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**UNDERUTILIZATION AND DISCOUNTING OF IMMIGRANT SKILLS:
PROFESSIONALS ON A ROAD TO DRIVING TAXIS IN TORONTO.**

by

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Master of Arts
Immigration and Settlement Studies
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ABSTRACT

Canadian immigration policy has largely been dominated by economic objectives with a commitment to long-term labour market goals. In essence the policy contends that Canada needs young and well educated people to sustain its economic growth. Canadian Immigration policy however, has been ineffective in integrating many of these highly educated and skilled newcomers into their own professions. As a result, professionally trained immigrants who are engineers, doctors, scientists and the like end up underemployed as security guards, factory laborers' or taxi drivers. This research focuses on the lived experiences of professionally trained immigrants who drive taxis in Toronto. The findings indicate underutilization of significant human capital possessed by immigrants who are professionally trained. It highlights barriers faced to secure employment in their field of study and identifies racism as an important factor in this discourse. Finally, it sheds some light on directions that could help overcome these barriers to employment.

Key words:

Immigration, Taxi Drivers, Racism, Employment, Toronto

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Historical Context of Immigration in Canada

Individuals migrate from their homelands to other countries for a variety of reasons. While some are pressured to emigrate due to discrimination or threat to their life, others make a choice to enhance their economic situation and improve their standard of living. Canada on the other hand needs young and well-educated skilled people to sustain its economic growth. With a large number of baby boomers ready to retire, the birth rate itself will not be able sustain population growth and hence public policy is significantly relying heavily on immigration to address this gap. Immigrants have become integral to Canada's social, economic and political fabric.

"Immigrants account for more than half of Canada's total population growth, and for 70% of the net growth in the labour market." (Wayland, 2006 p1) Reitz (2005) projects that all labour force growth in Canada will stem from immigration in the near future.

Canada has always been very selective about immigration. During the 19th and early 20th Century, the goal for Canadian immigration was to provide a stable population base in order to support an agricultural and industrial economy. Promotional schemes were directed towards Americans and northern and western Europeans. As recently as the early part of the 21st Century, legislation excluded people of any race, nationality or occupation whose customs, habits, character or status were unsuitable to Canada. (Kelly and Trebilcock, 2000, p137). During the 1960's, immigration policies were officially reviewed. A White Paper (as cited in Kelly and

Trebilcock, 2000) was tabled in Parliament in 1966 that stated, “to remain of positive value.... immigration policy must be consistent with national economic policy in general and with national manpower and social policies in particular.” (p353). This led to the adoption of the “points system” in 1967 that explicitly identified and weighted factors to be assessed in admitting independent immigrants. Immigration to Canada, consequently took a turn from being discriminatory on the lines of colour and origin, to a rationale that immigrants should be selected by reason of their education, training, skill, or other special qualifications that is likely to necessitate their becoming successfully established in Canada. (Kelly and Trebilcock, 2000, p 358). The shift in emphasis from country of origin to human capital for immigrant selection opened the door to a pattern of immigration from the developing world.

Currently, economic immigrants are chosen on the basis of the point system. They are assigned amongst other categories up to 25 points for applicant’s educational qualifications, up to 24 points for their ability to speak English or French, up to 10 points for age that is favorable to long-term employment, up to 10 points for having a job waiting in Canada and up to 6 points for what is referred to as adaptability. Out of a total of 100 points only 67 points are needed to obtain an immigrant visa. (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2006). Canada’s immigration system accords huge importance to education and training by awarding high points for qualifications during the immigration selection process. The impression immigrants get is that their qualifications which have been recognized by the government of Canada for immigration purposes will have a similar standing when it comes to finding employment in their own profession.

In 2005 according to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) economic immigrants and their families made up 60 percent of the 262,236 immigrants that came to Canada. 46,049 of these were professionals and managers. (2006) While Canada attracts amongst the best qualified immigrants, a recent study by Community Foundations in Ottawa (2006) shows that it continues to be disturbingly ineffective in integrating these highly educated and skilled newcomers. In summarizing the study, the communiqué by the organization concluded that, "Canadian social policy is undermining the success of newcomers to this country, hampering their access to employment and vital services and creating a web of discrimination that makes it harder for immigrants to settle here, even though they are more educated and more skilled than their predecessors." (Community Foundations, 2006. p1)

The criterion that is used to gain entrance to Canada is often insufficient to gain appropriate employment. This study attempts to offer insight into comprehending what some immigrant professionals have to endure in order to make a living in a profession other than the one they were trained for. It draws attention to the lived experiences of immigrant professionals in their quest to earn a living by taking jobs such as security guards, factory labour jobs or settling to drive a taxi. The study identifies barriers professionally trained immigrants who are currently driving taxis faced in searching for employment and provides suggestions to overcome them.

Toronto's Labour Force

In this section we narrow down our focus to that of Toronto with a brief analysis of labour force participation and make a comparison of the education levels and unemployment rates of those born in Canada to those of immigrants. *Table 1* offers a breakdown of labour force participation and employment in Toronto just prior to the census week of May 06, 2001. A

person is considered to be in the labour force if he/she is employed or actively looking for work. (CIC, 2001). As can be deduced from the table, the highest labour force participation rate is that of Canadian born at 81%. Immigrants who arrived between 1996 and 2001 have a 68% participation rate in the labour force, the lowest for any group. In fact there is a temporal relationship between the timing of immigration and the labour force participation.

Immigrants by period of immigration and Canadian-born—15 to 64 years of age—labour force participation rates, by age, Toronto Census Metropolitan Area, 2001

<i>Table 1:</i>	15 to 24 years	25 to 44 years	45 to 64 years	Total	
Canadian-born	67%	89%	79%	81%	1,280,920
Immigrants	55%	83%	73%	76%	1,206,890
Immigrated before 1986	71%	88%	75%	79%	557,770
Immigrated 1986-1995	56%	84%	73%	76%	432,260
Immigrated 1996-2001	48%	77%	63%	68%	216,870

Ref: Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), 2001.

(www.cic.gc.ca/english/research/papers/census2001/toronto/partc.html)

Table 2 below highlights Toronto's labour force for both immigrants and non immigrants based on their education level. The group that had the least labour force participation in all the categories were those of immigrants who had arrived most recently. Amongst the Canadian born those who had less than grade 9 education had a low participation. Notably at all levels of education, including those with college diplomas and university degrees, the immigrant group that had arrived in Canada most recently had the lowest level of labour force participation.

Table 2. Immigrants by period of immigration and Canadian-born—15 to 64 years of age—labour force participation rates by level of education, Toronto Census Metropolitan Area, 2001

	Less than grade 9	Some high school	High school diploma	College or trade diploma	University degree	Total
Canadian-born	48%	63%	82%	88%	89%	81%
Immigrants	55%	63%	74%	84%	85%	76%
Immigrated before 1986	54%	73%	80%	85%	88%	79%
Immigrated 1986-1995	59%	60%	74%	86%	86%	76%
Immigrated 1996-2001	47%	50%	62%	76%	79%	68%

(Ref: CIC, 2001. www.cic.gc.ca/english/research/papers/census2001/toronto/partc.html)

The difference in labour force participation between Canadian – born and the immigrants who had arrived most recently varied from 1% for those who had less than grade 9 education to 10% for those with a university degree. There was a significant difference of 20% between the two groups for those with high school diploma. Similarly, as in *table 3*, the unemployment rate for the cohort that immigrated between 1996 and 2001 was the highest compared to any group. It was almost three times as much as those who were born in Canada. Results also show (*table 4*) that the unemployment rate for immigrants who had arrived between 1996 to 2001 and who had less than grade 9 education had the highest percentage of unemployment followed very closely by those who had university education. Also the immigrant group that arrived between 1996 and 2001 and had a university education had an unemployment percentage that was four times higher than those born in Canada. It follows, therefore, that despite having a higher level of education the most recent immigrants have the highest chances of being unemployed in Toronto.

Table 3. Immigrants by period of immigration and Canadian-born—15 to 64 years of age—unemployment rates by age, Toronto Census Metropolitan Area, 2001					
	15 to 24 years	25 to 44 years	45 to 64 years	Total	
Canadian-born	11%	4%	3%	5%	100%
Immigrants	14%	7%	5%	7%	100%
Immigrated before 1986	13%	5%	4%	4%	100%
Immigrated 1986-1995	14%	6%	6%	7%	100%
Immigrated 1996-2001	15%	12%	12%	13%	100%

(Ref: CIC, 2001. www.cic.gc.ca/english/research/papers/census2001/toronto/partc.html)

Table 4. Immigrants by period of immigration and Canadian-born—15 to 64 years of age—unemployment rates, by level of education, Toronto Census Metropolitan Area, 2001						
	Less than grade 9	Some high school	High school diploma	College or trade diploma	University degree	Total
Canadian-born	8%	8%	6%	4%	3%	5%
Immigrants	6%	8%	8%	6%	7%	7%
Immigrated before 1986	4%	5%	5%	4%	3%	4%
Immigrated 1986-1995	7%	9%	9%	6%	6%	7%
Immigrated 1996-2001	13%	13%	13%	11%	13%	13%

(Ref: CIC, 2001. www.cic.gc.ca/english/research/papers/census2001/toronto/partc.html)

Literature Review

As expounded in the previous section, recent immigrants to Canada are better educated than their counterparts were in the 1960's and 1970's yet they appear to be having more difficulty in getting meaningful employment. (Finlayson, 2004). These findings indicate that the Canadian immigration policy-based on human capital does not seem to be producing the desired results. Human capital theory infers that greater individual and aggregate investments in learning activities lead to greater individual and societal economic benefits. (Livingstone, nd). The recent experience of immigrants proves this to be otherwise. It is not uncommon to see highly qualified persons taking menial jobs where their skills go underutilized. "For these immigrants, the most critical hurdles faced when trying to find employment were lack of experience in the Canadian work force and difficulty in transferring their qualifications. Each of these obstacles was cited by 26% of newcomers who had foreign credentials and reported at least one problem when trying to enter the labour market." (The Daily, September 04, 2003 p6).

Much has been mentioned about barriers to employment such as accreditation and "Canadian experience." To demand Canadian experience from recently arrived immigrants reflects the proverbial chicken and egg scenario. Yet, Canadian employers demand Canadian skills and Canadian experience from newly arrived prospective employees. I agree with Jeffrey Reitz's position that "although the problem with recognition of immigrants' foreign qualifications generally has not been articulated as one of racial discrimination, racial discrimination definitely is one cause of skill underutilization." (Reitz, 2005 p12). I wish to expand on this argument and explore the role that racism plays in the underutilization of immigrant skills. I will first start by using my own personal experience to lay the foundation for this analysis and later explore

through the lived experiences of professionally trained immigrants who are currently driving taxis in Toronto racism's place in immigrant skill underutilization. The reason for using my own example is because I believe it to be reflective of the experiences of many professionally trained immigrants in Toronto. The reason for selecting the taxi industry is because they are so visible on the streets of Toronto, yet their voice is almost unheard.

When I arrived in Canada on a fall evening in 1989, my luggage included files stacked with credentials and years of experience. I brought my life long savings and was filled with enthusiasm and tons of energy, just like many other immigrants who had come before me and have flowed incessantly after. My impression about Canada was that there was no discrimination or racism as it was a country of immigrants, that everyone was treated equally and all had equal opportunities. Ontario was "yours to discover," with equal access for all to partake from its riches and opportunities. I learnt very fast that it was not so easy and rosy as it sounded. Finding an apartment, opening a bank account, purchasing groceries, etc; may not be so difficult, but trying to find employment and successfully integrate into the economy turned out to be an enormous task.

I felt well equipped and believed I could quickly land a good job in my profession. Compared to other new immigrants, I felt advantaged as my language skills were very good as I had my qualifications from an American University. Despite the confidence and credentials, a good job eluded me. At the interviews, the manager would want to know more about what was the climate like back home and where I mastered my English, only to be politely informed that although I had good credentials, I did not have "Canadian experience," or in some cases was "over qualified." I started questioning myself as to why someone would not hire a qualified or

even better, a “more qualified” person. I learnt that, while I was privileged in some ways, I was however, a visible minority. This made me reflect on my past and search for answers. It brought to light what Yee and Dumbrill identify that “in every instance of interaction, race configures the perceptions of both the observer and the observed and subsequently plays a role in determining the dynamics of the relationships... In general few would contest that racial-ethnic minorities experience unequal outcomes.” (Yee and Dumbrill. 2003 p 111). I found that for many, race, gender, class, able-ness and sexual orientation play a big factor when seeking employment. It made me understand better the dynamics of the privileged and the under privileged. I wish the employers could have told me directly that they were not going to hire me because of the colour of my skin or the way I look. They could have been explicit and overt. Instead they chose to be subtle and covert in their approach. Bannerji explains that this type of racism is beyond a cultural or an attitudinal problem; rather it needs to be understood in systemic terms. (Bannerji, 1996).

The difficulty of not getting a decent job was not confined to me alone; it was the experience of many new immigrants I had known. My experiences acknowledge Pendakurs’ conclusion that the Canadian labour market is not devoid of discrimination. (Pendakur, 2000). What was available on the market for immigrants were labour-intensive jobs that required little use of education or skills. Good progressive jobs were difficult to come by. This reinforces Thobani’s view that historically, the Canadian state has contended the use of racialized immigration policy to ensure an adequate supply of labour. (Thobani, 2000).

In order to explore racism and discrimination in the employment sector, it is important to first look at Canada’s immigration and labour market history and examine the policies of the past. But first, let us start with an understanding of racism. Racism is defined as a set of ideas or beliefs

which have a potential to lead individuals to develop prejudice and action in the form of discrimination against racial minorities. (Bonilla-Silva, 1997). It is based on a belief that some races are superior to others and is viewed as “a process involving mental images in which people who have some distinctive physical attributes and who may have associated ethnic characteristics 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.” (Simmons, 1998 p87). In order to understand racism within the context of immigration policies and employment practices in Canada, it is important to first deconstruct it and examine it from a historical context.

Racism is viewed as static and unchanging and that it is the same today as it was in the past. (Bonilla-Silva, 1997). Racism during the early times was very much overt, with acts of racial discrimination, such as the enslavement and genocide carried out by the European settlers against the African people in Africa and the Aboriginal people in North America. During the 19th and early 20th Century Canada consistently maintained an immigration policy that encouraged immigrants from Europe and the United States. Immigrants from other regions of the world were not welcome. (Li, 2003. pg 37) The government exercised extreme measures to admit or exclude certain people. Selective immigration was the norm. The Eugenics theory of racial bias was sustained by public sentiments. This theory, which was founded on the belief “that humans were primarily defined by their hereditary composition. Characteristics such as intelligence and feeble-mindedness, traits such as alcoholism and criminality, as well as numerous diseases were passed in the blood plasma from one generation to another.” (Kelley and Trebilcock, 2000 p 212). This theory was ‘pure racism’ and was supported by the people and the government of Canada at that time.

Racism as we have illustrated earlier is founded on the belief in one's racial superiority over another. It is based on the false assumption that group differences are biologically determined and therefore inherently unchangeable. These assumptions were deontological traditions of Prime Minister Mackenzie King, who voiced the sentiments of many of his colleagues when he stated that it was "impossible ever to hope to assimilate a white population with the races of the Orient. To even contemplate assimilation would bring Canadians 'face to face' at once with the loss of that homogeneity which ought to characterize the people of this country, if we are to be a great nation" (Kelly and Trebilcock, 2000 p203) Such attitude towards immigrant labour was open to exploitation. "History is replete with examples of the federal and provincial government's deliberate ignorance of exploitive recruitment and employment practices in relation to immigrant labour." (Kelly and Trebilcock, 2000 p115).

During the 1960s, immigration policies were reviewed, leading to changes and adoption of the "points system" in 1967. This new legislation explicitly identified factors to be assessed in admitting independent immigrants. Immigration policy in Canada, thus took a turn from being discriminatory on the lines of colour and origin to a consideration that "a person who by reason of his education, training, skill, or other special qualifications is likely to become successfully established in Canada..." (Kelly and Trebilcock, 2000 p358). Other major changes such as, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Multiculturalism Act* were a big step to deal with legislated racism within Canadian policies. While these have helped to address issues pertaining to racism, they have, however, not been able to eliminate it.

The facade of overt racism has now been replaced by more covert racism, in which racial prejudices continue to plague the way members of the dominant race interact with those of the non-dominant race. The European or White people have maintained their unconditional authority

over non-White inhabitants to elevate their white power or their privilege of 'whiteness'.

Whiteness is seen as the norm. Yee and Dumbrill summarize whiteness as a form of "hegemony" that allows one group to use its power to dominate a group in a position of less power. (Yee, Dumbrill, 2003). This exploitation of non-Whites has led to growth and prosperity for only a privileged few and has had a devastating effect on others. Racial minorities continue to experience social and economic discrimination with regard to employment and other aspects of their social lives. Racism in Canada has been rooted in its colonial past and continues to dawdle with its impact being felt to this day.

Visible minorities have historically been marginalized in the workforce, usually holding semi- or unskilled jobs characterized by low status, low control, inadequate wages and poor working conditions. (Kelly and Trebilcock, 2000). As explained earlier, under utilization of immigrant skills is not a new phenomenon. It has been the subject of research and policy initiatives for a long time in Canada (Goldberg 2000; Stasiulis, 1990; Mata, 1994; Conger, 1994; Skills for Change, 1995; Brouwer, 1999). It has, however, taken new meaning recently, with the increase of immigrants from non European countries. Toronto with a population of 2.48 million people is considered to be one of the most multicultural cities in the world. (City of Toronto, 2006) In 2001, 44% of Toronto's population was born outside Canada. Furthermore, 40% of these had arrived during the 1990s. The most common countries of birth for these immigrants were China, India, Pakistan, Philippines, and Sri Lanka amongst others. (Martha, 2004. p43).

Canada attracts the best and brightest from the developing world. These immigrants have higher levels of education but their earnings have been lower and falling in comparison to the native-born Canadian. (Reitz 2001; Statistics Canada, 2003; Pendakur and Pendakur 2002). The biggest hurdle for new immigrants in Canada is the integration into the economic system. The

lack of opportunity for a skilled person to practice his or her talent amid unnecessary barriers results in enormous costs both to the individual and has a huge impact on the economy. (Basran, and Zong, 1998). Some may get good jobs but many have no choice but to take low end jobs, unrelated to their education and skills. It is not uncommon to see a new immigrant who is highly trained as an engineer, doctor, scientist, etc; end up underemployed as a taxi driver, pizza deliverer or a warehouse worker. Jobs such as driving a taxi are seen as a last resort for earning a living. For new immigrants it is a job that requires fewer skills such as reading, driving and a reasonable command of the English language. (Mitra, 2002)

The Cost to the Individual and the Country

In this section, we will briefly examine the impact of underutilization of skills both to the individual as well as for the economy as a whole. The *Globe and Mail* reported that urban economic growth in Canada is fuelled by immigrants who are increasingly skilled when compared both to native-born Canadians and to immigrants from previous generations. (Peretz and Mahoney, 2003.). However when it comes to their earnings the results are astounding. According to Statistics Canada as seen from *table 5* below, immigrants who came to Canada in the 1980's would start off with a 28.4% disadvantage, as compared to their Canadian born counterparts. But within a few years their salaries become comparable. This trend however has changed for the worst. For example, males arriving in the 1990's began at a 36.6% earnings disadvantage and after 10 years still lagging behind by almost 10% and this divide increasing to almost 20% for those arriving a decade later.

Table-5 Earnings of Recent Immigrants as a percentage of earnings of people born in Canada.

Years since arrival	Men	Men	Men	Women	Women	Women
	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000
1	71.6	63.4	63.1	64.7	70.0	60.5
2	86.9	73.3	71.4	79.3	79.8	68.4
3	93.4	77.0	75.5	84.4	84.4	71.7
4	88.8	77.1	77.3	87.8	82.0	74.3
5	92.7	78.5	77.1	91.7	83.8	77.4
6	93.5	81.5	76.5	94.9	83.3	77.8
7	95.1	84.5	76.6	97.9	87.3	76.8
8	89.9	97.5	75.2	96.3	94.6	80.2
9	97.3	97.2	78.3	103.1	93.7	82.2
10	100.4	90.1	79.8	103.1	93.3	87.3

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 census analysis series, *Earnings of Canadians. Making a living in the New Economy* (catalogue No 96F0030XIE2001013; release date, March 11, 2003)

Suffice it to say that the more recent the arrival, the harder it is has been to keep up with the Canadian born, in terms of their human capital in the labour market. “Whether they worked in a

high-skilled or a low-skilled occupation, recent immigrants earned less than their Canadian-born counterparts” (Statistics Canada, 2001 p13). Undervaluing education and experience of immigrants has been a basis of many studies in the past. (Basran, and Zong, 1998; Reitz 2001; Statistics Canada, 2003; Pendakur and Pendakur 2002). A Conference Board of Canada in a recent report emphasized that some immigrants hold skills and knowledge that are valuable but are underused and under-rewarded. (Conference Board of Canada, 2006). In the *Table 6* below, the average additional pay per year of education for an immigrant man is almost half that of the Canadian born men. But more astonishing is the exploitation of immigrant women. Their average additional pay per year of education is less than 50% of what a Canadian born man would receive. Similar is the difference in the value attributed to their work experience.

Table 6. Additional Pay Per Year for Education and Experience

Indices	Average additional pay/year of education	Average additional pay/year of experience
Canadian born men	\$2,157.00	\$2,156.00
Immigrant men (70% racialized communities)	\$1,220.00	\$1,700
Canadian born women	\$1,815.00	\$1,437.00
Immigrant women (70% racialized communities)	\$956.00	\$965.00

Source: Prof Anver Saloojee. Class presentation, Ryerson University, IS8903. Nov 08, 2004

Canada is losing out not only in the underutilization of the talents but also in terms of revenue which could otherwise have been generated. The gap in earnings between immigrants, most of who are racialized minorities, is high compared to non-racialized Canadian persons. The cost of undervaluing of the skills and education is enormous, not only to the individual but to the society as a whole. "The societal costs of failing to recognize the skills and contributions of newcomers to Canada are as serious as the economic costs." (Wayland, 2006 p19). While this paper focuses on underutilization of skills and its impact to the immigrants themselves and the economy of Canada, there is however, a huge and sometimes devastating loss borne by the sending country which is not the intention of study for this paper. Our society is paying a huge cost in attracting new immigrants and not utilizing their skills.

There are different methodologies that measure the economic impact of skill underutilization. Economic impact is defined as the reduced value of the work done by immigrants because their qualifications were not recognized in the workforce (Reitz, 2005). Various researchers have analyzed the cost of the underutilization of this segment of the population. Two different methods have showed that foreign-educated immigrants earned \$2 billion less than those born in Canada. (Reitz 2001; Watt and Bloom, 2001). At first, the trend was felt to be cyclical in nature, but has now been recognized as more serious and long term. (Statistics Canada; 2003, see also Frenette and Morrisette 2004, and Galarneau and Morrisette 2004). Immigrants start at an earnings disadvantage as compared to the Canadian born as seen above and as Teelucksingh and Galabuzi (2005) have elaborated, it is taking longer to narrow this earnings gap.

Barriers to Employment

There are a multitude of barriers to employment for professionally trained immigrant. While the specific barriers to appropriate employment and the lived experiences of taxi drivers who are professionals will be discussed later in this paper, a review of the overall literature highlights some of the major barriers to employment common for new immigrants as a group.

Proficiency in English language is a requirement for many jobs. For many immigrants, English is a second language and so fluency in the English language could pose as a hindrance to the employment market. (CIC, 2004) Although there are English as a Second Language (ESL) and Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) programs available through government funding, these programs may not adequately prepare professionals for entry into the job market.

Lack of Canadian experience is a big hurdle cited by new immigrants for their difficulties in obtaining adequate employment in the labour market. (Reitz, 2005). It is very common for recent immigrants to be asked to provide Canadian experience. Lack of Canadian work experience remains critical. (Statistics Canada, 2005; Reitz 2005). Often one would politely be informed that, they have no Canadian work experience. Canadian employers demand Canadian skills and Canadian experience from newly arrived prospective employees which may be challenging to produce if not impossible.

Another major hurdle new immigrants face is the lack of recognition of their credentials, skills and experience. A report by *Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council* stated that;

skilled immigrants in Canada, meanwhile, are at the breaking point about their inability to secure appropriate employment. The same credentials that deemed them attractive candidates for immigration purposes have proven worthless for pursuing a livelihood here. We have all met the taxi driver who was an engineer in his country of origin, or the server at the fast food stand who taught high school science for ten years. (Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council, 2004).

Li (2000) using the 1996 census data argues that foreign credentials have only a minor effect on the earnings of immigrant. Many studies however, reiterate that foreign based qualifications are undervalued and not recognized. It is difficult for a highly qualified person whose contribution in their country of origin was greatly valued to discover that their education and skills is not of much significance or value in Canada. (Green and Worswick, 2002; Ferrer and Riddell, 2003; Reitz, 2005).

Immigrants often face issues of discrimination based on skin colour or ethnicity and nationality (Brouwer, 1999 and Alboim et al, 2005). Research suggests that racial minorities experience greater problems of skill underutilization and this is viewed as evidence of racial discrimination (Reitz, 2005). Teelucksingh and Galabuzzi (2005) reiterate that race continues to be a major factor in distribution of opportunities within the Canadian labour market.

These are just a few of the numerous barriers and obstacles professional immigrants face in finding employment. A report by *Royal Bank Canada Financial Group*, one of Canada's largest financial institutions, in their report '*The Diversity Advantage*,' summarizes and elucidates the problem of successfully integrating the immigrants into the economic system as follows:

Canada's track record in successfully integrating immigrants is slipping. On average, immigrants arrive in this country better educated, in better health, and at similar stage of their careers as those born in the country, but the evidence suggests that during the past two decades, they have been much less successful in achieving success than earlier waves of immigration. Immigrants are having a harder time reaching Canadian income levels than was true in the past, in part because we have cut back on programs that help immigrants adjust and in part because many immigrants have difficulty gaining recognition for the education, skills and work experience they bring with them (RBC Financial Group 2005: p2).

In Chapter two we will discuss the methodology of this study and try to comprehend the taxi industry in Chapter three. In Chapter four, we will explore the findings of the survey and the

barriers encountered by immigrant professionals in their quest to be gainfully employed in Canada. We will examine what their lived experiences as taxi drivers have been and focus on barriers to employment in Chapter six. Finally in Chapter seven we will look at the plausible resolutions as related by these professional immigrants themselves and end with a conclusion.

Chapter 2

Research Methodology

Research Design and Methods

This chapter presents the methodology employed in this research. Data collection methods, sampling strategies, data analysis and the limitations of the study are discussed. During this study, standardized semi-structured interviews were conducted. There was a combination of both closed and open ended questions with more emphasis on the latter to permit an unlimited number of responses that allowed for unanticipated findings. This method involved documenting events and issues that are real by capturing the experiences of the people. (Neuman, 2006)

Participants under this method had the opportunity to discuss their experiences as professional trained immigrants and the obstacles they faced in finding employment. The questions to the taxi drivers addressed issues related to their (i) demographics, (ii) immigration, (iii) education, (iv) previous profession and barriers to employment, (v) taxi driver experience, and (vi) settlement experience. The actual questions are attached as *Appendix 1*. Participants were given ample opportunity to articulate their concerns and issues. The researcher allowed participants to discuss any other themes relevant to their socio-economic, immigration and settlement issues.

The purpose of this research was multiple in nature with an emphasis on being exploratory. While it is exploratory in nature due to limitations of time and resources, it should initiate more research on the subject so as to understand better why new immigrants who are professionally trained are driving taxis in Toronto and what solutions do they recommend to help overcome barriers to professional employment. This study received ethical approval from the Ryerson University's Ethics Committee and all participants gave consent for their participation.

Sampling

The interview data came from a non representative sampling of immigrant taxi drivers in Toronto who had post secondary education in various fields. Efforts were initially made to obtain a representative sampling frame but to no avail due to the nature of the taxi business. A sampling frame, “is a list that closely approximates all the elements in the population” (Neuman, 2006 p225). I therefore had to be imaginative and flexible and used different strategies to attain an appropriate sample.

One strategy I used was sequential sampling. In this type of sampling, the researcher tries to find as many relevant cases as possible, until time or resources are exhausted (Neuman, 2006). I approached taxi drivers directly at various locations such as outside the bus terminal, Union Station and subway stops, telling them about the study while they were waiting for their fare and giving them the flyer. (*Appendix 2*). A phone number was provided for potential participants to call and schedule an appointment at their convenience. I managed to get only four participants through this strategy. Another strategy was to place the flyers on the windshield of taxis that were parked outside malls and mosques. A flyer about the study was also placed inside one of the largest taxi brokerages in Toronto. The response from this strategy was very poor with no calls received from a respondent willing to participate in the study.

The next strategy I used was the snowball sampling which worked best for this study. Snowball sampling may be the best option available in a study such as this one. Neuman writes that snowball sampling is “a non random sample in which a researcher begins with one case, and then based on information about interrelationships from that case, identifies other cases, and repeats the process again and again.” (2006, p223). Respondents who had already been

interviewed were requested for names of acquaintances that were in similar predicaments and who would be willing to participate in the study. These respondents guided me to their colleagues either by giving me their names and telephone numbers or took my information and asked them to call me. With every new participant, I explained the process and got their authorization before I scheduled an appointment with them. It was important to develop a certain level of trust for participants to share their stories without fear. I reiterated my commitment to confidentiality as laid out in the consent form. The participants were informed that they were under no obligation to complete the interview and had the right to walk away from it at any time during the process.

The Interview Process

In order to achieve the objectives of my research, I interviewed 15 taxi drivers who had completed at least post-secondary education, an owner of a garage and an owner of a taxi brokerage company. The decision to interview the owner of the brokerage company and the owner of a garage was made during the data collection process to gauge key information regarding the taxi industry. During the interview with the brokerage company, a taxi driver who had no post secondary education was also present.

Being a visible minority did not guarantee me access to potential participants. One such potential participant who was a doctor declined at the last minute to do the interview. Initially, I planned to interview 25 people; however difficulties in recruiting appropriate participants and the hectic schedule of the drivers and limitations of time resulted in 15 interviews being completed. Each interview with the taxi driver took approximately 40 minutes. Interviews were conducted at the appointed time or were impromptu at various locations depending on the preference of the

participants. Some interviews were conducted in Tim Hortons coffee shops, at participants offices or in their homes if they so requested. A couple of interviews were conducted in the taxi car itself.

Secondary data gathered in this paper are from various sources such as research papers, government documents, taxi news, newspaper articles, and the only book I came across on Toronto's taxicab industry, "Mean Streets, Confessions of a Nighttime Taxi Driver." (McSherry, 2002).

Research Limitations

The limitations of a non random sample of any study have characteristics that are similar. The snowball sampling method used here carries with it an element of bias. This bias was reduced to a minimum as the interviews were conducted independently for each participant. Another limitation of such research with the sample size being relatively small is the ability to generalize the results. The sample that was selected was probably not representative of all the immigrant professionals that were driving taxis. As a result it may have limited the generalizability of the findings. "Generalizability refers to the extent to which the findings of the enquiry are more generally applicable outside the specifics of the situation studied". (Robson, 2002. p 93). However, given that it was impossible to get a list of all immigrant taxi drivers who possess post-secondary education; this method was probably the best strategy available in the limited time allocated for sample selection. The biases in this type of sampling strategy were minimized by snowballing from numerous starting points. Since this is a qualitative research and not a quantitative one, the information gained from the study will provide important exploratory

insights related to the kinds of problems and issues faced by professionally trained immigrants who face barriers in getting employment in their own profession.

Another limitation that I had anticipated was the participant's reluctance to providing certain information such as their immigration status or their earnings. I did not encounter this problem from any potential participant that I approached except one who declined to participate in the survey after initially agreeing to it. To alleviate this reluctance, I first started by giving a brief background about myself, my training and interest in the subject. As an immigrant, I tried to make the participant feel more comfortable and at ease and assured them that this was entirely voluntary and that their names will not be mentioned at any point in the research report. A voluntary consent form (see *Appendix 3*) was completed with all the 15 respondents. The principle of voluntary consent is that "people should never participate in research unless they explicitly and freely agree to participate." (Neuman, 2006. p135) Despite its limitations this study will give valuable insight to other researchers and may act as a catalyst and an entry point to further explore the issues and barriers faced by immigrants who are professionally trained and driving taxis in Toronto.

Taxi Driver Respondents

Below is a synopsis of the respondents who participated in the survey:

Taxi Driver #1 (TD1)

35 years old, single man who originally came from Somalia as a refugee claimant. Qualifications include a bachelors degree in English and Geography. Completed another degree in Political Science from a Canadian University. Has 2 years of experience as transportation manager in Somalia. Speaks 3 different languages.

Taxi Driver #2 (TD2)

40 years old, single man who originally came from Pakistan as a landed immigrant.

Qualifications include B.Sc in Electrical Engineering. Has 10 years of experience as Electrical/Mechanical engineer in Pakistan. Speaks 2 different languages.

Taxi Driver #3 (TD3)

53 years old, married man with 4 children who originally came from Pakistan as a landed immigrant. Qualifications include a Masters degree in Mathematics. Has 16 years of experience as Business/Administrative Manager in Pakistan. Speaks 3 different languages.

Taxi Driver #4 (TD4)

43 years old, married man who originally came from Pakistan as a landed immigrant.

Qualifications include a B.Sc in Business and Computer Information Technology. Has 7 years of experience as a marketing Manager in Pakistan and Australia. Completed upgrading in Canada in Postgraduate ecommerce and later acquired certification to teach ESL. Currently driving a taxi part time and teaching English. Speaks 4 different languages.

Taxi Driver #5 (TD5)

39 years old, married man with 3 children who originally came from Pakistan as a landed immigrant. Qualifications include a Masters degree in Genetics. Has 7 years of experience as an Agricultural consultant. Speaks 3 different languages.

Taxi Driver #6 (TD6)

39 years old, married man who originally came from Afghanistan as a landed immigrant.

Qualifications include double Bachelors degree in Persian literature from different universities of different countries. Did not work in home country due to war. Speaks 3 different languages.

Taxi Driver #7 (TD7)

30 years old, married man with one child who originally came from Pakistan as a landed

immigrant. Qualifications include a Bachelors degree in Maritimes Engineering. Has two and a half years of experience as an engineer. Completed stationary engineering certification course in Canada. Speaks 3 different languages.

Taxi Driver #8 (TD8)

54 years old, married man with 8 children who originally came from Pakistan as a refugee claimant. Qualifications include a Masters degree in Political Science. Has 10 years of experience as a senior auditor. Speaks 4 different languages.

Taxi Driver #9 (TD9)

46 years old, married man with 4 children who originally came from Pakistan as a refugee

claimant. Qualifications include a college diploma. Has 18 years of experience as an auditor. Speaks 3 different languages.

Taxi Driver #10 (TD10)

36 years old, married man with 3 children who originally came from Pakistan as a landed immigrant. Qualifications include a Bachelors degree in Civil Engineering. Has 10 years of experience as a Planning Engineer in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Speaks 3 different languages.

Taxi Driver #11 (TD11)

39 years old, married man with 3 children who originally came from Bangladesh as a landed immigrant. Qualifications include a Masters degree in Genetics. Has 7 years of experience as an Agricultural consultant in Pakistan. Speaks 3 different languages.

Taxi Driver #12 (TD12)

40 years old, married man with one child who originally came from Iran as a landed immigrant. Qualifications include a college diploma. No work history in own country. Speaks 4 different languages.

Taxi Driver #13 (TD13)

50 years old, married man with 2 children who originally came from Pakistan as a landed immigrant. Qualifications include a Bachelors Degree in Agricultural Engineering. Has 13 years of experience as a director of manufacturing agricultural equipment in Pakistan. Speaks 3 different languages.

Taxi Driver #14 (TD14)

52 years old, married man who originally came from Nigeria as a refugee claimant.

Qualifications include a Masters degree in Urban and Regional Planning. Has 11 years of experience as a University lecturer and teacher in Nigeria. Speaks 2 different languages.

Taxi Driver #15 (TD15)

47 years old, married man with 2 children who originally came from Pakistan as a refugee claimant. Qualifications include M.B.B.S. Medical Doctor. Has 20 years of experience as a family physician in Pakistan. Speaks 3 different languages.

One interview took place with the owner of a large taxi brokerage company (Brokerage, 2006) in the presence of another taxi driver (TDX) not included in the 15 above as he had not completed post secondary education. However information from him was used for validation purposes. One final interview was conducted with a garage owner and used to validate information about the taxi industry.

Chapter 3

Comprehending the Taxi Industry in Toronto

Overview

The taxi and limousine industry in Canada generated \$1.3 billion in operating revenue in Canada in 2003. (The Daily April 07, 2005. p1). That year there were 1,900 taxi and limousine associations and companies in Canada generating 43% of the total revenues for the industry and 33,400 self employed taxi and limousine drivers generating 57% of the total operating revenues for the industry. (The Daily April 07, 2005. p1). In 2002, Ontario generated 44% of the national operating revenues. (The Daily May 07, 2004. p1). Toronto being the hub of economic activity, taxi cabs have become as indispensable to the pace of the city as they have become iconic fixtures of the urban landscape. The taxi industry is a public transport system that is privately owned and operated. It is unique in the sense that with over 9,000 licensed taxi drivers in Toronto they have almost none or very little collective representation. Peter McSherry a taxicab driver with an experience of over thirty years recounted in his book that “taxi driving is not hugely remunerative and it’s a low status occupation. Cabbies in Toronto-and almost all other places- are looked down on by many people and they are virtually economically powerless.” (McSherry, 2002. p13). The taxi industry however, is an essential form of public service that is accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Unlike other public transport it is customized service for clients as the location of pick up and drop off is selected by the client. For all its reasons, the taxi industry should be encouraged to provide an accessible, efficient, reasonably priced, pleasant and safe service to both the residents and visitors to the city. (Stenning, 1996).

Industry Structure

The taxi industry is governed under By-law 20-85 of the City of Toronto and is administered by the Toronto Licensing Commission. In Toronto, a taxi cannot be on the road nor can one drive a taxi unless they are licensed by the administering body. The industry is made up of a complex structure of taxicab drivers, owner-drivers, brokerages, garages, the licensing board and agents. In the year 1998 there were 3,480 active taxicab licenses in Toronto. (Task Force, 1998. p13) These taxi cab licenses are known as “plates.” One can either use the plate and drive their own taxi or lease the plate to a taxi driver. In the 1970’s the majority of the taxicab license owners drove their own taxi but this has declined drastically over the years. (Task Force, 1998 p13) The task force to review the industry reported that about twenty percent of the taxi plate owners drove their own taxis while about 60% of the owners hired a designated agent to operate the plate on their behalf. The remainder 20% of the plates were leased directly to another driver without a middleman. (Task Force, 1998. p13.). New taxicab plates are issued based on a formula that projects demand. While the taxicab license is issued at roughly \$6,000.00, the Task Force to review the Taxi Industry in Toronto reported that the market price of an owner’s license had grown from \$49,976.00 in 1993 to \$85,000 in 1998. The cost of a taxicab license is currently estimated to be \$120,000.00 (TDX)

As of June, 12, 2006 there were 9,448 actively registered taxi drivers in Toronto. (Vienneau, 2006). These numbers are significantly higher than the taxicab licenses which are strictly limited. This disparity has resulted in a relative oversupply of taxi drivers. The industry consists of three types of drivers; 1) drivers who own the car but lease the plate; 2) shift drivers who rent both the car as well as the plates either on a weekly or monthly basis. (There are over 30 garages with anywhere between 2 cars and 50 cars available for lease); 3) independent drivers who own both

the car as well as the plate and except for the annual fee pay no other charges. (Facey, 1999). To understand the taxi industry it is important to understand the “brokerage” company. These are organizations that provide services such as dispatch, deployment, accounting, purchasing and equipment etc. The owner of one such company the author interviewed had 1150 cars under its wing as well as charge account business from corporations. Taxicabs are usually driven in two shifts with a weekend shift being separate thus leaving approximately three drivers per taxicab license.

Driving a taxi may appear to be a good lifestyle that can earn a good living; however, according to many taxi drivers this may be an illusion given the nature of business and working long twelve hour shifts under pressure. According to McSherry, a veteran who has been driving taxis for over 30 years describes the job in his book as “very fatiguing; it wears out its practitioners physically, mentally, and emotionally.” (McSherry, 2002. p13) Economically, there is uncertainty as it is not known where and how much the next fare will be. Daily or monthly earnings are unpredictable. It is not peculiar to the taxi industry that the driver starts the day with a negative amount. Fixed daily or weekly payments for the plate as well as to the brokerage firm that dispatches business for the driver have to be made, regardless of what the driver earns. The taxi driver therefore, must first earn enough in fares to cover the rent and gas before any money goes into their own pockets. For one taxicab driver who owned the car, expenses included \$1250.00 per month for rent to the plate owner, \$450 to the brokerage company, \$500.00 for insurance, \$300.00 for maintenance per month. (TDX). These expenses have to be paid first before the taxi driver starts making any money. A taxi driver added that, *“If you add in the rising cost of gas, bad weather, passenger harassment, it is possible that, at the end of a long shift, I may not have made much or will have actually lost money.”* (TD13)

The process of becoming a taxi driver

To be allowed to drive a taxi, one has to have a valid driver's license and be certified by the City of Toronto Licensing Unit. For certification one has to pay \$548 for the 17 day training program and successfully complete it. Participants must meet the attendance requirements and obtain a minimum overall grade of 80% in order to be successful. (Taxi Training, 2006. p1) An owner of one of the major brokers described the process of becoming a taxi cabdriver as follows;

If I want to be a cab driver from the city...I must go to the city and I must find out for a 17 day course that once I pass, it is very rare and difficult, with a high percentage of failure, but once I do get that cab driver's license, then I can go drive a taxi. Then I would go to... a garage. You don't know that much about the business and you don't have a vehicle of your own, so you go to a garage, and you hire a car there or shift price – you go out in your vehicle and start to drive. It's not easy, certainly it's not easy to drive by any means. I admire anyone who straight away goes into it because you're dealing with the public, you're dealing with the traffic in the city, knowing the geography of the area, knowing how to handle difficult customers...it's very difficult in itself and challenging. So in your first time out, you're going to spend several months probably getting the hard knocks of taxi and finding out for yourself. (Brokerage, 2006).

Taxi Driver Profile

Taxi drivers provide an intriguing profile of a classic Toronto profession. Drivers are overwhelmingly immigrants. (Brokerage, 2006). Historically, the taxi industry has drawn on immigrant groups. In the early seventies, the majority of the taxi drivers comprised Americans who were avoiding the Vietnam War. A significant percentage were Jews of Russian or European origins, Greeks, Italians and the English. (McSherry, 2002. p29). The taxi industry has in recent times attracted a phenomenal portion of immigrants from developing countries. Current drivers continue to be first-generation immigrants, the majority of who are now from countries

other than Europe. It is estimated that 80% of the taxi drivers in Toronto are visible minorities. (Facey, 2003). Native born Canadians are less likely to prefer taxi driving due to harsh conditions of work and because they have access to better opportunities. It is also believed that the physical dangers that the taxi drivers have to endure further reduces its attraction for native born Canadians. Although the exact number and percentage of the taxi drivers who are immigrants as compared to Canadian born was difficult to obtain, McSherry in his book alluded to the ratio in his book. Describing the attendees in a taxi training class, he stated that "In my class, I was the only Canadian –born taxi driver out of a class of thirty-four in attendance. One was a retirement –aged European and all of the rest were immigrants from Asia or Africa." (2002. p16) When asked to break down the composition of taxi drivers in the company, the response from one of the largest brokers in Toronto was, "in our company, it would represent about 70% South Asians." (Brokerage, 2006). If all visible minorities were considered it would add up to a larger percentage.

All respondents who participated in this study were from visible minority groups. They were from six different countries namely Pakistan, Somalia, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Iran and Afghanistan. One potential respondent who was from the former Yugoslavia refused to officially take part in the interview. All but one was a Muslim. Participants in this study were all male, aged 30 to 54 years. The taxi industry is predominantly male dominated with very little involvement by women. A large brokerage company only had 2 women out of almost 1500 drivers. When asked what the reason for low female participation in the industry was, the owner replied;

Well I think that it's mainly safety. If a woman...especially is going to pick up a male passenger... there is a certain apprehension there. And if you have a couple male passengers... it can even increase the stress level. (Brokerage, 2006)

Table 7 Percentage of respondents and their immigration status in Canada

	Refugee Claimant	Landed Immigrant	Citizen
Upon Arrival in Canada	7 (46.6%)	8 (53.3%)	
At the time of interview	3 (20%)	4 (26.6%)	8 (53.3%)

A significant portion of the respondents came to Canada as economic migrants citing better future and opportunities in Canada. Over half of them as shown in *table 7* above had indicated that they came as landed immigrants. In recent years, this class of immigrants has dominated the numbers for immigration selection. Skilled worker immigrants are selected due to their potential to contribute to the labour market using their skills and education (Brouwer, 1999). These immigrants must have met the required criteria on education, work experience, knowledge of either or both of the official languages, and their ability to successfully integrate into the Canadian society. Almost half of the respondents came to Canada as refugee claimants and they too possessed at least a post secondary education. Over half of the respondents had made Canada their home and had taken Canadian citizenship while a quarter of them were landed immigrants and a fifth were still under the refugee status.

Almost all respondents spoke more than one language. Most of them spoke three or more languages and all of them except one indicated that their English language proficiency was at least good. Only two respondents were single with the rest having families. Five such respondents indicated a family of five or more. There was one respondent who had a family of ten. This infers that income generated by driving a taxi was not only being utilized to support the driver himself but large families. The reliance of income from the taxi business was very evident among respondents and many alluded to having no choice in supporting their families. One such

respondent mentioned that, *“it is quite hard and dangerous... Lots of crazy people in town... I’m not satisfied driving a cab or a taxi but I don’t have a choice.”* (TD7)

Chapter 4

The Taxi Driver Experience

Taxi driving is generally considered a marginal industry and evidence shows that the job is particularly hazardous. Taxicab drivers face added risks when operating on the streets of Toronto. Besides driving in heavy traffic, taxicab driver's face high risk of victimization through assault, vandalism, robbery, theft, fraud and even abduction and homicide. (Stenning, 1996). Being on the road as often as they are, taxicab drivers also battle fatigue due to long shifts and the pressure of dealing with other impaired or aggressive road users. This chapter explores various dimensions of driving a taxi on the streets of Toronto as captured through the experiences of professionally trained immigrant taxi drivers.

Reasons for entry into Taxi driving

There are various reasons why drivers enter into the taxi business. When asked what factors led them to drive a taxi, over half of the respondents mentioned they got into the taxi business for pragmatic reasons. The most common thread that emerged was to earn a living and feed the family. One such respondent put it in very simple terms, "*...to survive... to pay the bills.*" (TD1) The response exposes the underlying notion that driving a taxi was taken as a last resort for a group of people who are highly qualified with good skills. Many of them are financially strapped with familial obligations and few options. Despite their qualifications they have little choice but to get behind the wheel to make a living. Another respondent who holds a Masters degree remarked that he was driven into this business. He said, "*I was driven to drive a cab...I was working in a factory [and] my life was made difficult, and I had to leave and drive a taxi.* (TD14)

Another reason cited was that the process of getting into the taxi business was easier compared to other jobs. A respondent answered the question as follows: *“To survive...If I am working the odd job, I cannot make enough money. The most attractive thing is that it is easy thing to do... Get a license ...go to a garage and get a taxi to drive.”* (TD8)

The statement elucidates that driving a taxi was less bureaucratic and the job was easier to find compared to other odd jobs. It required limited skills and entry into the business was comparatively straightforward. To be able to drive, a taxi one has to successfully complete a 17 day training course offered by the City of Toronto Licensing Unit. (City, 2006) As a person who has completed post secondary education, this was not viewed as being complex. Entry into the taxi business by those who already had post secondary education is therefore not observed as being difficult compared to other jobs.

Another reason given by many respondents was the opportunity to be self employed. Many respondents cited the flexibility taxi business afforded them in making a choice in their daily routines. One respondent explained what his reason for getting into the taxi business was. *“You are independent when driving a taxi... Has less money... but there is independence.”* (TD6) This suggests that the prospect of being independent has attracted many drivers to the industry. They can decide when to start work, when to take a break or even when to stop working for the day.

When asked how long they would continue to drive a taxi, most respondents stated that they would leave the taxi industry sooner rather than later if they had a better option. Only three respondents said they would drive for a couple of years while one respondent felt that taxi driving was his destiny by remarking that he would drive *“until death.”* (TD9)

Social Networks

Networking plays an important role in the economic integration of immigrants into the labour market. (Rumbaut, 1997) New immigrants benefit from the networks within their community. Ties with fellow country men or community members are critical as it allows the individual entry and guidance in the industry. Relations with their own community members, who guide them to available job opportunities, have been found to be beneficial for acquiring employment. (Mitra, 2002) When asked how they got into this job of driving a taxi, many respondents mentioned that it was through friends or relatives. One respondent remarked, *"friends guided me... to line up... and start working."* (TD13) Social networks provide valuable knowledge about available opportunities. Immigrants are embedded within networks in the host society, mostly with others of similar ethnic and or national backgrounds. (Mitra, 2002) Another respondent who was an auditor with the government in his country posits that: *"my friends were driving a cab... and so I got knowledge from them... and so I tried it."* (TD9) Recognizing the importance of networking one participant who had migrated from Pakistan noted that, *"networking is very important... If a community is established in a field, their community members will be able to get a job for them... Our community is new and we do not have anything or organization and networking at our own community."* (TD10)

The social networks such as family, friends and fellow country men are essential factors in the settlement of immigrants since they provide valuable support and knowledge about the employment market. They at times play a bigger role than any agency and cost almost nothing to the government. It is interesting to note that there is no incentive available for such undertakings.

Effect on Individuals and Families

With their accreditation and skills holding little value, these professional immigrants have little choice other than to continue to work in the taxi business. Brouwer cites a report by the Canadian Task Force on Mental Health Issues that the impact of not working in one's profession "may be the most harmful to society. It singled out the barriers to trades and professions as major factors leading to an erosion of skills, loss of technical idiom and diminishing confidence in one's capabilities." (1999 p6). To make a living in Toronto, taxi drivers face a complexity of formidable risks and disadvantages that include both physical and psychological. Not working in the field on which one has spent years of valuable time, resources and effort can have a devastating and lasting affect on the individual and the family as one respondent stated: *"I have had a lot of psychological problems and also in my family... The goals I had when I came, I have not been able to fulfill and... so has affected me... and the future of my children."* (TD3).

Working long hours almost on a daily basis and under stress can add to the serious health and social repercussion for the taxi driver. It also prevents the taxi driver from meeting familial responsibilities. "At the time of migration, newcomers to Canada are on the whole healthier than their counterparts of comparable age. Over time, however, they lose this health advantage. Persons from non-European countries who are most likely members of racialized groups- are particularly likely to report deterioration in their health." (Wayland, 2006. p14). The dreams of being successful for many are dashed and their only hope lies in the success of their children.

The length of time respondents had been in the taxi business varied with the shortest time being two and a half months and the longest being 12 years. There were 3 respondents (20%) who had been driving for 10 years or more. Four (30%) respondents had been driving a taxi for 5 years and over, while three respondents had driven the taxi for a year or less. This data alludes to

the difficulty of getting out of the business once you are in it. Leaving the business may not be an option for many of these professional immigrants. What was revealing through the data was that almost all respondents were working long hours which comprised of 10 to 12 hours a day. To meet their financial obligations respondents had little choice but to drive long hours which also precluded them from familial obligations or leisure activity. Working long hours in a taxi is like working on a moving sweatshop. (Mathew, 2005).

Family and health were the two main concerns of the respondents driving long hours. Peter McSherry describing his experiences explains that, *“because Toronto taxi drivers are classed as independent contractors, not employees, they are entitled to no security in life at all – except which they provide for themselves. The job is very fatiguing; it wears out its practitioners physically, mentally and emotionally. Cabbies develop heart disease, chronic back problems, and hemorrhoids.”* (McSherry, 2002. p13).

The consequences of working long hours precludes time with the family, exercise, leisure time and healthy eating habits. As a result it engenders diseases such as diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, mental stress, depleted energy levels and fatigue. As the above respondent indicated it can also effect psychologically as well. The respondents were concerned about their health and family. One respondent, talking about his concern about the effect of driving long hours had this to say: *“If you drive a cab you can make a reasonable living... but you have to work very hard and long hours ...which affects your health and family... Family life is zero.”* (TD10). Notwithstanding the effect it has on the taxi driver, the absence of a father, can have a devastating affect on his children and the family. The children have to suffer the most as they hardly get to see their father. Another driver alluded to this point citing that, *“it is affecting*

me as I have to work more hours... You have to work almost 80 hours a week and so cannot give time to my family... It is definitely affecting my body and my children.”(TD11).

In many cases although the father is present, the family has to endure functioning like a single parent family. One respondent who has been driving a taxi for 12 years also hinted that driving a taxi cab can lead to break up of a family. He said that, “*it demeans your personality...so many people have lost their families because of cab driving...If you drive at night how can you be at home?... Someone will be sleeping with your wife.*” (TD14.). The comment illustrates that the need to work long hours entails being estranged from family and friends. It can lead to isolation with serious repercussions to the family. Prolonged work hours influence the quality of life (Facey, 1999) It also precludes the taxi drivers from exercising their urban citizenship rights, hence their participation in civic activities could be limited to a minimum.

Making a Living

A majority of respondents indicated that their annual income was between \$25,000 and \$49,999. Forty percent of the respondents stated that that they made less than \$25,000 in annual income. Almost all respondents felt that they could be making at least twice their earnings if they were employed in the profession they had originally trained for; one respondent who was a doctor stated that his earnings could jump from making less than \$25,000 driving a taxi to making over \$75,000 practicing medicine.

Although there is uncertainty in the economic predictability of the taxi driving business, forty percent of the drivers that did partake in the study were content with their experience of making a living driving a taxi. The following comments illustrate this:

When the economy is good, driving a taxi is good and vice versa. (TD1)

Better than many other odd jobs. (TD7)

Compared to other odd jobs it is good for a living...I don't compare it with people getting \$50,000 but compared to all labour and factory jobs...driving a taxi is better. (TD8)

These comments indicate that the taxi business was dependent on the economy just like most other businesses. One third stated that at present they were not facing any financial hardship. However, the other two thirds of the respondents were concerned about their economic uncertainty. Working 12 hours a day does not guarantee that they will earn enough to meet their financial obligations. The following comments demonstrate the feeling of insecurity and frustrations when asked about their experience making a living as a taxi driver:

It is hard to make a living driving a taxi. You spend a lot of time and [do]not make enough money. (TD5)

It is very hard. It is not easy...maybe you need to work 60-70 hours a week...you make \$6-8/hour...You need to feed the family, but you don't spend time with family...you can say it is hard to mouth.. (TD11)

To make a living, the taxicab drivers are willing to work hard for a fairly low pay. These comments refer to being confined to a job that allows them barely survive despite their qualifications and skills. Another respondent who has a Masters degree in Mathematics showing his abhorrence did not mince any words. This is how he expounded when asked the same question: *"Very difficult making a living driving a taxi... We work like animals, we are treated like animals... All my human rights are lost driving a taxi, I have no rights. All rules are against the cab drivers, because no one is there to represent us. Over 10,000 workers and no representation in the system."* (TD3). While these remarks reflect on the frustration inherent

with the business, they reveal several other issues as well, some of which have been echoed earlier. Taxi drivers do not have any collective representation. This particular driver made his feelings clear that cabbie rights have been eroded and any new rules being implemented seem to work against them. According to him the taxi drivers were devoid of any voice. He felt that as taxicab drivers they could be treated as anyone pleased as there seemed to be no one voice to speak for them and no one to voice for them. There is a sense of hopelessness appended to his comment. It sort of reveals the inherent feeling of a low status job which another respondent was more explicit about. He stated that: “*they call us cabbie. It is not easy to make a living...when I get home I am tired.*” (TD13).

While the respondent denotes that making a living driving a taxi is difficult, he also reveals the concealed feeling of some drivers that their status as taxi drivers is a marginal low status one. This is demonstrated by the comment “*they call us cabbie,*” which exposes the underlying belief of stigma attached to driving a taxi. Taxi driving is perceived to be unskilled and therefore has no prestige with negative connotations imputed to race. (Facey, 1999). The saliency of race and class seem to be incorporated in the taxi driver business. The above comment illustrates the prevalence of stereo-types about the industry, that the taxi drivers are looked down in status and in intelligence without any regard that many taxi drivers in Toronto are highly qualified and experienced individuals.

In summary, the economic instability, coupled with low incomes, low control, vulnerability, protracted hours of work, isolation and sedentary periods in a taxicab, is the milieu in which taxicab drivers operate. (Facey, 1999).

Racism and Discrimination

While there will be further discussion on racism and discrimination later in this paper, this section picks up from the previous section to deal with racism and victimization as experienced by taxi drivers while on their job. Victimization level among taxi drivers is 20 times that of Canadians in general while the rate of occupational homicide could be as much as 4 or 5 times as high as that faced by police officers while on duty. (Stenning, 1996. p63/64). There has been little research recently on criminal victimization of taxi drivers in Canada; however the industry gets closer attention in the newspapers when a taxi driver is killed or murdered on the job. Statistics on incidents of crime against taxi drivers to the extent that they are reported to the police, reveal that there was a reduction in 2003 as compared to the previous four years. However, for the first six months this year (2006) there were 39 robberies reported to the Toronto Police Service as compared to 48 for the whole year in 2003. (Toronto City Council, 2006 p2). Commenting on the hazards of the occupation, McSherry, the veteran driver of over 30 years, commented that: *"Notwithstanding anybody's statistics, the situation is not getting any better."* (McSherry, 2002 p13).

Although Canada has a national multicultural policy, results indicate that racialized immigrants have yet to feel included in everyday community life. (Throne and Legg, 2004). The presence of visible minority drivers in the taxi industry does not negate or mitigate racism or its effects. It does not imply that the higher percentage of immigrants in this business is as a result of no discrimination. On the contrary, the reason for professionally trained immigrants to be taxi drivers may very well be as a result of not getting employment in their field due to discriminatory attitudes related to racism. Experiences of racism and discrimination have taken various forms with racial abuse and stereotyping being most common. Racism could be overt

and obvious or could be covert and subtle. It could also be individually based or systemic. In this section we focus on individually based racism. When asked if they had faced discrimination or racism, 77% of the respondents affirmed having experienced some sort of racism while driving a taxi. Many of the respondents were vocal about how they were negatively affected by these experiences. When asked if they had been treated differently because of their ethnic background while driving a taxi, this is how some of them responded:

Normally, you expect someone to stop you for a fare...and when you do, they just use abusive language...some even want to beat you up... just because I am black and taxi driver...They have a perception of being evil... as a cab driver.” (TD14)

Many times. Almost regularly... A mail guy blocked me and started abusing “you f--- paki.” It has become very common.... I find the reason many of us drive a taxi is because we do not want to compromise on our values and respect. (TD3)

Yes... it happens to everyone. (TD5.)

Yes. Very many times... Have seen many people use bad language. People turn their face when they know where I come from... At one time, one person asked to get in the taxi, and they were 5 people. I refused and they spat on me. (TD6).

As previously mentioned, these remarks not only illustrate experiences regarding racism and stereotypes but reveals a subtle ideology that prevails amongst some people that the taxi driver is supposed to obey the commands whether legal or not. A standard taxi can accommodate four people. Having one extra person could become a safety issue and so the driver was right in refusing to let five to board the taxi, for example TD6’s experience when he stated that, “*at one time, one person asked to get in the taxi, and they were 5 people. I refused and they spat on me.*” (TD6).

International and local events can influence discriminatory behaviour. As if colour of the skin or driving a taxi cab was not enough to reinforce prejudice and stereo-types amongst some, religion has now been added as the fuel for such negative behavior. Racism based on religion

has become a feature of the taxi drivers' experience especially since 9/11. The following comments are examples that reflect religion based abuse. This is what they had to say:

Absolutely...especially when there is hot news... Around 9/11 an executive director from a bank got in and after seeing the name said...(are) there are no bombs under the seat? (TD12).

uneducated people ask you where you are from and treat you differently and say bad things about my country and religion... and you can not respond back... But most people are nice. (TD 8).

Both these statements nullify each other in terms of racism being confined to those who are uneducated. From the first statement it is obvious that the person making the comment was a highly educated individual while the second respondent felt that it was those who are uneducated who make such racist remarks. It infers therefore that racism is not confined to only those who are uneducated. Also looking at the second comment made by the respondent who has an MA degree in Political Science where he says, "*and you can not respond back,*" shows a sense of vulnerability and helplessness, suggesting that in order to make a living he has to forego and ignore certain issues. It is assumed that taxi drivers lack intelligence or are ignorant of their jobs. Despite its relevance, drivers tended to downplay incidences of racism. Perceptions of its immutability appear to engender feelings of powerlessness and lack of control. (Facey, 2003) Taxi drivers also frequently get involved with the police. By continuously being on the road for long hours, they are more exposed than other drivers, hence increased vulnerability to the cops and chances of confrontation with the police. One respondent who had a bitter experience with a police officer had this to say:

Very often you are (badly) treated by your customer...especially now a days... One day I had one police biker (on bicycle)...he slammed the door and broke my roof light. I called 911 police and explained what (had) happened to my car...This fellow(police officer on bike) had a strap stick who wanted to hit me...he made \$400-500 damage to my car... Police told(asked) me if it was(a) garage car...I said yes, and they told me to take it to

garage and get it fixed. Nothing happened to the police on the bike. Of course not all police are the same, but you get some...And you get this type of environment to work. Sometimes you get problem with customer [who are] racists...and other motorist. Sometimes you have to pull-up customers and you park and other motorist say bad things...you have to face this everyday. (TD11)

Taxi drivers are very helpful to clients and others. We are providing a service. We expect mutual respect from others as well, and it includes police, clients, and other people. (TD6).

Although most interactions of the taxi drivers are positive and the respondents indicated that they did not have a very negative relationship with their clients, their lived experiences do elucidate that racism and stereo types exist on an individual basis and are manifest overtly or can be subtle in nature.

Chapter 5

The Quest for Employment

Education and Skills

Canada has traditionally been a country of immigrants and until very recently recruitment of immigrants was mainly dependent on the supply and demand in the labour market. With the surfacing of a knowledge-based economy, the realities have changed. “The pressures of global economic restructuring intensified international competition, rapid technological change, a shifting of skill needs and changing immigration patterns have set the context for Canadian economic and labour market transformations.” (Shields et al, 2006 p7). This has led to the emergence of an important dimension for new immigrants. The level of education required to immigrate has been raised, resulting in an increase of highly educated and immensely skilled new immigrants. It follows naturally that when qualified immigrants come to Canada, they expect that their qualifications and experience will help them get employment in the profession they have been trained for.

For the purpose of this study, the target participants were those who had post secondary education; however this was in no way to disregard the importance of secondary education and the wealth of experience that other immigrants may possess. The high qualifications of many who are driving taxis was echoed by a 54 year taxi driver who said, “*when I was taking training for a taxi license in 2002, out of 22, there were 19 Pakistanis, 13 of which were engineers, 4 doctors, and the rest had a Masters Degree. The least experience of these was a civil engineer with 7 years experience.*” (TD3, 2006).

The participants in this study had a wide range of post secondary qualifications. There were four participants who had Masters Degree in programs such as Urban and Regional Planning, Genetics, Mathematics and Political Science respectively. Four participants had Degrees in Electrical Engineering, Maritimes Engineering, Civil Engineering and Agricultural Engineering. Two participants had double undergraduate degrees from different universities including in Canada while the rest had Bachelors Degree. One respondent was a medical doctor. The respondents therefore were highly qualified individuals who considered their level of English proficiency to be good or better. There was one respondent who was actually teaching English on a part time basis while another had lectured in English at university level.

The standard of living of a person is dependent on the formal education and employment experience of the person. These are the two principal elements of human capital. (Ornstein, 2006) In 2002 according to the results of a survey, 76% (or 124,700) of new arrivals had at least one type of foreign credential. (The Daily, Sept 2003 p2.). There has been much concern about recognition of foreign credentials as opposed to just education. Credentials are “the documented evidence of learning based on completions of a recognized program of study, training, work experience, or prior learning assessment. Degrees, diplomas, certificates, and licenses are examples.” (CAETO, 2004 p3). Respondents in this study not only had educational certificates but wealth of other qualifications and many were prepared to upgrade if guided rightly. A Statistics Canada report revealed that 40% of the newcomers had planned to do some sort of University-level training once they had arrived in Canada. (The Daily, March. 2003 p1). Of the respondents who participated for this paper, 33% indicated that they did pursue to upgrade their education. Half of these actually had embarked on another University degree. Along with high

educational qualifications, participants in this study brought with them abundance of valuable international experience. The following is a sample of the experiences of the respondents when they came to Canada;

- 20 years as a Medical Doctor
- 16 years of Business Management
- 11 to 12 years as a lecturer
- 18 years as a government auditor
- 10 years as a Civil Engineer
- 7 years as Marketing Manager
- 7 years as Agricultural Consultant

According to Statistics Canada, the two most common occupational groups for men prior to coming to Canada were natural and applied sciences and management. (The Daily, June 2003) Six months after coming to Canada they were most often employed in sales and service and in processing and manufacturing occupations. (The Daily, September 2003). This represented a major shift from the occupations they worked in before entering Canada. Based on the statistics for Toronto as shown in *table 8* there was a higher percentage of immigrants in jobs such as sales and service and in processing compared to Canadian born. From *table 8* one can deduce that 20% of Canadian born were employed in the sales and service or processing sectors while 31% of the immigrants were employed in similar sectors. There was however, a low percentage in administrative and management positions. Surprisingly, there was a higher percentage of recent immigrants than those who were born in Canada working in the health sector. This could be indicative of the higher level of education for new immigrants combined with an increased demand in this labour market sector.

Table 8. Immigrants by period of immigration and Canadian-born—employed 25 to 64 years of age—occupation groups, Toronto Census Metropolitan Area, 2001 (percentage distribution)

	Sales and services	Pro- cessing	Admin- istrative	Manage- ment and social sciences	Trades, transport	Health, science	Total
Canadian-born	15%	5%	24%	33%	11%	12%	100%
Immigrants	18%	13%	20%	20%	13%	15%	100%
Immigrated before 1986	17%	10%	22%	24%	14%	13%	100%
Immigrated 1986-1995	20%	16%	19%	17%	14%	14%	100%
Immigrated 1996-2001	20%	16%	17%	16%	11%	21%	100%

Ref: Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), 2001.

(www.cic.gc.ca/english/research/papers/census2001/toronto/partc.html)

Previous studies have found that professionally trained immigrants coming to Canada in the 1990s encountered difficulties in getting their foreign credentials assessed. This was especially true among immigrants who were trained in an education system different from that of Canada. (The Daily, March 2003) Accreditation is a “process of quality assurance which indicates that standards of education established by professional authorities have been met. In Canada, individuals and educational institutions are not accredited. The term applies only to educational programs of study.” (Guide, 2006) From the perspective of the immigrant, the accreditation process is a test of patience. A Statistics Canada study revealed that six months after arrival, 26% of immigrants with professional credentials had at least one of their qualifications verified by an employer, educational institution or the governing body of their

profession in Canada. Another 13% of immigrants had credentials checked by sources outside Canada or by immigration officers, while 61% had not even started the process of having any of their credentials validated. (The Daily, March 2003). Seeking accreditation of professional degrees is a task that involves educational institutions, professional self regulating bodies and employers. When the respondents were asked if they had sought employment in their own profession, 80% of them responded affirmatively that they had looked for work in their own field but were not successful. Their job search time ranged anywhere from 2 months to 4 years. Some totally gave up searching for work in their own profession while others continued to pursue it as they continued to do other menial jobs. Some respondents had the following comments to make:

I sought (sent) over 1,000 resources (resume) and I got an interview, only to be told that I was not hired as the other person was a Canadian. (TD3)

I was working in sales and marketing associate with IT industry, but in Canada apparently I was not suited... I got a job in the States (US) and was commuting for 3 years. (TD4).

Chapter 6

Barriers to Employment

A recent study by Statistics Canada found that more than one-half (52%) of recent immigrants with a university degree worked in a job requiring only high school education at some point during the six-year period. They were also twice as likely to stay overqualified 100% of the time. (The Daily April, 2006). Those immigrants who were likely to have a low level education in 2001 were from South or Southeast Asia, were members of a visible minority, had English as their second language and were and earned 42% less per week in 2000 compared with their counterparts in jobs requiring a university degree. (The Daily, June 2004). One would assume that after their arrival in Canada, immigrants would have to take up low paying menial jobs for a short time before they obtained a job based on their qualifications. This is however not the case. The difficulty in obtaining university-level jobs is not necessarily a short-term phenomenon. “Even after more than 10 years in Canada, at least 21% of employed, university-educated immigrants who arrived between 1985 and 1989 had a low-education job in 2001. This is important because advanced skills could erode over the long run.” (The Daily, June 2004). The possibility of these professionals to practice in the profession for which they were trained appears very narrow. Some may never be able to practice the skills they were trained for.

There are significant barriers that exist for new immigrants to fully integrate into the Canadian economy, both in terms of contribution to the country as well as individual fulfillment of potential. Studies abound on what the causes are with some researchers accentuating some aspects more than others. (Goldberg 2000; Stasiulis, 1990; Mata, 1994; Conger, 1994; Skills for Change, 1995; Brouwer, 1999).

Below is a synopsis of the lived experiences of the respondents regarding barriers to employment which they as immigrants who are professionally trained emphasized during this study.

Barriers to Employment as Perceived by Respondent

When asked what explanation they were given by the employer for not hiring them, eight (53%) of the respondents stated that they were not given any reason by the employers for not hiring them. What is revealing in these responses was that most of the respondents stated that they were not aware of the reason for refusal to employment. Some respondents had the following to say:

I wasn't given any explanations. No replies." (TD4)

I sent more than 100 resume....even though I meet the qualifications... I have not been able to get even an interview... so I don't know the reason why I am being refused" (TD10)

No one has given me an explanation." (TD7)

Five (33%) of the respondents stated that lack of Canadian experience was the reason given to them by the employers for not getting employment. This was one of the common themes that came up frequently as a barrier to employment. Some respondents had the following to say about Canadian experience:

That I have no Canadian experience and was unable to understand this as without my first job, how could I get that Canadian experience? (TD3)

They asked have you any Canadian experience... To get their degree takes 5 years and then they ask about experience again... how can you get that. (TD13)

They believed that without any Canadian experience, you would not fit in your profession...Canadians use "Canadian experience" as a blockage for immigrants. They use it as a ploy to block work from immigrants...I see it as discrimination. (TD14)

Respondent TD13 mentioned the frustration of getting Canadian experience even after going through training and getting Canadian qualifications, but the Canadian experience still remained elusive. It is very common for recent immigrants to be asked to provide Canadian experience. Lack of Canadian work experience remains critical. (Statistics Canada, 2005; Reitz 2005). Often one would politely be informed that they have no Canadian work experience. Respondent TD13 further elaborates that even upgrading and getting a local degree may not suffice as he would still have to get the elusive Canadian experience. Two respondents stated the reason they were given for not getting hired was due to accreditation. Their qualifications were not recognized by the potential employer.

Canada admits new immigrants by assessing their education and skills to promote economic growth. Immigrants expect more opportunities and better utilization of their knowledge. "If immigrants are unable to convert their training to productive use, the expectations of both the host country and the arriving immigrant remain unmet." (Picot, 2004). Although recent immigrants are more highly educated than their predecessors, they have not fared well and face an earnings disadvantage. In spite of an increased economic recovery in the late 1990s immigrant economic outcomes have deteriorated. Several studies have attributed major occupational barriers for professional immigrants to two main categories, institutional barriers such as accreditation and individual barriers such as language skills. (Statistics Canada 2003, Frenette and Morrisette 2004, and Galarneau and Morrisette 2004). When asked what barriers or obstacles they found and what they thought was the problem for immigrants who are professionally trained in not getting employment, most respondents gave more than one answer. The responses are very intriguing as some of the barriers mentioned may not have been given much attention in the past.

Table 9. Barriers to employment as perceived by the participants in the study.

	Racism	Language	Accreditation	Canadian Experience	Networking	Government	Social Skills	Employers	Lack of Guidance
No of	8	7	6	6	4	2	2	1	1
Respondents	(53%)	(47%)	(40%)	(40%)	(27%)	(13%)	(13%)	(7%)	(7%)

It should be noted here that the respondents were not limited to one answer. A majority of respondents (8 or 53%) cited racism as the most critical problem in entering the job market, with 7 (47%) of the respondents mentioning English language or their accent as a barrier to employment, while 6 (40%) of the respondents mentioned lack of Canadian experience and a similar number found accreditation as the problem. Four (26%) participants felt a lack of networking contacts was the issue, while 2 (13%) respondents were of the opinion that the government through inaction was the problem and a similar number felt they lacked the required social skills such as knowing the culture of the organizations to be employed in their own area of expertise. What follows is a brief analysis of the responses offered by the participants in the study:

1) Discrimination and Racism.

Racism is viewed as an institutional matter based on a system in which the majority exploits, controls and keeps down others by categorizing them in racial or ethnic terms. (Blauner, 1972). We have defined and talked about racism earlier but will now explore the experiences of professionally trained taxi drivers and examine whether they felt racism was a factor in not

getting employment in their profession. Immigrants often face issues of discrimination based on skin colour or ethnicity and nationality (Brouwer, 1999 and Alboim *et al*, 2005). Research suggests that racial minorities experience greater problems of skill underutilization and this is viewed as evidence of racial discrimination (Reitz, 2005). Teelucksingh and Galabuzzi (2005) reiterate that race continues to be a major factor in the distribution of opportunities in the Canadian labour market. These findings are validated by the responses of the participants in the study. It was felt by a majority of respondents that racism was a factor in them not being able to practice in their profession. Many respondents felt that the notion of Canadian experience was being used as a screen for racial discrimination. A respondent who has a Masters degree made his views clear about the problem. He said;

They believed that without any Canadian experience, you would not fit in your profession...Canadians use "Canadian experience" as a blockage for immigrants. They use it as a ploy to block work from immigrants...I see it as discrimination. (TD14)

These comments are further supported by other respondents mentioned below. Their experiences reinforce the perception of the prejudicial and racist nature of bias that exists in the employment sector. This is what one of them had to say on not getting a employment: "*I believe it was racism. I was looking for some information on the internet and posted my real name and got no answer... When I changed that and wrote my name as Mike,... I got lots of answers.*" (TD3). This response underscores that certain names could be used in a discriminatory way to reject the person for the position. Toronto being an increasingly multicultural and multi religious city, certain names can be identified to belong to a certain ethnic or religious group. Belonging to particular racial, religious or ethnic group that is easily identifiable through the name could act as a barrier to employment even before any visible contact is made.

Another respondent (TD14) stated he was discriminated based on the colour of his skin or from where he came from. He explained that he was a member of a professional association and so if there were any jobs available he would know and apply. This is what he had to say about the job he was offered in Newmarket: *"[If there was] any job available, I would know... I was ready to go to New Market... I was ready to go when they asked me where I was from... When they realized I was black... that was the end of it."* (TD14)

As the respondent describes, colour of skin did play a role in him not getting the job. Although he was already accepted by the company, what really mattered in the end was the colour of his skin and where he came from. Other respondents who felt that they were discriminated against due to the colour of their skin had the following to say:

I think colour of my skin was a major obstacle plus the language... as I do not have the right accent although my English is very good. (TD10)

There are not lots of opportunities. The other problem is being a brown person and not being a Canadian native.... Many people cannot afford to study and support your family. (TD7).

New immigrants don't own the companies and so there are no opportunities, People who are well established own majority of companies and will hire only one or two minorities to reflect multiculturalism... There is racism here. If a job is needed, they will call for one from the same community and not open it up.... Canada needs professional immigrants and they should give immigrants equal opportunities because doctors and nurses move to the USA.... Why are professionals treated well in the USA and not in Canada? Many professionals have left here. They are left with empty hands. (TD1).

Barriers placed by white people and those in the government...who felt threatened by world-educated immigrants. (TD14)

...racism is a problem...there is racism here. Freedom is good ... Problem we face most times is discrimination... hard to find job. (TD11).

These comments show the frustration of some respondents.. Unlike the one on one incident of racism with individuals while driving a taxi, these experiences are profound as they involve decisions made on behalf of institutions and have far-reaching effects. These discriminatory experiences of systemic racial inequality are produced and reproduced time and again through a process of everyday interactions and routine practices. (Calliste, 1996). The exposure of one respondent was not only confined to him alone but was experienced separately by those around him. He stated that *“it has been tough. My brother-in-law has two Masters from (the) US, and he’s a cab driver...cannot get a job here...Another brother-in-law went to York University...cannot get a job because he’s black, and he’s a cab driver.” (TD12)* This suggests that the problem of racism is not confined to just a few, it is experienced by many. It offers a wider and deeper understanding of the challenges faced daily by some of these immigrant groups. These types of anomalies do not allow social cohesion or maximize the competitive advantage. With the population of racialized immigrants set to rise in the coming decades, the challenge is for both the government and the private sector to take lead in building foundations to overcome racism, both overt and covert and to be inclusive, so as to bring about a social change that will benefit all, irrespective of their race, gender, class, sexual orientation or ability.

All respondents in the study were immigrants from non-European countries, most of whom have alluded to experiencing some form of discrimination in seeking employment resulting in their earnings being low. Canada needs immigrants to sustain its economic growth but these stories speak to the dangers they portray to the stability and economic progress of the country as a result of increase in racialisation of poverty. (Galabuzi, 2001). With a highly diversified workforce, it is essential that equal opportunity be available for disadvantaged groups and others within a non-discriminatory work environment. Canada’s economic growth and prosperity in a

highly competitive and global marketplace will depend on full utilization of the talents, skills, knowledge, and energy of all Canadians.

2) English Language Skills.

Almost half (47%) of the respondents felt that their English language skills was seen as a barrier to employment. This was a significant finding considering that they had completed university level education. It appears that although they may have mastered everyday usage of the English language, they were not familiar with the professional vocabulary (“lingo”) used by companies in Canada which could have acted as a barrier. While some new Canadians may know several major languages and dialects, if their command of English is not up to native speaker's standard, they would remain disadvantaged. (Galarneau and Morissette, 2004). Lack of fluency in the English language may also compound the difficulties in becoming gainfully employed and impede personal development and civic participation. The following comments illustrate this point:

My English was not good and if your language is not good it is very difficult to get a job. (TD8)

My problem is English. I can't go to my profession in Canada ... and wherever you go they need the experience. (TD9)

Communication...English language...upgrading to the new system. (TD12)

I think colour of my skin was a major obstacle...plus the language... as I do not have the right accent... although my English is very good. (TD9)

Proficiency in English can be an important determinant for employment in Toronto.

According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), immigrants do identify lack of fluency

in English as a key barrier to locating and taking advantage of the job opportunities. (2004). Despite having their language skills assessed prior to immigrating under the points system and having adequate conversational language skills upon arrival in Canada, many immigrants lack the mastery of specialized workplace language skills and vocabulary. (CIC, 2004) This means that there is a need for language training at a higher level that is specific to the profession, not just basic conversational English. Unfamiliarity with the culture of the organization can also hamper the communication between new immigrants and the employers as TD12 succinctly mentions.

There is no doubt that adequate language proficiency is extremely important in a professional field; however, as TD9 illustrates with his comments, “*as I do not have the right accent,*” the accent could be a basis of discrimination for not getting employment. Another respondent alluded to the issue when asked to suggest how the problem could be resolved; he stated “*change the accent for newcomers.*” (TD10) Much of this alludes to a type of discrimination that is neither openly recognized nor is it addressed. Such examples pose questions for the construction of being inclusive. There is no one Canadian accent and so singling out a particular accent for exclusion denotes that some are more equal than others based on their speech. This impedes the principles of equality and opportunity for all.

3) Lack of Canadian Experience

Canadian experience was cited by respondents in this study as another major barrier to getting employment. In a study by Statistics Canada that involved 65,600 new immigrants who had resided in Canada between 6 to 24 months and were looking for employment, 71% or 46,500 encountered at least one problem. Of these individuals, about one out of four cited

lack of Canadian work experience as the most serious problem they encountered. (Statistics Canada, 2005) This is close to the 27% found in this research which further reiterates that Canadian experience remains a big obstacle for new immigrants looking for work. The following responses explicate this issue:

Language and experience are very important. Also, understanding people. (TD6)

Canadian certification and Canadian experience are two barriers. (TD7)

Canadian experience is the main reason for not finding a job for a new immigrant.... For a new immigrant he/she has to have the first job to get the experience. (TD2)

Much has been said about Canadian experience which is often referred to as a Catch-22 situation as implied by respondent TD2. Immigrants are told that they need Canadian work experience in order to be eligible for a job but they need the opportunity to get a job in order to gain Canadian work experience. (Harding, 2003). Canadian experience therefore could be used arbitrarily by employers to reject certain applicants without giving them the opportunity to prove themselves.

4) Networking

Research on networking indicates that social networks provide with support for settlement into the host country but with valuable knowledge about the employment market as well. (Mitra, 2002) In a survey carried out by Statistics Canada 78% of the newcomers settled in areas where their network of friends and relatives lived, relying on them when they needed any help. Out of those who came under the economic class, 44% chose their destination because family and friends were already living there. Half of such immigrants in economic class who settled in Toronto said they did so to join family and friends. (The Daily, Sept 04, 2003) Lack of the right social networks can hinder new immigrants in their quest for employment especially if it is in

their own profession. The respondent who highlighted this had the following to say:

“Networking. You need good networks to find work. New immigrants don’t have that. (TD6) This respondent alludes to a feeling of hopelessness. Recent immigrants are from countries other than Europe and their compatriots are new to Canada. A sense of community or network supports may not have been developed. It goes without saying that the newer the immigrant and their community, the fewer social networks they have. This is reflected in the statement made by the respondent below:

Networking is very important... If a community is established in a field... their community members will be able to get a job for them. Our community is new and we do not have anything or organization and networking at our own community level. Good luck to all the immigrants. All people who come to Canada are highly educated but it is difficult to get jobs... maybe we need to move to Alberta. (TD10)

The above statement validates the argument by Pendakur and Pendakur that ,“deep ethnic identity seems to increase the use of informal job finding networks only if the local population of co-ethnics is large.” (2005 p6). Interesting in the statement made by TD10 is that it also points to some sort of discrimination within different communities. This point is further emphasized by comments made by TD2 when stated there is, “there is ‘nepotism’, so you have to know [those who hire] or have connection,” to get that job. Jobs available in a particular sector dominated by a certain ethnic group could likely be made known to a member of that community first, resulting in a member of that community being hired. Established network supports are therefore important in getting employment. Pendakur and Pendakur concluded in their study that ethnic identity does play a role in the quality of jobs one acquires but further suggest that the deeper the ethnic identity, the lower is the occupational prestige and hence the poorer the labour market outcome. (2005).

5) *Government Intervention*

Some respondents felt that the government was the problem, that it was not doing enough to help new immigrants integrate into the labour market. A respondent was forthright with his views that, “*the government is the problem. Government should give equal opportunities.*” (TD1). This respondent emphasized the importance of government doing more than what it is doing at present. He seems to be suggesting that equal opportunities do not exist at present and that the government should avail more opportunities for employment for new immigrants. The response alludes to the government leading by example. Stressing the importance of taking leadership in guiding new immigrants another respondent stated that, “if they’re giving immigration to a professional, they have to help that person get a job in their own field.” (TD7). There appears to be a lack of comprehensive plan by the three levels of government to get immigrants settled and integrated into the labour market once they arrive here. There may be supports available but due to factors such as lack of cohesiveness, inadequate funding, right incentives or inadequate policies to support the immigrants, not enough is seen to be done in the settlement of immigrants in general and professionally trained immigrants in particular.

6) *Social Skills*

Navigating social interactions can be a difficult task especially when one is brought up in a particular milieu yet interacts and achieves in another totally different surrounding. New immigrants to Canada are increasingly from countries other than Europe where the socio-cultural norms are different from those here. For these new immigrants understanding the local language jargon, social cues, and communicating styles can be demanding. It becomes even more complex and confined when it comes to employment and can pose as a barrier for some as highlighted by

one of the respondents. He has a post graduate degree and has experience working in Pakistan, Australia and now in Canada. This is what he had to say:

More of social skills. When you are in sales and marketing, your biggest asset is networking. When you are new in a country, you don't understand the streets... jokes... cultural things... and so it was difficult to break in.... and when I got to know there was a huge gap in your resumeand you lose your self esteem and your job ... and you still have to pay bills. (TD4)

Language and experience are very important. Also.... understanding people. (TD6)

According to the respondent these are important issues if integration of new immigrants into the economy was to be made any faster. Avenues to address these issues and provide training not only need to be available but to be known as well.

7) Employers

There were respondents who felt that the employers were the problem. Their responses were as follows:

There is no control over the employers concerning not hiring inexperienced people and they have not been able to explain this... They want a civil engineer to first start as a laborer... then a mason or carpenter... and then a civil engineer... and spend his lifesaving on upgrading. (TD3)

It is partly because of employers. They are not willing to take risks. They are not willing to look at what 60% to 70% they (immigrants) may offer..... There is a responsibility on immigrants as well. We come from different backgrounds... and we have to understand the office environment here.Example in Pakistan, a manager does not make tea. Here a manager may be required to clean floors and will have to do that.Someone from Pakistan, they cannot comprehend this. (TD4)

What the reasons are for employers not to give immigrants an opportunity is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the above respondent (TD4) brings forth a number of issues. He talks about the problem of employers not giving the new immigrant an opportunity. He mentions, “we

come from a different background,” which alludes to the possibility of some racial undertone. He also maintains that the immigrant needs to do more as well if we are going to succeed in fully utilizing immigrant skills. With immigration policies increasingly emphasizing higher education and better skills, it is improbable that these new immigrants lack the necessary elements but the question remains: are the employers willing to recognize and accept their credentials?

8) Upgrading

The difficulty of upgrading and volunteering to gain experience while earning a living was elaborated by respondents who said the following:

The education is the main thing... experience is another problem... You volunteer to get experience but if you do (that) where you get money to feed the family. (TD13)

It is very difficult to get a job in Toronto...When you come to Canada you do not have enough money and so you do not want to take a chance...I can not afford to research or go to school... Once you have started working you need to keep your income running. (TD10)

Often immigrants have to volunteer and/or undergo some retraining to upgrade their qualifications. In such situations the high cost of fees could become a hindrance for the new immigrant professional. With little or no financial supports available for such upgrading or retraining, immigrants have to continue working to pay for the education as well as upkeep of the family.

Chapter 7

Solutions and Conclusion

Solutions: Overcoming Barriers.

There is no shortage of ideas on what needs to be done to improve the situation of professional immigrants driving taxis. However, the following are some suggestions from the professional immigrants who are affected by the circumstances themselves. When asked what could be done to resolve the problem, this is how some of them responded:

Change the system...they should accept the qualifications. If someone is practicing in another country, why is he not good in this country? A person who is qualified here does not have more knowledge than another person qualified in their country...give them house jobs or internship so that they get familiar and this will work in getting people in the system. (TD15)

Only government can resolve by creating jobs. (TD1)

Government should train ...especially because they are gathering immigrants and so should look after them and give them training. At least hire new immigrants. Have a small quota for new immigrants. Help settle in other locations like in Calgary. A Department should help a new person guide and settle and provide training. (TD2)

They have to have a good preliminary process at country of origin. There must be some language skills training... It is easier to do it there instead of here, as there is less pressure there because one already has a job.There must be a detailed orientation rather than just give a pamphlet for orientation and I think the Government should implement a policy for businesses to include immigrants from diversified background. Maybe a tax break of some sort, and it should be a collective effort between industry and government. You can be qualified as a teacher, but not qualified from teacher's college. (TD4)

there is a need for federal government to have an open door policy when it comes to employment of new immigrants...Try them if they are good...Who are you to tell them the degree is not okay? We all belong to commonwealth group of nations...When it comes to sports, we beat them, and they know we are good. When it comes to football, we beat them and they know we are good...When it comes to employment, they say we are no good. (TD14)

The above responses recommend a number of solutions. I have identified them as follows;

1) The respondents were of the opinion that the government should do more to alleviate the problem. The main suggestion was that since the government is encouraging new immigrants they should also provide training for them and help them settle in areas where there are better opportunities. All levels of government should recognize the importance of identifying and removing discriminatory barriers that are embedded in the culture. It should also support and encourage full participation of all Canadians regardless of their backgrounds in the various economical, cultural, social and political programs. The minority groups have been disadvantaged for a long time and so government institutions should lead in reflecting the needs of the minority groups through action.

2) The preliminary process should be improved at the country of origin. Many immigrants when applying for a visa, mistakenly assume that granting of the 'points' for their occupation and education is an approval of their skills and qualifications. Little do they realize that the visa granted by Citizenship and Immigration to immigrate to Canada has no bearing on an individual's ability to practice their skills or trade in this country. This misunderstanding is highlighted by a respondent who stated that;

For the qualified person, when they give immigration on skills bases, the skill must be accepted...if you don't give jobs on those skills, why give immigration? How can the person get Canadian Experience? When the person comes here, you don't accept his skills...you need to change this. (TD15)

There appears to be a disconnect in how the granting of an immigration visa is perceived by immigrants. It is assumed that the acceptance of qualifications for immigration purposes by the

Canadian government will be acceptable and respected by other institutions and employers when immigrants arrive in Canada. This is not necessarily so as employers or institutions may have their own criteria for acceptance. "Rather than asking how applicants "fit" into the Canadian system, it's more productive to consider how their education system and experience are equivalent to the Canadian system." (Cullingworth and Bambrah. 2004 p39).

3) There were a significant number of respondents who stressed the importance of having the right and consistent employment-related information for new immigrants prior to or as soon as they arrived in Canada. One of the common concerns identified by the respondents was lack of information and resources to prepare and assist newly arrived immigrants. Respondents had contacted agencies but they lacked the proper fit between the needs of the client and the appropriate guidance that was required. This is among what they had to say;

*We are prepared to upgrade the education, but someone should tell us what." (TD5)
"They should have a center or an office where the person could be guided as to how to get into the Canadian system. (TD7)*

Training could be provided. A lot of people come here... and if they are directed properly... they could get a job.(TD12)

I don't know what resources are available when someone comes to Canada....they need direct help..... When a professional comes to Canada they should have information sessions. They should be able to get the maximum information either to get a job or upgrade the education... It has to be solid information...It should not be loose like it is now at HRDC... It should be more direct to help in settlement.. (TD13)

There was a sense of frustration for not knowing what needed to be done once they arrived in Canada. It appears that information is not only not consistent but they don't really know where or whom to go to for guidance. These respondents felt that there should be one central place where they could all go to and be guided individually based on their needs and qualifications.

4) Another suggestion from the respondents was that accreditation should be linked with the immigration application process at the country of origin so that the prospective immigrants are aware of and familiar with Canadian legislation, codes and standards prior to emigrating. Collaboration on the assessment of academic credentials could be done prior to migration. This could give them the opportunity to prepare and re-train if they have to, while waiting for their immigration visas so that when they arrive in Canada they are better equipped and well prepared.

5) Emphasis should be placed on language skills training as TD4 suggests, “*there must be some language skills training.*” This should include a meaningful focus on workplace communications skills. Many immigrants have the technical skills to practice their profession but lack the occupational-specific terminology and communications skills required. This training can be offered before immigrants migrate and would ensure that this isn’t a barrier when they arrive. (Broadbent, 2004)

6) The other important point that respondent TD4 makes is for the government to work closely with industry and implement a policy to create jobs for immigrants. He suggests that in order to give incentives to business to employ immigrants of diversified backgrounds, the government should give “*a tax break of some sort.*” (TD4)

When asked for any final comments or any advice they wanted to share with others, this is what some had to say:

I will advise all skilled and educated people never think to come to Canada. (TD3)

Taxi drivers are very helpful to clients and others. We are providing a service. We expect mutual respect from others as well, and it includes police, clients, and other people. (TD6)

Canadian immigration is getting immigrants on skill basis. But most of these people don't work in their own field. If they're looking for people as labour, then give immigration to labour(ers). If they're giving immigration to a professional, they have to help that person get a job in their own field. (TD7)

You show this is a place of rosy land, and when they come here, you shut the door on them...When you come in, where you settle really matters. I settled with those who were driving a cab, and so there was no initiative to go to school. If I did, it would've been a different story. My comment would be for those who are coming in...If you are coming in, seek the advice of those who have been here...take your time, stick your neck out...go back to school...it will take a long time, but you will eventually do good...or you could go to the US. (TD14)

The skilled people who come here must get ready for hardship, don't believe you will get jobs in your own field. (TD15)

The above comments echo the frustration of many professionally trained immigrants whose skills are not capitalized. Canada needs immigrants but it appears that the message we are sending out to qualified immigrants is not consistent. Canada has generally had a good name worldwide. Issues around disparities and discounting of immigrant labour skills need to be addressed before we start losing that good will. With the difficult and negative experiences of so many skilled immigrants and their lack of ability to fully utilize their human capital, it may just be a matter of time that news of adversity about the labour market here, is sent back home. This in the long run could make us lose our competitive edge in a challenging worldwide market.

Conclusion

Although studies have in the past been done on the underutilization of skills in Canada, I was not able to find any qualitative research on the lived experiences of professionally trained immigrants who were driving taxicabs in Toronto. In that sense, this may be the first of its kind.

Accordingly, this preliminary information through systemic research into a phenomenon so important to so many can act as a starting point for other detailed studies.

The benefits of this study are multifaceted. Review of the literature allowed us in general to scan the barriers encountered by new immigrants to employment and in particular the underutilization of skills for professionally trained immigrants. The voice of the respondents have allowed us to peek into a quintessential industry of Toronto that is so visible on the streets, yet about which so little has been documented about it. Many respondents in the study are out on the streets day and night for twelve hours or more, seven days a week, trying to earn a living. They have acquired the knowledge and understanding of the streets of Toronto most of us do not possess, yet they do not have much say on any issues. To a limited extent, this study has allowed the marginalized voices of an important segment of the City's population that is highly educated, skilled and experienced to be theorized.

Within the wider context, this study has revealed the socio-economic as well as health effects on professionally trained immigrants who are taxi drivers. The findings reveal that to make a living, taxi drivers have to work long hours which has a detrimental effect on their health, family life and children. Ironically, working long hours is necessary to meet financial obligations and for upkeep of the family but can also lead to the break up.

All respondents that participated in the study came from diverse ethnic backgrounds and brought with them wealth of experience. They however found road blocks at various levels in their quest for employment in their own profession. While not having credentials recognized was cited as a barrier to employment, the process of accreditation and retraining was found to be long and tedious with different processes and requirements for different professions. The need to feed the family can not be placed on hold while the immigrant goes through this lengthy process.

Importantly, findings of this research expose that underutilization of professionally trained immigrant skills cannot be fully understood without taking its prejudicial and racial dimensions into consideration. The most prevalent barrier for not getting employment cited in the study was racism. Even when the barrier mentioned was the lack of the right English accent, lack of Canadian experience, or non recognition of qualifications from certain countries, there was almost a veiled sense of undertone of racism attached to it. Respondents in the study experienced both individual as well as institutional racism. While individual racism was experienced with comments from their clients while driving a taxi, it was the systemic racism that had a far reaching effect. Describing this type of institutional racism, Budhu explains that “systemic and structural racism – through major societal institutions, from educational, labour market, to justice and service delivery systems – create barriers, which prevent visible minority communities from fully developing their potential and participating equitably in Canadian society. These barriers also serve to rob the society of valuable human resources.” (Budhu, 2001).

The barriers and discrimination that I confounded and experienced over 15 years ago appear to be dwarfed by what some of the respondents have described. They have endured more than what I could have imagined. Discrimination based on race and colour does not seem to go away. As the respondents have alluded, it has taken a new turn to include the right English accent and religion. We also need to take into consideration that if we are to have any serious discourse to address racism, there will have to be a paradigm shift in the understanding that it is not necessary for a person of privilege to be racist for them to be contributing to racism. The mere fact of continuing to reap benefits due to racist policies of the past and present is tantamount to racism

and this issue should be brought to the fore to change. We can not ignore the presence of racism, no matter how much some of us may have wanted to believe that we now live in a colour-blind world. Agocs in her study concludes that; “a world of normative whiteness is not a colour-blind world, but it is a world in which the pressures to deny, to ignore, to refuse to know, and to be complicit in everyday racism are tremendously strong.” (Agocs, C and Harish Jain. 2001. p14). The experience of the respondents in the study reinforces Agocs’s conclusion.

Barriers that are institutional and include the attitudes of employers play a significant role in this race. Employers have a free hand to accept or reject a prospective employee. Asking for Canadian experience can be a mere front for a desire to reject an applicant on other grounds such as colour, accent or religion. This form of inequality has been exacerbated by the shift away from an activist role for governments, and towards a free market approach to social problem or economic problems. (Galabuzzi, 2001). In other words it is like passing the buck to someone else. By so doing, the government has kept the issue at arms length and shifted the responsibility away from itself to the professional governing bodies, educational institutions and employers, essentially precluding any act of wrong doing on its part. Government action or inaction has in the past played a big role in influencing perceptions about racism and discrimination and it appears from the perceptions of the respondents that it continues to do so at present. “Left largely un-represented by trade unions, lacking political leverage, often unable to speak English, and desperate for work, foreign laborers were vulnerable to severe forms of exploitation, abuse and discrimination. Indeed, the history is replete with examples of the federal and provincial governments’ deliberate ignorance of exploitive recruitment and employment practices in relation to immigrant labour”. (Kelly and Trebilcock, 2000)

As some respondents have reiterated the government should do more than what it has done. With a highly diversified workforce, it is essential that equal opportunity be available for disadvantaged groups and others within a non-discriminatory work environment. Canada's economic growth and prosperity in a highly competitive and global marketplace will depend on full utilization of the talents, skills, knowledge, and energy of all Canadians. Government action can play an important role in laying out a foundation and process for equality and non discrimination. Employment equity should be fully utilized for developing methods of reviewing formal policies and practices to identify systemic barriers. It appears that employers have yet to come to terms with the present racial and cultural diversity of the Canadian labour market. If we agree that barriers to employment for professional immigrants exist, then it is not a novel proposition that we must take into account the lived experiences of these various professionals when developing effective and appropriate policies.

While Canada manages to attract the most accomplished immigrants, it essentially squanders them by creating barriers to their integration and participation into the labour market by not fully utilizing their skills and knowledge. When one calls for a taxi, they may not just get a cab at the doorstep, but a qualified and experienced doctor or an engineer along with it, except that they can not practice their skills. These strategies do not allow maintenance of social cohesion or maximize the competitive advantage the immigrants bring with them. There has to be a change of attitude on the part of all the players: the government, the private sector and the populace at large. Issues affecting integration of immigrant labour skills including racism, lack of Canadian experience, language accent, etc, need to be fully understood and addressed before we lose our competitive edge in a challenging global market. Canada needs immigrants in order to maintain its growth. With the population of racialized immigrants set to rise in the coming decades, the

challenge is for the Canadian government and various institutions to take lead in building foundations to overcome racism, both overt and covert, and to be inclusive so as to bring about a social change that will benefit all, irrespective of their race, gender, class, sexual orientation or ability.

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Appendix 1 – Survey Questions

Under-utilization and Discounting of Immigrant Skills: Professional Immigrants on a Road to Driving Taxis in Toronto.

Please note that you can decline to answer any questions you want or withdraw from the project at any time with no consequences.

Demographics

1. Age:	2 Religion:
3. Sex:	4 Marital Status:
5. Country of origin:	6 Languages spoken:
7. Family size:	8. English language proficiency:

Immigration:

- 9. Reason for immigrating to Canada:
- 10. Immigration status upon entry into Canada:
- 11. Current Immigration status:
- 12. Length of residency in Canada:

Education:

- 13. Highest level of education completed at the country of origin:
- 14. When was it completed?
- 15. Highest level of education completed in Canada and when?
- 16. What if any upgrading have you completed or are currently completing in Canada?

Past Profession:

- 17. What was your profession at your country of origin?
- 18. What year did you last work there?
- 19a. How many years of experience did you have in that profession?
- 19b. Where was it?
- 20. What is the reason for not working in your own profession in Canada?
- 21. Have you tried to look for employment in your own profession?
- 22. For how many months did you try looking for employment in your profession?
- 23. If you have not been able to work in your profession, how has it affected you and your family?
- 25a. What explanation have you been given for not finding a job in your own profession?
- 25b. In your view what barriers or obstacles did you encounter in finding employment in your own profession?
- 26. What do you think is the problem in not getting employment in your own profession?
- 27. What do you think can be done to resolve it?

28. What has been your experience finding any employment in Toronto?

Current Profession- Taxi Driver

- 29. What factors have led you to drive a taxi?
- 30. How did you find the job of driving a taxi?
- 31. Do you own the taxi?
- 32. How long have you been driving a taxi?
- 33. On average how many hours do you work in a day?
- 34. For how long do you see yourself driving a taxi?
- 35. What has your experience been in regards to making a living been driving a taxi?
- 36. Have you ever been treated differently because of your ethnic background while driving a taxi? Could you share your experiences with us?

Settlement:

- 37. Have you experienced any challenges in terms of housing, employment, education, employment etc in your settlement in Canada?
- 38. If yes, what was the biggest challenge that you experienced?
- 39. How did you overcome it?
- 40. Did you access any resources or support services to help you in your settlement in Canada?
- 41. Were there any particular resources or services helpful to you?
- 42. What do you think can be done to improve these resources and support services to assist newcomers in their settlement in Canada?

Development

- 43. What is your perception of the Canadian society?
- 44. Do you or have you volunteered in Canada?
- 45. Where do you see yourself one year down the road?
- 46. Where do you see yourself 5 years down the road?
- 47. Are you satisfied with the decision you made of coming to Canada?
- 48. Do you consider yourself currently facing financial hardship?

General Questions

- 49. Do you own your home?
- 50. Your annual Income:
 - a) \$0 to \$24,999.00
 - b) \$25,000.00 to \$49,999.00
 - c) \$50,000.00 to \$74,999.00

d) Over \$75,000.00

49. Your expected annual Income if you were in own profession

a) \$0 to \$24,999.00

b) \$25,000.00 to \$49,999.00

c) \$50,000.00 to \$74,999.00

d) Over \$75,000.00

51. Any other comments:

Professional immigrants driving a taxi.

Are you one of them?

My name is Abdulhamid Hathiyani and I am a student at Ryerson University. I am doing research to explore the experiences, and understand the reasons, for professionals who drive taxis in Toronto.

This is an important study whose results will be used to better understand barriers to employment for immigrants and make recommendations to overcome such barriers.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Should you decide to take part in this study you may choose to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice.

Each interview will take approximately an hour. Information provided during this study will remain entirely confidential with no names of participants being mentioned in the report.

To participate in this important study please contact me by August 31th 2006, so that I can schedule an appointment for you at a mutually convenient time and location.

Abdulhamid Hathiyani

Tel: 416 4017402

Thank you for your time and Interest

Participant Code_____

Ryerson University

Consent Agreement

Title: *Under Utilization and Discounting of Immigrant Skills: Professionals on a Road that leads to Driving Taxis in Toronto.* You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to be a volunteer, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

Researcher: My name is *Abdulhamid Hathiyani*, I am a student at Ryerson University, Toronto Ontario and am being supervised by Prof Mustapha Koc on this project.

Purpose of the Study: I am presently doing research on a project entitled “*Under-utilization and discounting of immigrant skills: Professionals on a road that leads to driving taxis in Toronto.*” This is a study to better understand barriers to employment faced by immigrants in Canada who have a specialized profession. Your views and opinions will help identify barriers to employment and give a better insight into the experiences of immigrants who have a specialized profession but are driving taxis.

Description of the Study: I plan to conduct interviews consisting of both closed and open ended questions that will take about an hour. If you so wish, this interview can be divided into two sessions that can be scheduled at your own convenience and location.

Collection of personal data. To facilitate the flow and cut down, on the length of time for the interview, I plan to audio tape the interview. Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you may choose not to answer any questions you are not comfortable with or discontinue the interview at any time with absolutely no consequences.

Access to data

At the end of this study when the report has been compiled, you will be given the opportunity to review and make suggestions if you wish, prior to publication.

Confidentiality

All information that is shared with this researcher will be kept strictly confidential. Excerpts from the interview may be made part of the final research report. When this study will be completed and accepted by the graduate school at Ryerson University, all collected data such as tape recordings and transcripts will be destroyed.

Voluntary Nature of Participation: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with Ryerson University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to stop your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are allowed.

At any particular point in the study, you may refuse to answer any particular question or stop participation altogether.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the research now, please ask. If you have questions later about the research, you may contact.

Abdulhamid Hathiyan

Telephone Number. (416) 392 6556

If you have questions regarding your rights as a human subject and participant in this study, you may contact the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board for information.

Research Ethics Board

c/o Office of the Associate Vice President, Academic

Ryerson University

350 Victoria Street

Toronto, ON M5B 2K3

416-979-5042

Agreement:

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to be in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this agreement.

You have been told that by signing this consent agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

Name of Participant (please print)

Date

Signature of Participant

Signature of Researcher

Signature of Researcher

Please sign below to show that you have allowed this interview to be tape recorded. When this study will be completed and accepted by the graduate school at Ryerson University, all collected data such as tape recordings and transcripts will be destroyed.

Date

Signature of participant

Please indicate your contact address if you are interested in a copy of the research report:

100-741-80