (For) when the political economy is de-racialized, racialized phenomenon tend to exists without explicit rules of recognition, and so, provide the status quo and agents of social control with plausible deniability in regard to serious infringements of civil liberties and cultural democracy.

At the analytic level, consider that in conjunction with a de-racialized political economy discourse, many sociologists still insist that social inequality and status hierarchy are by-products of class exploitation that occurs through the control of property and the means of production. So, racialized phenomenon are typically conceived to be class-based (i.e., primarily a matter of the rich versus the poor, or the developed versus the developing). Many have consistently argued – even in the conceded wake of what has been called a world "ethnoracial revival" (Smith 1981; Nash 1989) – that inequality and domination between ethnoracial groups can be understood (and only understood) as rooted in socio-economic-class conflicts. However, as Clark and Lipset (1991: 397) write:

> class is an increasingly outmoded concept, although it is sometimes appropriate to earlier historical periods ... Class analysis has grown increasingly inadequate in recent decades as traditional hierarchies have declined and new social differences have emerged. The cumulative impact of these changes is fundamentally altering the nature of social stratification – placing past theories in need of substantial modification.

Upon closer inspection, globalization is not only, or even primarily, about class; it involves a worldwide overlay of Western values, norms, institutions and practices that sanction White cultural hegemony. The global technological and organizational infrastructure has been established primarily by corporations, governments, and individuals in rich developed countries for the benefit of White privilege. As a consequence, according to UN Human Development Report (2004), today about 1/4 of the worlds' dark population (approx. 1.5 billion non-White and non-Western people) live on less than on American dollar a day; nearly a billion are illiterate, and another billion go hungry; about 1/3 of the population in so-called South-based countries will not survive to 40 (half the average life expectancy in Canada). Meanwhile, at the end of 2002, 180 million people were unemployed worldwide, a 20 million increase from 2001 unemployment rates. Patterns of dependency and underdevelopment are no less devastating today than at the height of European colonialism. However, direct colonial rule is no longer the case, having transformed to indirect rule (neo-colonialism) with its minimal political independence but continued economic control and domination. Neo-colonialism is exercised less through the use of physical deterrents and increasingly through the distribution of an elaborate system of norms and imperatives. Accordingly, it no longer needs to be openly articulated in competitive world politics. It is instead a global working assumption. It is the collateral commonsense of reality, propagated by global media conglomerates, that is assumed and normalized as the standard measure of all things – and so, all communal life is now crammed into Eurocentric, "whitestream" categories as a basis for description and evaluation – creating a dissonance for affirmations of people of colour between good and evil, assertiveness and abomination, freedom-fighting and terrorism. Modern globalism constitutes an elitist, North-based, Western-focused technological support form of economic and cultural imperialism (Hedley 2002: 37). The North-South bifurcation of the world extends a social-psychological dualism to all people of colour that Du Bois once designated primarily to the soul of Black folks:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (1969: 45).

In this brave new postindustrial/knowledge-based/credentialed world, people of colour can have double the knowledge and education and credentials and yet still be ranked and tallied as less than whole. The phenomenon of double-consciousness has gone global. Today, we may refer to the divided soul of all people of colour. Because there effectively are now two warring ideals in all of the world's dark bodies, whose dogged strength alone keeps them from being torn asunder by the globalization of White hegemony. This racialized political-economic gap between the "Global North" and the "Global South" is drifting toward a kind of "global apartheid" — extremes of power and wealth are compressed into geographically segregated zones to create an "apartness" every bit as punitive and pervasive as apartheid was in South Africa (Richmond 1994).

The reference to apartheid here is a sociological and not merely a metaphorical one. Even though Canada and many Western societies today are not like an Afrikaner-like police-state, the comparison made by some sociologists recognizes that apartheid is fundamentally a principle of race relations and not merely a system of segregation. The foundational principle of apartheid is "racial hegemony" – managing the presence of a large populations of Non-Whites without undermining White power and privilege. In this respect, apartheid doesn't have to be formalized to exist, it can actually be preserved informally and tacitly as a matter of consequence, and in the absence of an infrastructure of laws and institutions to support it.

The internal logic of a universal global economy ensures that virtually no problem is exempt from its operational dynamics of White hegemony. When corporate globalization destabilizes local economics in the South, indigenous dark populations are displaced from there traditional means of production and forced to migrate "with or without papers" to the world's cities in search of subsistence and survival. This has results in tremendous flows of documented and undocumented and multi-coloured migration to urban centres around the world, and particularly to the Global North. As a further consequence, many nation-states in the Global North have mobilized to curtail the very forces that they have unleashed by militarizing border enforcement and control and criminalizing undocumented immigrants from the South as parasitic subterranean low-life. Meanwhile, the public discourse on contemporary immigration is becoming increasingly more defensive and attenuated, taking on a Fortress North America mentality bent on harmonizing border security and waging war against the terror of racialized others. The central paradox of the new fortress mentality, however, is that the more interdictions there are into international migration patterns, the more egregious the situation seems to become. The result of restrictive immigration measures around the world is a greater propensity to migrate. So, the numbers of documented and undocumented migrants are on the rise (Appleyard, 1991).

Despite the international marketing tool of multicultural diversity, little has been done in the Canadian workplace to actually protect it by. Canadians, by and large, have not yet fully confronted the reality and challenges of a racially and culturally diverse society in ways that would endorse creative and far-sighted measures that encourage the inclusiveness and accommodation of our mixed masses. The need to more expansive in our thinking about the importance of immigration for society-building in the global age, is fiercely counteracted and

often compromised by an increasing anti-immigration hysteria, and public pressure to preserve the entrenched interests of the status quo, to the detriment of the whole and the future. While immigrants no longer typically endure legislated racial abuse and overt discrimination, in the new world order the furtive de-racialization of political economy discourse disregards visible minority experiences of racialization through discounting of qualifications and restricting access to gainful employment in the professions, which results in social marginalization, alienation and disillusionment.

In contemporary society, it is incumbent upon future sociological research to continue the process of trying to re-think Canadian society and global-international relations from the standpoint of men and women who are now being racialized as dangerous, as alien, as potential threats to civilization, and whose knowledge and education and credentials are being ranked and tallied as less than whole.

Notes

[1] Willy Brant is credited with coining the de-racialized global subdivisions of "North" and "South" in his Report of the Independent Commission on International Development Issues (Brant Report, 1980). The report, he declared, is a map of the world with a bold line dividing it into two parts – North and South ... I have used the terms "developed" and "developing" countries which are categories created by the United Nations to classify all countries in the world. This classification scheme mirrors the North-South dichotomy. These terms are often used as convenient labels to divide the world into two camps – rich and poor. The fact that the global ICT revolution is presently taking place largely in the rich, developed North is generating backlash in the poor, developing South. Many fear that it could broaden the already enormous development gap between North and South (South Commission 1990).

[2] The Ethnic Diversity Survey (2003) used the definition of "visible minorities" found in the Employment Equity Act, as "persons other than the Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race and non-white in colour."

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