

ASSESSING THE BARRIERS REGARDING CANADA'S LABOUR MARKET POLICIES
AND THEIR IMPACT ON CARIBBEAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE SKILL-TRADE SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

Many racialized immigrants, particularly Caribbean immigrants, leave their countries in hope of attaining a better life in Canada. In addition, skilled immigrants are lured to Canada by an aggressive immigration policy which promotes the notion that there is potential for immigrants to improve their lives and succeed as well rounded citizens who contribute to the Canadian society (Teelucksingh and Galabuzi, 2005). However, when many racialized immigrants try to enter the Canadian labour market, they face various challenges which sometimes continue after finding employment. This study will address the concerns relating to the barriers that Canadian labour market policies can present in the labour market, and the ways in which some Caribbean immigrants understand the policies, and experience its impact through systemic barriers. With the use of interviews by key informants from the Caribbean community, this paper seeks to explore the ways in which some racialized immigrants are acutely affected by Canada's labour market policies.

Key words:

Labour market; race; Caribbean immigrants; skill-trade; unions

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Introduction

Labour market policies such as the Employment Equity Act and the concept of unionism are important courses of action that the Canadian government uses to manage various organizations and employees. Importantly, these policies may have different impacts and outcomes on the lives of employees, particularly racialized employees, despite its purpose of being created to promote equity and protect employees' rights in the labour market. According to Xue (2008), "lack of job experience in Canada was the most cited serious problem for newcomers when looking for jobs throughout the first years in Canada" (p. 5). This suggests that many newcomers face challenges to entering the Canadian labour market despite the existence of labour market policies such as the Employment Equity Act. The Employment Equity Act was not only designed and implemented in response to systemic employment discrimination (Agocs, 2002), but was also created to promote the representation of diversity in various corporations.

Although the barriers that many racialized immigrants experience entering the Canadian labour market is well-documented (Hawthorne, 2008), this paper seeks to explore the impact of some Canadian labour market policies on the lives of racialized immigrants, specifically Caribbean immigrants who have been employed for less than ten years in the Canadian labour market. Pyper (2008) emphasizes that "immigration policies and regulations regarding certification requirements also hit many occupations in the trades" (p. 17). This highlights the fact that the discounting of foreign credentials also affects many racialized immigrants' (Li, 2001) entry in the skill-trade sector. After entering the Canadian labour market, it is important to understand if racialized immigrants continue to experience barriers in the labour market; and how labour policies affected the lives of racialized immigrants.

Scholarly research, such as Access Alliance (2013) and Weiner (2008) among others, have continuously identified and demonstrated the barriers that many racialized immigrants

experience when entering the Canadian labour market. As distinct from this work, the focus of this study is to assess the barriers arising from Canada's labour market policies and examine how these policies affect some Caribbean immigrants in advantageous or disadvantageous ways in the skill-trade sector. In addition, Frenette et al. (2004) and Hawthorne (2008) draw attention to the fact that in Canada, wage disparity has worsened and that it may take up to 20 - 30 years for many racialized immigrant to achieve parity with comparable qualified Canadians. Teelucksingh and Galabuzi (2005) emphasize that "income disparities have historically been a reliable measure of racial discrimination in the labour market" (p. 9). This illustrates that some labour market policies may somewhat be ineffective for many racialized immigrants who experience wage disparity after entering the Canadian labour market. This highlights the reason why it is important to assess the barriers of Canadian labour market policies and examine its impact on the lives of some Caribbean immigrants.

In this study, a qualitative approach is used to examine how labour market policies impact the lives of some Caribbean immigrants in Canada with the use of interviews. Through the lens of critical race theory and labour market segmentation theoretical framework, policies such as the Employment Equity Act and unionism are scrutinized in order to understand the various functions and adverse impact that policies may have on racialized immigrants. Teelucksingh and Galabuzi (2005) reveal that "the continuity of racial segregation in the labour market with roots in Canada's inception as a white settler colony imposes an added burden on racialized groups [...] with non-standard forms of work" as a growing trend in Canada (p. 9). Hence the continued impact of Canada's colonial history on the lives of many racialized immigrants in the labour market even in the 21st century. In the next section, various literatures are reviewed to highlight the theoretical framework that underpins this study; and provides the

current trends regarding the function and impact of labour market policies. A description of the methodology is emphasized in order to shed light on the approach that was used to gather data. The interview findings illustrate a descriptive result of the participants' narratives, and themes that are used in the analysis of this paper to demonstrate ways in which labour market policies impact the lives of some Caribbean immigrants. This paper concludes with a summary of the major findings and limitations of this paper.

Literature Review

This literature review is divided into six sections in order to explore the theoretical framework that will be used to frame this paper, draw attention to the significance of Caribbean immigrants in Canada, the realities of their experiences in the Canadian labour market, and the impact of the Canadian labour market policies on their lives. Weiner (2008) states that “successful integration includes the ability to find work that uses one’s education, training and experience and provides compensation commensurate with one’s human capital” (p. 3). It is imperative to note that there is a gap between the state's discourse of promoting an inclusive society for the integration of racialized immigrants in the labour market and the realities of many racialized immigrants who experience systemic barriers in the labour market that impedes their integration in the labour market. Shinnaoui and Narchal (2010) states that “the integration of migrants into a host nation’s labour force has been reluctant and subordinate, despite an increasing reliance on migrants to overcome the gaps in national labour skill shortages” (p. 424). When racialized immigrants are received to work in the Canadian labour market, many of them face systemic barriers that the dominant group does not necessarily face in the labour force that hinders their integration such as limited access to regular full time employment and equivalent wages. With regards to the Canadian labour market, integration therefore requires that an “immigrant’s economic performance converges toward that of their native born counterparts” (Hum & Simpson, 2004, p. 47).

According to Bevelander and Pendakur (2012), “in the Swedish debate, Canada is often identified as an important positive example of a country where immigrants from all over the world integrate largely without problems” (p. 2). Countries such as Sweden perceive Canada as an inclusive society that provides equal employment opportunities for immigrants regardless of

their race, age, gender and class. This illusive perception reinforces the misconceived notion that immigrants and refugees have few or no barriers toward integrating in the Canadian society. Even though Canada introduced the points system in 1967, which opened the immigration gates to racialized immigrants from developing countries to work in the Canadian labour market, scholarly research (Choudry & Thomas, 2013; James, 2009) in the last five years continues to show that many racialized immigrants experience discrimination in the Canadian labour market even in the twenty first century. Thus, the discounting of immigrants' foreign credentials (Li, 2001; Li, 2008) and the expectation of Canadian work experience among other factors is not a new phenomenon but that it is the subtle ways in which various actors such as the state's use of certain policies, such as the points system that operates as a brain drain tool (Shinnaoui and Narchal, 2010), to perpetuate the cycle of discrimination in the contemporary society in addition to some private businesses hiring and promotion practices that oppress the economic mobility of many racialized immigrants who experience unequal pay. Chaykowski and Slotsve (2002) reveal that "while public-sector union density levels remain high, Canadian private-sector union density has begun to decrease significantly since the late 1990s" (p. 494). This draws attention for concern of racialized immigrants employed in private businesses. Hence this paper will explore the issues of systemic discrimination in the Canadian labour market by not only assessing some labour market policies applicable to the private and public organizations but by also giving voices to racialized immigrants in the literature by incorporating empirical research with racialized immigrants.

Theoretical Perspective

From a historical perspective, Reich et al. (1973) defines labour market segmentation "as the historical process whereby political-economic forces encourage the division of the labour

market into separate submarkets, or segments, distinguished by different labour market characteristics and behavioural rules” (p. 359). This definition helps one to not only identify the existence of a segmented labour market but to also question the existence of labour market segmentation, particularly in Canadian society, where Canada promotes itself as a multicultural society that is open to the notion of equality for all. Although the concept of Canada as a multicultural society is problematic, focus will not be placed on this ongoing debate in this paper because of the limited focus of this paper regarding the impact of labour market policies on the lives of some Caribbean immigrants.

Labour market segmentation can be understood as four segmentation processes (Reich et al., 1973). Segmentation into primary and secondary markets, segmentation within the primary sector, segmentation by race, and segmentation by sex are the outcomes by which the labour market can be divided (Reich et al., 1973). With particular interest to this paper, labour market segmentation into primary and secondary markets, and by race help to frame the discussion regarding the various ways in which racialized immigrants are pushed into secondary labour markets in Canada. Thus “labour market segmentation arose from conscious strategies and systemic forces” (Reich et al., 1973, p. 361). This quote bolsters my research question which seeks to explore and understand the reasons why and how labour market segmentation continues to exist in Canada in the twenty first century, and the impact it has on racialized immigrants, specifically Caribbean immigrants. Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2006) state that “labour market segmentation theory was created by political economists in the 1970s and 1980s and it claims that social and institutional forces reduce opportunities for certain social groups, and relegate them to the ‘second division’ of the labour market” (p. 206). This theory helps to identify and deconstruct the ways in which the state and the private sector use systemic structures such as

discounting of foreign credentials and emphasis on having Canadian experience, to push many racialized immigrants in sub-economies and underpaid jobs.

The labour market segmentation framework is a critical theoretical tool that interrogates the reasons why many racialized immigrants experience high unemployment, and overrepresented in precarious jobs (Galabuzi, 2001). It also sheds light on the fact that systemic barriers exist in the host society in order to reduce opportunities of economic mobility for certain social groups, specifically racialized immigrants. In relegating racialized immigrants to second division of labour, the Canadian government perpetuates the cycle of oppression by controlling many racialized immigrants' access to economic and social resources. This reinforces my argument that the Canadian state uses strategic labour market practices to hamper the livelihood and upward economic mobility of many racialized immigrants.

Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2006) illustrate that labour market disadvantage can be seen:

as largely due to ethnic and racial discrimination leading to the segmented labour market, which is functional for the capitalist economy at the societal level as well as for individual employers, as it provides a constant supply of cheap labour ready to take on the bottom jobs. (p. 206)

The labour market segmentation paradigm is a useful theoretical framework that highlights the intersectionality of class, ethnicity, and race among other factors that the state uses as signals to racialize many immigrants in the labour market. Lusi and Bauder (2010) illustrate that “in a Canadian context, for example, immigrants are excluded from primary segment occupations by institutionalized cultural practices of credential non-recognition professionalism, which many immigrants do not have access to” (p. 30). This demonstrates that even though Canada promotes itself as an inclusive society that no longer practices overt forms of racism, the existence of labour market segmentation such as the high rates of racialized immigrants in low-wage employment reveals that Canada still continues the cycle of oppression, particularly in the labour

market, through the use of covert forms of racist practices such as normalizing the representation of racialized immigrants in low paying jobs. Additionally, Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2006) explain that “labour market segmentation is a product of interconnected institutional, intercultural, and economic flows between sending and receiving countries, as well as established global cultural and economic hierarchies” (p. 220). This adds another level of understanding to the global relationship that exists between the north and south countries by revealing the notion of a patriarchal relationship. Many developed countries such as Canada adopt a patriarchal attitude towards developing countries. Teelucksingh and Galabuzi (2005) emphasize that “the shift towards more immigrants from the South has led to a noticeable lag in economic attainment among members of the immigrant group” (p. 17). Developing countries in the south are perceived as a child relying on a father, i.e., countries in the south depending on countries in the north for direction, economic assistance and advice regarding the ways in which labour in south countries can be used to meet the demands for cheap labour in first world countries.

Another theory that will also frame this paper is critical race theory. James (2009) defines critical race theory as:

grounded in the realities of racial minorities’ lived experiences with racism and as such rejects the colour-blind approach to politics and legal regulations which on the one hand are expected to address oppressive situations of people of colour, but on the other hand simultaneously function to oppress. (p. 93)

As a useful theoretical tool, critical race theory examines and deconstructs systemic structures in the Canadian labour market by identifying and analyzing the social and economic conditions that impact the lives of racialized immigrants, particularly Caribbean immigrants. With incorporating the voices of some Caribbean immigrants, this paper will demonstrate the various impacts, whether positive or negative, that Canadian labour market policies have on racialized

lives in addition to interrogating the labour market legal regulations. Hence, labour market segmentation theory and critical race theory are the theoretical frameworks that inform this paper.

The Caribbean Community in Canada

Historically, the immigration gates of Canada were not fully opened to racialized immigrants, particularly Caribbean immigrants, until the late 1960s. James (2009) highlights that “it was not until Canada changed its restrictive immigration policy in 1967 that the number of Caribbean people coming into Canada increased significantly... [where] Caribbean black men and women came to Canada seeking work and educational opportunities” (p. 94). This sheds light on the interest of this paper to explore the impact of Canadian labour market policies on the lives of many Caribbean immigrants who immigrate with the hope of seeking for a better life, specifically employment opportunities in Canada. Block and Galabuzi (2011) emphasize that “from a public policy perspective, the under-representation of racialized workers in public administration is of grave concern” (p. 11). Indeed, this concern of under-representation of racialized workers is of great relevance where public administration deals with the implementation of government policies and involves civil servants who work in public services. This highly suggests that many racialized workers’ experiences in Canada’s labour market may not have much influence on the creation or development of government policies because the representation of racialized workers is marginalized in public administration that helps to institute these policies. Teelucksingh and Galabuzi (2005) emphasize that “the existence of racially defined concentrations in certain sectors and occupations suggests differential access to the labour market and racial discrimination” (p. 16). The under-representation of racialized workers in public administration is an indication that differential access and racial discrimination

exist with regards to the entry of racialized workers in this particular sector. Interestingly, on the international platform, Canada is perceived as a place of opportunities yet the low representation of many racialized immigrants in prominent jobs and their lived experiences contrast with the Canadian ideology of equality for all, particularly in the labour market. In addition, Caribbean participants in Carl James' (2009) study emphasized that they were stressed as a result of their work in Canada. This suggests that some Caribbean immigrants' health issues such as stress and depression are as a result of negative experiences in the Canadian labour market. Thus this paper uses critical lens to explore and understand how the Canadian labour market affects the lives of Caribbean immigrants based on six selected Caribbean narratives, and scholarships by Carl James (2009), Cheryl Teelucksingh and Grace-Edward Galabuzi (2005) among other scholars.

James illustrates that "the fact that racial minorities, especially blacks, continue to do poorly in the Canadian job market points to an unfavourable context , especially in the area of employment, which they are forced to confront" (2009, p. 96). Hence the notion of Canada as an inclusive society and the Caribbean immigrants' hope of getting better employment opportunities in Canada is a problematic paradigm. The unequal access to full-time, full-year employment in Canada is a partial picture of racialized labour market experience that many racialized immigrants face in the labour market (Block & Galabuzi, 2011). This suggests that in addition to limited access to full-time jobs, there are other social and economic factors that adversely impact the experiences of many racialized immigrants in the Canadian labour market. Additionally, Teelucksingh and Galabuzi (2005) highlight that "the labour market is segmented along racial lines, with racialized group members over represented in many low paying occupations, with high levels of precariousness while they are under-represented in the better paying more secure jobs" (p. 4). This draws attention to the fact that racial discrimination exists

in the Canadian labour market where the under representation of racialized immigrants in higher level jobs reveal the reality that there is a primary labour market that is dominated by non-racialized people and a secondary labour market that is over represented with racialized immigrants.

Racialized Immigrants' Perspective

The Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) in its report states that, “even though Canada was the first country to adopt multiculturalism as its official policy, we have had a history of social, cultural, and economic discrimination against visible minorities and Aboriginal peoples” (2000, p. 5). It is acknowledged that Canada has had a colonial history. In response to its colonial history, the concept of multiculturalism among other policies was implemented. However, in the twenty first century, recent scholars such as Rupa Banerjee (2008) and Anver Saloojee (2003) among others have demonstrated that racial discrimination continues to exist in the Canadian labour market which mostly results in a segmented labour market where many racialized immigrants earn fewer wages than people from the dominant society. Hence racial discrimination can occur as economic discrimination, and exclusionary discrimination (Teelucksingh & Galabuzi, 2005). Teelucksingh and Galabuzi state that “racial discrimination in employment refers to two forms of practices, (as mentioned above) that deny racialized group members equality of opportunity in the Canadian labour market and secure an advantage for non-racialized groups” (2005, p. 6). This suggests that regardless of certain labour market policies that were implemented as a response to discrimination, racial discrimination is still evident in the Canadian labour market in the twenty first century.

Banerjee (2008) emphasizes that “discrimination may also be manifested in unfair treatment, and if this is not reflected in objective measures such as wages, many instances of

discrimination may be overlooked with this type of analysis” (p. 381). In addition to the objective measure of the over representation of many racialized immigrants in low paid positions, it is imperative to analyze the social work conditions such as the day to day treatment of racialized immigrants in the Canadian labour market by employers in order to not overlook the various forms of discriminatory behaviour that many racialized immigrants face in their work environment. Banerjee (2008) reveals that “examining individuals’ perceptions allows us to explore the subjective side of discrimination [and that] perceptions do characterize reality for those who report it and therefore have real consequences for workers and employers” (p. 381).

The experiences of racialized immigrants in the Canadian labour market is critical to the understanding of the real consequences that many racialized immigrants face such as loss of self-love, feelings of anger and depression, and lack of self-confidence (James, 2009) despite the implementation of certain policies that are adopted to promote fair treatment in the labour market. Importantly, Saloojee (2003) emphasizes that “racial discrimination is manifested at the individual, institutional, structural and systemic levels [...]; it can result from apparently neutral policies and practices that, regardless of intent, have adverse impacts on racialized individuals and communities” (p. 5). Despite the Canadian government’s discourse of inclusion through the promotion of perceived neutral policies and practices such as the immigration point system among others, racial discrimination continues to prevent the integration of many racialized immigrants from accessing regular full time jobs and high representation equivalent to the dominant group in the primary labour market. Some of the Caribbean participants in James’ (2009) study attributed the failure to obtain jobs or employment opportunities that they wanted to the stereotyping of them as “lacking work ethics, being uneducated, uninventive and incapable of abstract thinking” by the dominant group in the Canadian labour market (p. 102).

Saloojee (2003) argues that “racism is a form of social exclusion, and racial discrimination in all its forms and manifestations is the process by which that exclusion occurs” (p. 2). Evidently, racial discrimination is a form of racism which occurs in the Canadian labour market which socially and economically exclude racialize immigrants in the dominant society. However, Saloojee (2003) emphasizes that “the contemporary discourse on social exclusion is too narrowly focused on poverty and integration into the paid labour market, and it potentially obscures a bigger debate about exploitation and the extent to which racism creates a dual labour market that leads to the super-exploitation of workers of colour” (p. 3). Saloojee (2003) does not negate the relationship that exist between poverty and social exclusion, but he draws attention to the impact and consequences of racism which can create a dual labour market that allows the dominant society to exploit the labour of many racialize immigrants who work in precarious jobs in Canada. In addition, racism also accounts for the devaluation of foreign credentials that prevents many racialize immigrants from accessing certain occupations when they enter Canada’s labour market.

Representation of Unions

According to Das Gupta (2007), “systemic racism in the labour movement is indeed one contributing factor, among many, to the lower unionization rate of racialized immigrants compared to white workers” (p. 350). Lower unionization rates for many racialized immigrants in the labour market maintain power imbalances in society. Adams (2007) emphasizes that “Canadian governments have promised on the world stage to protect and promote collective bargaining as a human right but they have reneged on that promise” (p. 42). Thus low levels of unionization draws attention to the fact that many racialized immigrants work in precarious jobs and their wages and labour are not regulated which lead to racial discrimination and exploitation

of their labour. Importantly, lower unionization rate of racialized immigrants is a form of systemic racism that is not easily detected. Das Gupta emphasizes that “systemic racism refers to standard and apparently neutral policies, procedures, and practices that disadvantage people of colour” (2007, p. 350). Other scholars such as Anver Saloojee among others have also shed light on the occurrence of racial discrimination in union movements. Saloojee (2003) argues that recent reports completed by the Canadian Race Relations Foundation strongly indicates that “the labour market is split into two primary segments where one is well paying [...] and have high rates of unionization while the other is characterized by less favourable rates of pay [...], little job security and low rates of unionization” (p. 7). Racialized immigrants are over-represented in the labour market that is characterized by less favourable wages and low rates of unionization while being under-represented in the labour market that is characterized by high rates of unionization and high wages. Importantly, Chaykowski and Slotsve (2002) highlight that “unions tend to reduce wage dispersion and inequality in Canada” (p. 494). Unionization is important for workers and racialized workers in particular; in that it provides a sense of job safety and security where unions are able to secure better wages and benefits for workers (Chaykowski & Slotsve, 2002). Although unionizations allow for collective protection against management, unions may not represent the unique needs of racialized workers.

Das Gupta (2007) highlights that many employers practice systemic racism “which is demonstrated in racist hiring and promotional practices [...] and legal prohibitions or barriers against the unionization of certain groups of workers” (p. 350). For Das Gupta (2007), systemic racism can take legal forms which appear as neutral policies and practices in the labour market; however, can still deny racialized workers access to promotions and working in a unionized environment. Adams (2007) argues that “although the Canadian government have permitted

unions to exist, they have prevented them from carrying out their democratic functions” (p. 42). Even though the function of unions is to create an equitable work environment as a way of providing secure employment, the Canadian government has contributed to the negative results of unionization and prevent it from accomplishing its true purpose. Adams highlights that “Canadian government has repeatedly imposed conditions unilaterally and have legislated workers on legal strike back to work” (2007, p. 42). This draws attention to the fact that even though racialized immigrants are underrepresented in unionized environment, it is difficult to form a collective bargaining association where the Canadian government has somewhat control over the functions of the union. Choudry and Thomas (2013) emphasize that community-based workers’ organizations, such as Immigrant Workers’ Centre, were organized in response to the complex relationship between unions and the Canadian government, and “intended to operate instead as an organization in which workers themselves would drive the agenda” (p. 219). The notion of workers driving the agenda of community-based workers’ organization reveals that the agenda of many unions are not directed by the members of the unions but by other actors such as the influence of the Canadian government’s agenda that does not support certain practices such as workforce strikes which is a form of resistance.

Interestingly, the debate surrounding systemic racism in the Canadian labour market helps to interrogate the reasons why racism continues to exist despite the dominant society’s discourse of promoting an inclusive labour market. Das Gupta (2007) argues that “one key indicator of the marginalization of racialized immigrants is the predominantly white leadership in the movement, despite the number of dynamic non-white activist in local areas” (p. 350). Hence the dominant society continues to maintain power imbalance in the labour market where white people are predominantly given the preference and access to be in leadership positions on union

boards and working in unionized environments and while many racialized immigrants do not get the same preference and access to be in leadership on union committees and working in unionized environment.

Most importantly, Das Gupta (2007) emphasizes that “while unions have been in the forefront of advocating for equity and combating racism [...] in the larger society, they have been slower in acknowledging racism within their own organizations” (p. 354). This is a profound statement that reveals the problematic issues that exist within unions. This quote advocates for not only unions but also for scholarships to re-examine the reasons that union leadership is slow to critically engage with the systemic barriers and forms of discrimination that exist within union movements and organizations. Evidently, more contemporary research needs to be done in the Canadian labour market regarding union movements. Also, this is one of the main strengths of Das Gupta’s article where she not only unpacks the issues that exist in union movements but that she urges other scholarship to investigate and interrogate the reasons that systemic structures still exist in union movement in a society that promotes itself as inclusive.

Canada’s Employment Equity

Regarding Canada’s labour market integration, it is essential to acknowledge the importance of the Employment Equity Act of 1986 that was implemented as a response to racial discrimination. Henry & Tator (1999) explain that “the purpose of the act was to achieve equality in the workplace, and to correct the conditions of disadvantage in employment experienced by designated groups – women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities, and members of visible minorities in Canada” (p. 103). However, Agocs (2002) highlights that “there continues to be a gap between employment equity policy on the one hand, and action and implementation on the other” (p. 257). Importantly, the Employment Equity Act “applies to

Crown corporations and federally regulated employers with 100 or more employees” (Henry & Tator, 1999, p. 103). The fact that employment organizations that are not federally regulated and those with less than 100 employees are not under the Employment Equity Act reveals some of the limitations of this policy. Thus, the Employment Equity Act which does not cover racialized immigrants who are employed in non-Crown corporations, non-federally regulated employment and businesses that have less than 100 employees shows that the potential is there for many racial discriminatory actions against racialized immigrants to be overlooked by the Canadian government. This potential to overlook systemic discriminatory actions in particular work environment perpetuates the cycle of racism in the Canadian labour market where many racialized immigrants are marginalized.

Agocs states that “the concept of systemic discrimination encompasses the complex and interrelated pattern of policies, institutionalized practices, norms and values that perpetuate exclusionary structures and relationships of power and opportunity within organizations and labour markets” (2002, p. 258). When the Canadian government limits the implementation of the Employment Equity Act to businesses with 100 or more employees, it engages in the process of normalizing the under representation of racialized immigrants in the primary labour market of businesses that have under 100 employees. Additionally, Agocs demonstrates that “a notable weakness of the Employment Equity act is the absence of significant sanctions for employers who fail to implement the Act’s requirement” (2002, p. 269). With ineffective consequences for employers who do not implement the Employment Equity act, sabotages the purpose that the Act was created to respond to. Hence, the process of racialization continues to affect and impede many racialized immigrants access to full time regulated jobs.

What is noteworthy is the limited literature surrounding the federal jurisdiction and pro –

vincial debate regarding the Employment Equity Act. Bakan and Kobayashi (2000) highlight that “in Canada, variation among the provinces regarding employment equity policy and diversity is a topic which, to our knowledge, has not been examined in the literature to date” (p. 2). The limited literature regarding employment equity policy suggests that the proactive measures of implementing the Employment Equity Act in the various provinces have been slow. Bakan and Kobayashi emphasize that “for most provinces, the level of discussion regarding employment equity is very board, along lines of ‘for’ or ‘against’” (2000, p. 2). This quote draws attention to the extreme ends in which the pendulum of the provincial debates swing with little space to negotiate and interpret the policy as a response to equity practices in all workplaces and consequences for employers who do not comply with the law. In addition, with focus on Ontario, the formal process to implement the Employment Equity Act in Ontario started in 1990 and was implemented in 1994 and repealed in 1995 (Bakan & Kobayashi, 2000). The repealed of the Employment Equity Act in Ontario reveals the ongoing systemic oppression that continues to exist in Canada. At the provincial level, despite some draw backs of the Employment Equity Act, the removal of a policy that has potential to address some of the systemic barriers that many racialized immigrants face by promoting diversity at different levels within workplaces is a strong indication that minimal consideration is given to the small representation of racialized immigrants in certain workforces and managerial positions.

Non – Accreditation of Foreign Credentials

The devaluation of foreign credential is another form of inequality that is structurally embedded in the Canadian labour market. The discounting of foreign credentials by the dominant society is a form of hindrance to the Canadian labour market integration and it negatively impacts the lives of racialized minorities. The Canadian Council on Social

Development (2000) states that “accreditation is a major barrier facing immigrants who were not educated in North America” (p. 11). Many racialized immigrants face barriers toward integration in the Canadian labour market through the non-accreditation that they experience regarding their foreign credentials. In addition, it is not only racialized immigrants with foreign credentials who face barriers in the labour market but that racialized immigrants who are educated in Canada also face systemic barriers. The Canadian Council on Social Development (2000) reveals that “even for racialized immigrants educated in North America, many still face barriers to career advancement” (p. 11). This is a powerful statement that demonstrates that regardless of the educational institution where racialized immigrants are educated, many of them still face systemic barriers in the Canadian labour market.

Shinnaoui and Narchal (2010) argue that “to overcome skill discounting, assessing authorities should as policy, provide information on bridging existing gaps between locally desired and overseas obtained credentials” (p. 435). Importantly, the authors are urging the state to create mandatory policies that will not only assess, but facilitate the knowledge and accreditation of racialized immigrants’ foreign credentials so that employers understand the importance of racialized immigrants’ foreign credentials and skills. This valuable suggestion is often taken up in other scholarship (James, 2009; Lusi & Bauder, 2010) that advocates for the integration of racialized minorities in the labour market whose foreign credentials are discounted and their skills under-utilized.

Deconstruction of the Points System

Aydemir and Borjas (2006) illustrate that “in Canada, immigration has disproportionately increased the number of high-skilled workers” (p. 3). Canada depends heavily on immigrant labour, specifically racialized immigrants with high-skills. However, it is imperative to

understand that the Canadian government strategically encourages racialized immigrants with high-skills to migrate to Canada through the use of the immigration point system among other immigration programs which allow the state to take many of the most qualified racialized immigrants from their home country and use their labour according to the interest of the Canadian state. Aydemir and Borjas (2006) highlight that “in 1967 Canada introduced the point system that aimed explicitly at selecting immigrants with desirable skills” (p. 5). Systemic structures such as the immigration point system is a tool that the Canadian government uses to lure high-skilled racialized immigrants into the assumption that they will have full access to jobs in the labour market based on the points that they have been awarded by the immigration program for their credentials and skills earned abroad. Entering the debate regarding the immigration point system as a systemic structure, Oreopoulos (2009) argues that “what is particularly noteworthy in the Canadian case is the fact that their immigration policy focuses on attracting immigrants with superior levels of education, experience, and industry demand” (p. 2). Evidently, the Canadian government hand picks many racialized immigrants who it perceives as suitable to the economic interest of the state in order to maintain a dual labour market that reflects the dominate group in the primary labour market while forcing many racialized immigrants in the secondary labour market to not only maintain an hierarchal structure but to also exploit the labour of many racialized immigrants.

Even though extensive research has been done on the critique of the Canadian labour market, the Canadian government has been slow in response to making effective policy changes that would hold many employers accountable for the various forms of discriminatory actions that many racialized immigrants continue to experience in the labour market. Although Canada portrays itself as an inclusive society, many structural barriers continue to exist in the labour

market as a hindrance to the integration of many racialized immigrants. These hindrances such as the devaluation of foreign credentials and the high rates of under-employment in low-skill occupations among other factors are forms of racial discrimination that many racialized immigrants experience in the Canadian labour market. Most importantly, the adverse effects of these hindrances also affect the mental health and social well-being of many racialized immigrants who experience stress and depression among other ailments as a result of the negative impact of systemic discrimination in the Canadian labour market. The deconstruction of these forms of systemic structures have shown that the Canadian government strategically uses them as a tool to maintain power imbalance among the subordinate group in the secondary labour market which is perceived as inferior to the dominant group in the primary labour market.

Methodology

According to Lizette et al. (2011) “research can either harm or support communities, thus researchers should develop the cultural competencies to conduct research with immigrant populations” (p. 185). Research can have positive or negative implications. Thus, one’s research methodology should be carefully chosen and assessed in order to eliminate or minimize any adverse effects. For this paper, interviews are used to collect data to not only assess the barriers of the Canadian labour market policies, but to also draw attention to the impact that it has on the lives of some Caribbean immigrants. Archer and Berdahl (2011) emphasize that “qualitative analyses employ open-ended questionnaires, interviews, and coding techniques” (p. 131). Interviews are concrete examples of a qualitative approach that I have incorporated in my major research paper. Using a qualitative technique such as an interview (for about forty five minutes) allowed me to ask open-ended questions where the participants choose to share as much or as little information with me. Additionally, Archer and Berdahl (2011) explain that “qualitative research is less structured than quantitative research, which allows the researcher to explore the subtleties of individual beliefs or group dynamics” (p. 125). Importantly, a qualitative approach allows the exploration of other issues or concepts that may come up during the individual interview process with the participants. In other words, through the lens of a qualitative approach, one is able to further examine additional dynamics and beliefs of participants that were not anticipated yet relevant to the research topic. Importantly, critical race theory helps to unpack the experiences of the racialized participants in this study by revealing the systemic and underlining nuances that contribute to racial discrimination through the use of qualitative methodology that provides the medium for participants to share their stories about the Canadian labour market. Labour market segmentation theory is another theoretical framework

that enhances the further understanding of participants' experiences in the labour market by identifying, categorizing and deconstructing the various ways in which the participants may have experienced discrimination through the detailed information that they provided in the interviews.

Sampling

Six English-speaking Caribbean immigrants were interviewed for this study in order to share their experiences regarding the impact of the Canadian labour market policies on their lives. All the names that are provided for the participants in this paper are pseudonyms. The age range of 25 – 44 years was of keen interest in this study due to the fact that “nearly half of recent immigrants are in the prime working age group of 25 – 44 years” when they arrive in Canada (Orme, 2007, p. 75). Hence, through the screening process, participants who identified their ages between 25 - 44 years were selected for this study. According to Xue (2008):

Results from the 2006 Labour Force Survey show that while established immigrants (those who landed more than 10 years ago) had comparable labour market outcomes compared to the Canadian-born population, very recent immigrants (those who landed in Canada for five years or less) had the poorest outcomes in the Canadian labour market. (p.1)

Thus participants who identified through the screening process that they have been employed in the Canadian labour market for less than 10 years were selected in order to examine if there has been any significant changes regarding comparable labour market outcomes to that of their Canadian-born counterparts since their arrival in Canada. Additionally, the participants' countries of origin and employment sector in Canada were identified.

Three participants were male Jamaicans and three participants were females from Trinidad, St. Vincent and Barbados. These participants have been employed in the Canadian labour market for less than ten years. In order to recruit participants, I started with key informants with whom I have an established relationship with from various employment and

religious institutions. I relied on the snowballing sampling method from these key informants to find participants who were interested in participating in an interview regarding the impact of Canadian labour market policies on the lives of Caribbean immigrants. My contact information was passed on to any participants who were interested. Through the use of email, I was able to screen participants regarding their eligibility to participate in the interview based on their ethnicity, age and employment status. Pyper (2008) highlights that “press coverage demonstrates that issues associated with employment in trades are a concern for many in Canada” (p. 17). Of particular interest to this paper, the experiences of racialized immigrants in the trade sector became an important area that this study seeks to explore. Additionally, Xue (2008) reveals that “among all immigration categories, skilled worker principal applicants had the highest proportion reporting problems finding employment throughout the first four years” (p. 5). Thus the experiences of racialized immigrants employed in the skill-trade sector, specifically in the service sector trades, were of keen interest. Even though this paper will focus at times on the experiences of Caribbean immigrants who work in the skilled trade sector, the recruitment process was opened to individuals who were employed in other sectors.

Constraints of Qualitative Approach

The ability to make generalizations is more limited in qualitative research because of the small size of the group being studied (Archer & Berdahl, 2011). Importantly, even though I used a qualitative approach for this paper, the main constraint that I encountered was that the perceptions of the six participants were not enough to form a generalization regarding a particular issue or concern in the Canadian labour market. In addition, another constraint that I encountered during the research process was the influence of my biases and assumptions on shaping and interpreting the data collected during the interviews with the six participants. The

risk of paying more attention to information that highlights the disadvantage impacts that the participants many experience in a unionized environment is an example of my preconceive assumptions about unionization.

Data Collection and Analysis

Regarding qualitative analysis, Archer and Berdahl (2011) state that “scholars employing qualitative methods make sense of their observations through the identification of themes” (p. 130). After transcribing the interviews of the six participants, I searched for terms that the participants commonly used in the interviews. I also identified themes that emerged as a signifier of particular headings and sub-headings that can be explained in depth. Archer and Berdahl (2011) explain that “all researchers in the qualitative tradition search for patterns in their data as they group different observations according to certain nonnumerical relationships” (p. 130). This reinforces my approach of systematically identifying and grouping data information based on the common terms and themes that emerged as well as grouping the information that do not have any commonality in order to present a holistic finding in my major research paper. Each interview lasted for approximately forty five minutes to an hour. The questions were designed in order to encourage the participants to share their experiences in the Canadian labour market (please see Appendix A).

Ethical Concerns

Katreena Merrill (2011) states that “it is important to understand that all research needs to be approved by the ethics board or research ethics committee” (p. 182). Research dealing with human subjects can have major risk factors that affect the participants involved. The potential risk to participants in this study was psychological where some questions triggered an unpleasant experience for the participants which caused some participants to feel uncomfortable or anxious.

However, participants were assured that he or she could decline to respond in addition to withdrawing from the interview process. This is clearly outlined in the consent form and verbally stated during the interview process (please see Appendix B). Additionally, throughout the paper, participants' names remained anonymous in order to protect their identity.

Interview Findings

The interviews suggest that after entering the Canadian labour market, some racialized immigrants continue to experience challenges in which labour market policies do affect their workforce experiences. Although the sample for this research is small, it is worth considering the narratives of these selected Caribbean immigrants in order to further understand how Canadian labour market policies affect the lives of some racialized immigrants in advantageous and disadvantageous ways. Hence the findings point to possible trends that are worthy of further research and consideration that cannot be generalized based on the findings in this study.

Participant Demographic Profile

Importantly, prominent scholarship defines racialized immigrants as non-dominant ethno-racial groups who experience race as a main factor in their identity through racialization; a process where racial categories are constructed as different and lead to social, economic and political negative impacts (Galabuzi, 2001; Access Alliance, 2011). As mentioned, three of the male participants, Leroy, James and Sam are from Jamaica and the three female participants, Sharon, Pamela and Diane are from Trinidad, St. Vincent and Barbados respectively. From their home countries, four of the participants had their first degree from prominent universities, one participant had an advance diploma and one participant had two degrees. Only two participants were working in their field of study in Canada but in lower level positions to that of managerial positions that they were working in when they were in their home countries. In addition to identifying their country of origin, interview participants self-identified as being racialized, in a white settler society.

Pyper (2008) states that “while men account for half of employment in non-trades occupations, they make up the vast majority in the trades (97% in 2007)” (p. 2). Additionally,

Teelucksingh and Galabuzi (2005) highlight that in specific categories such as trades, “white male non-visible minorities” were the majority of workers across Canada. This quote sheds light on the difficulty of finding racialized female and male participants who are employed in the Canadian skill-trade sector. However, the three male participants in this study have been employed in the Canadian skill-trade sector, specifically in the service sector trades for less than ten years and the three female participants, although employed in Canada for less than ten years; they were not employed in the skill-trade sector. Among the three female participants, Pamela was employed in healthcare, and Diane and Sharon were employed in administrative positions. Teelucksingh and Galabuzi (2005) highlight that “racialized women are at least twice as likely as racialized males to work in clerical and sales position [...]”. It would be interesting to interrogate the dilemma of racialized women being mostly represented in clerical positions but the scope of this issue will not be addressed in this study due to the limited focus of this research on the impact of Canada’s labour market policies on the lives of some Caribbean immigrants.

After the screening process, all the participants were interviewed about Canadian labour market policies and the issue of racism. Throughout the interview process, majority of the participants used the term ‘Black’ to refer to the Caribbean population in Canada. Thus the terms ‘Black’, ‘racialized immigrants’ and ‘Caribbean immigrants’ are used interchangeable throughout this study. The following will highlight the themes that were discussed by participants during the interviews.

Discrimination in the 21st Century

Limited Access to Job Promotion

The interview findings revealed that the issue of racism is still relevant in the 21st century in Canada. All the participants identified that discrimination is a form of sophisticated racism;

racist actions by the dominant society that are swept under the rug but has real consequences for racialized immigrants. The participants also emphasized such racism continues to exist in the Canadian labour market regardless of the notion of labour market policies that suggests standardization where all employees regardless of their racial background should be treated fairly. One participant, Leroy (2013), stated that “the issue of racism is alive in the Canadian labour market in the 21st century; it is just that it is more swept under the rug because nobody wants to really address the issue”. James (2013), another interview participant, also echoed the relevance of the issue of racism as an “ongoing problem in the Canadian labour market where many Caribbean men are not able to get jobs in certain professions because of their race”. In addition, Pamela (2013) highlighted that “based on your culture and where you are from, many times ‘black’ people are pushed around [marginalised] in the workplaces”.

All six participants indicated that the issue of discrimination in Canada’s labour market is more than relevant because they have personally experienced different forms of discrimination such as limited access to work in managerial positions in addition to knowing many other Caribbean immigrants who are discriminated against in the labour market based on their ethnicity. Diane stated that:

...on more than one occasion I have been denied the opportunity to work in a higher position and I have notice that the office space is shared in such a way that most of us, the Black ladies have less cubicle space while most of the white ladies are actually in offices and not sharing cubicle spaces – I question that a lot.

Thus discrimination, particularly racial discrimination, in the 21st century in Canada continues to be an area of concern where Canada promotes itself as an inclusive society that promotes the ideology that everyone is treated fairly in the labour market. According to Furunes and Mykletun (2010), “evidence show that age discrimination is a common problem in working life; it applies at different stages in the processes from recruitment and development of workforce” (p.

23). Pamela articulated the example of age discrimination that some Caribbean immigrants may experience in the Canadian labour market. She shared that:

...most people don't realize it but these companies not really hiring immigrants who are mature in age because I remember when my friend told me that she was applying for a supervisory position and the company actual bypass her and hired a younger girl, white girl who just graduated from college. No consideration was given to my friend's commitment to the company for all those years of working.

Pamela's quote reinforces the fact that for many racialized immigrants who are already employed, older workers are exposed to the risk of discrimination in relation to promotion based on their age (Furunes & Mykletun, 2010). Pamela and Diane's stories highlight that some Caribbean immigrants not only experience racial discrimination with regards to limited access to managerial positions but that age discrimination is also considered as a barrier that some racialized immigrants may face in the labour market based on the dominant employer's perception that as aging individuals, they are not suitable for certain positions such as managerial positions.

The four participants who are employed in unionized environment revealed that regardless of labour market policies, many racialized immigrants experience limited access to promotion. As mentioned before, Diane also stated that she was denied promotion when she tried to apply for a managerial position. James, the only participant who is a union committee member, stated that:

There was a supervisory position that was available in my department and everyone, including my immediate supervisor encouraged me to apply for the position. With the support of most of my co-workers, I applied for the position. Would you believe that I did not get the job after working with the company for more than six years; they gave the position to a white guy who was working for the company a little over a year in Quebec before that plant closed down. I was so disappointed and many of my co-workers were upset over the fact that the white guy got the position and he has only been with the company for less than two years. Out of concern and a desire to improve for the next time, I asked the manager who interviewed me why is it that I did not get the position and he said that the white guy had more advantage over me; he had a degree in engineering.

This was so unfair because the job posting did not state that you needed a degree in engineering to qualify for the job. The company was quick to overlook my many years of service to them.

Ethnic Representations of Unions

As indicated in the interviews, not all work environments are unionized. Employed in administrative positions, Sharon and Diane do not work in a unionized environment; whereas Pamela, who is employed in healthcare, works in a unionized environment. As for the male participants, they all work in unionized environments. Regarding the ethnic representation of union board members, James is the only participant that is a part of the union committee. James highlights that “the ethnicities of the union board on the lower level, those who work on the front line, are a mixture of ‘Black’, South Asian and White committee members”. This resembles the strategies of many private businesses such as the bank that puts mostly racialized immigrants on the frontline but as the hierarchy is climbed, it is mostly the dominant group that occupies the higher level positions. James also emphasized that:

At the higher level, there is only one ‘Black’ member out of twenty White board members at my workplace. I am always proud to be a union steward but I am always concerned about the limited representation of [racialized] immigrants at the top level because we don’t have much people at the top from our background who can understand some of the issues that we face on the ground in the workplace. It’s like there is a gap between what the [racialized] immigrant experience and the final decision made by upper level union that seems as if they [union] are working in the interest of the company and not the individual who was victimized by his employer.

Although Diane and Sharon were not employed in unionized environments, both female participants stress the importance for immigrants to work in unionized environments in order to limit the encounter of working in jobs that have wage disparities and to support racialized immigrants in order for them to not lose their jobs. Sharon states that:

It is important for Caribbean immigrants to work in unionize environments because it puts in place structures and policies to benefit the employees. Although where I work the employer makes it seems as if union is negative instead of positive, I believe that

unionized workplaces help to deal with problems relating to equity practices and it levels the playfield. Too often there is a hush hush about the pay rate of job postings that are circulated for new positions in my workplace as if the employer does not want you to know how much that particular position is paid. I strongly believe that when you are in a unionized environment, at least you are aware of the wage for positions and that everybody is almost receiving the same pay rate. My husband works in the construction industry and he is the only 'Black' man as a member of the union and he works as a recruiter for the union so I know that the union can help to support job security and fair pay rate for employees in the workplace.

All the participants indicated that it was important for Caribbean immigrants to work in unionized workplaces because the union helps to support the employees, assist with job security and promote equality. Unionized environment was often synonymous with fair wages. Diane states that "it is important to have the opportunity to experience working in a unionized environment because the union is not there to support malicious and manipulative employers or process but it is there to support the rights of the employees and to ensure that they have equal pay". In addition, Leroy who works for a Crown Corporation states that:

The union is good to have but the only challenge is that many 'Black' committee members never seems to get pass the front line union committee board. It seems as if the top level is only for White men so I don't even bother to try to become a union Stewart.

Even though the participants indicated that it is important for Caribbean immigrants to work in unionized environment, they also acknowledge that there are shortcomings with the limited representation of racialized immigrants on the union boards at the highest level of the organization. Another participant, Pamela highlighted that "although there seems to be few of us represented on the union board, many immigrants will have their rights recognized in a unionized environment compared to a non-unionized workplace because the union will stand up for you whereas if you were to do that on your own, it would be very difficult". However, a sense of job precariousness was noted when Leroy pointed out that even though he works in a unionized environment, "my job can be stressful at times because at the end of the day the company can still fire me because so few Black people work here and I know of a former Black

co-worker that the company wanted to fire and they eventually laid him off for no apparent reason”.

Effectiveness of Canadian Labour Market Policies (Pros vs. Cons)

Labour market policies are implemented to shape the economic outcomes of the Canadian workforce. All six participants indicated that there are advantages and disadvantages regarding labour market policies such as the Employment Equity policy, Human Rights policy and the Immigration Points System. James states that:

I had a friend who came to Canada about five years ago on the points system because he was well qualified but he had a hard time to get into a job for which he had international training so he just settled to work in the manufacturing job because he had to take care of his wife and three children who also came with him. He says that he wants to get back into teaching but the process here is too long so he will try to work hard in his current job so that his children can get into the jobs that they really want to do. The immigration point system is good in a sense where it helps people to come to Canada for a better life especially if they are leaving developing countries like Jamaica but the point system doesn't help immigrants to settle in jobs that they thought they would have when they arrive in Canada. That is the sad part of it”.

Participants such as Diane and Sharon revealed that they had limited knowledge of the Employment Equity policy but they knew people who came to Canada through the immigration points system. Sharon stated that “many people from the islands come to Canada on the points system because they are qualified educated people but many of them end up in jobs where they have to work twice as hard to make ends meet for their family”.

The participants highlighted that labour market policies are important and despite some limitations, it is very important for companies and institutions to make employees aware of these policies so that immigrants are fully aware of their rights in the labour market. Access Alliance (2011) highlights that “individuals are sometimes uninformed about Canadian labour market rights and legal resources available to them” (p. 5). According to Pamela, she was not aware of the Employment Equity policy (in her previous job) until she was working in healthcare, a

unionized environment. This is an example of challenges that some racialized immigrants may face where their employer's action to not inform them of applicable labour market policies results in "barriers due to lack or weak implementation of employment rights and protections" (Access Alliance, 2011, p. 3). Leroy, James and Sam became aware of the Employment equity policy through their unions. Another policy that was discussed in majority of the interviews was the Human Rights policy. Four of the participants alluded that because they were in a unionized environment, they were briefly informed of their rights in various union meetings. However, Diane and Sharon state that they were aware that they had some form of rights in the workplace based on information that they have gleaned from the media but that information was not posted in their public work areas such as staff rooms or mentioned in human resource meetings. Diane emphasized that:

...I only know about human rights through reading newspaper articles and watching the news. Even though I have an idea that I have human rights, it is very hard for employees like me to challenge my employer when my rights are violated due to fear of reprisal. I am afraid to bring up the topic of human rights in my job because I don't want to lose my work; so, many times I don't say anything, not even to the Human Resource department, when I am overlooked for a promotion. Based on my rights, I know HR [Human Resources] should have investigated the reason why I did not get the job that I was adequately fit for.

Limited Access to Overtime

A Question of Poverty?

Another theme that was frequently discussed in the interviews with the male participants who were employed in a unionized environment was the notion of white workers getting the opportunity to work overtime while racialized immigrants were not given the same opportunity. Fuller and Martin (2012) highlight that "immigrants tend to work fewer hours, at lower wages" (p. 141). The notion of racialized poverty was identified in the interviews with mainly the male participants who stated that they continue to encounter difficulties with paying their bills because

of not earning enough money or overtime compared to their white counterparts. The racialization of poverty is a reality in Canada among many racialized immigrants (Wallis & Kwok, 2008). Leroy commented that “overtime in the workplace is very hard to get, it seems like it is only given out to certain people like the white guys, the friends of the supervisor”. The difficulty of getting overtime in the workplaces, particularly in a unionized environment was of great concern for the male participants. Sam emphasized that:

Many times I don’t mind the opportunity to work overtime so that I can get the extra cash to pay up some bills but it is always the white [male] employees that get to stay back to work the overtime hours, not us...I really need the extra cash because the money that I earn can’t cover some basic things like buying enough food for the house or paying for the light bill so it backs up and gets disconnected from time to time.

Additionally, James stated that:

Employers still show favoritism in a unionized environment. They [employers] find subtle ways of giving the white guys more overtime and the easier job while we [racialized employees] do the dirty and harder work and get little or no overtime. They [employer] don’t rotate the job duties. Many times I want to prove that [my] employer allows the white employees more break time than us but the employer always try to skirt around the issue so I just continue to try to do my job even though it can be so frustrating and stressful.

In summary, the interview findings for this study suggest that the issue of racism is still relevant in the Canadian labour market due to the fact that many racialized immigrants continue to face barriers such as limited access to promotion and less overtime in their work environment among other factors. In addition, Leroy highlighted that “it is very hard to prove harassment or subtle remarks that hints to racist connotations”. Given the various sectors that the participants are employed in, it is evident that there are disadvantages of Canada’s labour market policies where many racialized immigrants are afraid to stand up for their rights because they fear losing their jobs regardless of the policies existence.

Discussion

The analysis of the interview findings below highlights the main concerns of some Caribbean immigrants who are employed in the Canadian labour market for less than ten years. In addition, regarding Canada's labour market policies, the six participants in this study identified that there are various benefits of having labour market policies on the one hand and on the other hand, there are adverse effects that impact the lives of many Caribbean immigrants in the workforce. According to Access Alliance (2013), "racialized immigrant families face deep structural barriers to getting good jobs" (p. 9). Through the lens of critical race theory, structural barriers act as a discriminatory tool that the dominant workforce uses to prevent many racialized immigrants from accessing certain well paid employment sectors. This form of discriminatory action results in labour market segmentation and it sheds light on the reality that despite labour market policies, many racialized immigrants experience negative realities of getting a good job in Canada based on their 'race'. Importantly, "critical race theory calls attention to the relevance of, and the circumstances and cultural contexts, by which race is made consequential in individuals' interactions and experiences" (James, 2009, p. 93). Hence, all six participants in this study emphasized that the issue of racism in the 21st century is real and relevant because many Caribbean immigrants continue to face challenges such as racial discrimination in the labour market. Without major interventions, it can be speculated that racial and gender stratification patterns will continue to be present in Canada's labour market (Teelucksingh & Galabuzi, 2005).

Picot, Hou and Coulombe (2008) state that "the rise in poverty in the early 2000s was concentrated among immigrants who had recently entered Canada, suggesting increasing problems in early economic adjustment" (p. 415). What is interesting to note is that even after

working in the Canadian labour market for more than five years, many racialized immigrants continue to experience some type of poverty where they are unable to pay off bills that provide them with necessary services (e.g. electricity, heat etc.) for their family. During the various interviews, the issue of wanting to pay off bills were of utmost concerns for the male participants who made it known that even though they were employed in the skill-trade workforce; they were not given certain opportunities to earn more money that they could use to help pay off their bills in a timely manner. Thus many times their bills are in arrears and sometimes even disconnected on multiple occasion. In addition, Access Alliance demonstrates in their most recent research that “being stuck in low-paying precarious jobs in turn creates negative structural conditions (irregular income, irregular work hours, workplace injuries, jobs-skills mismatch etc.) that further prevent immigrant families from getting stable employment in their field” (2013, p. 9). This draws attention to the reality that many racialized immigrants, although employed in the Canadian labour market, experience wage disparity where they go home with less wages than their white counterparts as a result of negative structural conditions that favour the dominant group over the subordinate employees.

It is imperative to recognize that even within unionized work environments, labour market segmentation can still exist. Reich, Gordon and Edwards (1973) emphasize that “division of workers into segments legitimizes inequalities in authority and control between superiors and subordinates” (p. 364). This quote sheds light on understanding the racist underlining action of James’ employer who gave the white male employees longer breaks and the easier work to do compared to the racialized employees who were given the dirty work and harder task to complete. Although James, a union Stewart, tried to prove his employer’s discrimination action, he emphasized that his employer had a way of skipping around the issue of

favouritism which made it hard for James to prove. Hence, James' employer is not held accountable for his discriminatory actions. Access Alliance (2011) points out that "race-based discrimination [...] also affects experiences within the workplace including the types of work that racialized people are given" (p. 1). Interestingly, James' employer operates within a unionized environment but is not held accountable for his inequitable actions that clearly display favouritism. James stated that "[my] employer finds means and ways to exercise favouritism in the workplace". This reinforces the notion that labour market policies can have adverse impacts on the lives of some Caribbean immigrants such as James, where his employer is not held accountable for his discriminatory actions. Thus the cycle of discrimination continues to propel in the Canadian labour market.

According to Sam who was also employed in a unionize environment, "labour market policies are neutral". In the case of Leroy's former racialized co-worker, he was laid off the job without any valid reason. This suggests that Canadian labour market policies are mostly in place as a response to negative concerns but in fact, acts as an inadequate shield for some racialized immigrants who are experiencing racial discrimination in the labour market. Access Alliance highlights that "our immigration and settlement policies continue to be fundamentally based on outdated colonial rationality that instrumentally views immigrants as source for cheap, disposable labour to meet short term labour market demands" (2013, p. 96). When racialized immigrants are given the dirty jobs to do instead of the job being fairly distributed among all the employees including the dominant group, it reveals that employer perceives racialized immigrants as cheap labour that does not need to be appreciated for their time and service to the company. Weiner (2008) argues that "racialized immigrants may face additional discrimination in the form of racism" (p. 10). Hence the colonial mentality continues to permeate the Canadian

labour market despite the institution of labour market policies that are put in place to protect the rights of all the employees. Evidently, “we need to shift to a *humanist policy vision* on immigration which sees immigrants as an *engine for nation-building, and for promoting global equity*” (Access Alliance, 2013, p. 96). With a humanist policy vision, racialized immigrants will be valued and perceived as contributing to the well-being of Canada, their new home. Additionally, Turegun (2011) highlights that “the undervaluation of immigrant human capital has its cost to Canadian society as well as to immigrants” (p. 3). When employers undervalue their racialized employees, it not only affects the individual negatively but that it also negatively impacts the Canadian society.

Regarding labour market policies, specifically the immigration points system, James highlighted that he knew someone who came to Canada through the points system in hope of finding a job that was similar to the one that he had in his home country but to his dismay, the friend was not able to get a good job in Canada because of the various difficulties that he faced such as the long process of getting accreditation for his foreign credentials (that he could not afford). Miner (2010) argues that “the reason many people are recruited or encouraged to come to Canada has been based on their education and training; but our own institutional barriers serve as roadblocks to their integration” (p. 12). Indeed, James’ friend is a concrete example of how the Canadian labour market policy can be used to lure many racialized immigrants to Canada based on the assumption that they will be able to get good jobs due to their level of education and training but on the other hand, the institutional barriers such as the long process of accreditation or even non-recognition of many foreign credentials hamper many racialized immigrants from getting good jobs. “On the surface, Canada provides an ideal environment for immigrant integration” (Fuller & Martin, 2012, p. 139) but when many racialized immigrants

arrive in Canada, many of them are forced into secondary labour markets that do not have job security among other negative factors. Colic – Peisker and Tilbury (2006) emphasize that “labour market segmentation has been a basis of social disadvantage of racialized immigrant groups” (p. 206). Hence, many racialized immigrants are pushed into these sub-division labour markets by the same labour market policy that was created to encourage them to immigrate to Canada for greater opportunities, yet when they arrive, many racialized immigrants are faced with systemic barriers that operate to oppress them and channel them into secondary labour markets.

Alboim and McIsaac (2007) draw attention to the concern that the Canadian policy architecture that is being constructed to support the increased levels of immigration can only succeed if it is systemically articulated with labour market development and education and training. This suggests that policy makers need to take the realities of many racialized immigrants’ experiences in the labour market into consideration in order to articulate and develop meaningful and effective labour market policies that will support the economic and social mobility of racialized immigrants. One of the interview participants, Diane, emphasizes that “many times [racialized] immigrants are afraid of standing up to their employer when their rights are infringed on because they are either afraid of losing their job or they know it is pointless going through the process because it takes so long before anything is done; that is if anything gets done”. Regarding the Human Rights policy, Grundy and Smith (2011) state that “the system of individual complaints was criticized as a cumbersome and reactive system that created backlogs and placed an inordinate burden of time and money on the individual complainant” (p. 338). Grundy and Smith (2011) argument supports Diane’s observation relating to the various reasons why many racialized immigrants may that bother to use the

Human Rights policy as a shield against racial discrimination because of the time and money that many racialized immigrants have to sacrifice in order to follow through with their complaint against their workplace.

In response to pressure on the Canadian government to respond to employment inequity in the labour market, the Employment Equity policy was created. Grundy and Smith (2011) state that “the policy framework of employment equity promoted by policy-makers was premised on a particular construction of the problem of workplace inequality as neither intentional nor ingrained but, rather, as rooted in a lack of knowledge on the part of employers of the representativeness of their workforces” (p. 354). It is interesting to note that both Diane and Sharon, who work for companies with over 100 employees, shared that they were not fully aware of the Employment Equity policy. Bakan and Kobayashi (2000) illustrate that “while most provinces have employment equity policy, few have a proactive strategy for training” (p. 11). This sheds light on one of the shortcomings of provincial labour markets that endorse the Employment equity policy yet lacks proactive strategies to inform all its employees about the policy.

Access Alliance (2013) demonstrates that “immigrant families need to be trained and supported to use their rights to achieve and negotiate good jobs free of discrimination and exploitation” (p. 96). When Diane and Sharon are not fully informed by their employers about the Employment Equity Policy, it signifies that the employers do not take the policy serious. The notion of having a diverse representation of racialized immigrants and the concept of fair equity is not necessarily valued by these employers who do not promote or advertise the policy in visible work areas. In addition, Agocs (2002) emphasizes that:

it is likely that the weakness of monitoring and enforcement mechanism, as well as the lack of sanctions for failure to make progress toward equity in the workplace, have

indicated to employers that they need not take employment equity policy seriously. (p. 273)

Evidently, many employers are not held accountable for not engaging with the Employment Equity policy which applies to companies with more than 100 employees. Hence, many racialized immigrants are unaware of their rights such as having an equitable wage in their workplaces. Thus the Employment Equity policy becomes void to many racialized immigrants who are not informed about it by their employers.

Importantly, Bakan and Kobayashi (2000) argue that “employment equity policy is based on the principle that to obtain equal access to employment, and equal access to advancement within the workplace, proactive, positive measures must be enacted to redress systemic oppression” (p. 1). Thus in order to achieve equal access to advancement in the workplace, applicable employers have to make a conscious effort to not only inform racialized immigrants about the policy but to also end the cycle of discrimination by allowing racialized immigrants the opportunity to be promoted accordingly. Proactive positive measures should include the effort of not only the Canadian government but also the efforts of the private – sector, policy makers and employers in order to move Canada’s workforce towards achieving an equitable and equal access labour market.

Conclusion

As an exploratory study, the main goal of this paper was to further understand how Canadian labour market policies affect the lives of some racialized immigrants, specifically Caribbean immigrants, who have been employed in Canada for less than ten years. Given the review of the interview findings, it is evident that the development and training of Canadian labour market policies should support the economic mobility of racialized immigrants. The participants in this study highlighted that labour market policies can be beneficial where it is in place for the protection of the racialized employee but it can also have negative impacts where the employer does not respect the policy and still practices favoritism in the workplace. Among the six participants who participated in this study, four of them worked in unionized environment that gave them a sense of security but it did not alienate the stress and frustrations that they still encountered such as dealing with employers who discriminated against them, particular the male participants, who did not get the opportunity to do overtime.

Throughout the findings, it became evident that despite working in a unionized environment, some racialized immigrants experience racial discrimination in the Canadian labour market. Hence the importance to understand that many racialized immigrants do not only face barriers trying to enter into the Canadian labour market, but that they also face barriers while being employed. With the use of critical race theory, racial discrimination is deconstructed to reveal the various nuances such as system barriers that continue to perpetuate racism in the Canadian labour workforce. James pointed out that the jobs that many racialized immigrants are given is greater than the work the white male employees are given. Even within the workforce, there are segmented labour markets. Based on James' statement, labour market segmentation theory helps to reveal the existence of secondary division of labour where many Caribbean

immigrants are given different task to complete which are harder, precarious and dirty; whereas the dominant group of employees are given simpler duties that are not considered strenuous or dirty which puts them into a primary division of labour. This form of secondary division of labour puts many racialized immigrants into a marked group of labour that the dominant employer characterizes as cheap labour to fill undesirable work positions.

Limitations

A major limitation of this paper is the small sample size that was used to gather information relating to the experiences of Caribbean immigrants in the skill-trade sector. Due to this limitation, the information provided in this study cannot be generalized for all Caribbean immigrants who have been employed in the Canadian labour market for less than ten years. Another limitation of this paper is that the qualitative approach was the only methodology that was used to gather information; whereas the quantitative approach could have been utilized in order to quantify the information. Despite the limitations of this study, it is clear that some labour market policies may have undesirable impacts on the lives of some Caribbean immigrants.

Recommendation

Organizations and institutions should ensure that their employees, particularly racialized employees are informed of policies that are in place to protect and promote their rights. Placing policy information in strategic places such as the lunch area, the bathrooms and on information boards in the workplaces is an initial step towards creating an informative environment for racialized employees. As Canada continues to open its gate to racialized immigrants, labour market policies should be developed according to the concerns of racialized immigrants in order to not only promote the notion of employment equity but to also make it a reality that racialized immigrants can count on the policies to protect their rights. Hence the need for the collaboration

and active efforts of the Canadian government, employers, unions and private businesses to work towards increasing the representation of racialized immigrants in various regulated and unionized organizations in addition to open access for promotion and overtime for racialized employees respectively. Most importantly, further research is needed to interrogate the process by which labour market policies are made and how much consideration of the reality of racialized immigrants' experience in the labour market is taken into thought. It is imperative for Canadian policy makers to re-examine the impacts of labour market policies on the lives of racialized immigrants based on the fact that Canada continues to depend on immigrants' labour to boost its economic interest and profits.

Appendix A

Interview Guide

1. How relevant is the issue of racism/discrimination in the Canadian labour market?
2. Do you work in a unionized environment?
3. What are the ethnicities of the people on the union board in your work environment?
4. How important is it for Caribbean immigrants to work in a unionized environment?
5. How effective are Canadian labour market policies?
6. What do you think about the points system?
7. How effective is the Employment Equity policy?
8. Do you encounter any barriers within the Canadian labour market?
9. What does barriers look like in the Canadian labour market?

Appendix B

Consent Agreement

Ryerson University

Assessing the Barriers Regarding Canada's Labour Market Policies and Its Impact on Caribbean Immigrants in the Skill-Trade Sector

Purpose: Thank you for your interest in the project entitled, 'Assessing the Barriers Regarding Canada's Labour Market Policies and Its Impact on Caribbean Immigrants in the Skill-Trade Sector'. This research study examines the impact of Canadian labour market policies on the lives of Caribbean immigrants in the skill-trade sector.

In this interview phase of my project, I will build upon information regarding the impact of Canada's labour market policies on the lives of many Caribbean immigrants who are employed in the Canadian skill-trade industry. Interview questions will focus on your perceptions of Canada's labour market policies and its impact on your life. My hope is to explore a range of concerns regarding Canadian labour market policies impact on the lives of racialized immigrants, particularly Caribbean immigrants. The study itself has no ties to industry or government partners and will be conducted by an independent researcher (graduate student) from Ryerson University.

Study Procedures: You have been asked to take part in an interview that will last about 45 minutes in length. If you agree, the interview will take place at Ryerson University in a meeting space that ensures privacy.

Potential Risks and Benefits: It is not likely that there will be any harms or discomforts nor direct benefits to you associated with this interview. However, you may feel uncomfortable with some of the issues that are raised. You will be asked questions about your opinion of Canada's labour market policies associated with race and marginalization. These questions may have potential for psychological stress. The likelihood of this risk will be minimal. Your participation in the study is voluntary. You are welcome to end the interview at any time and you may also decline to respond to any question.

Although the research will not benefit you directly, your participation and cooperation can help develop an understanding of the challenges and/or opportunities regarding the impact of Canadian labour market policies on the lives of many Caribbean immigrants in the Canadian skill-trade sector. Please note that I will use exact quotes from the interview in my major research paper.

Confidentiality: Your identity will be kept strictly confidential. Only the faculty supervisor and I will have access to the interview notes in order to ensure that all data remains confidential. Following the interview, you will have the option of checking the interview notes (at your request, a copy of transcripts or a draft of the major research paper will be mailed to you). Throughout the duration of the study, all interview notes will be entered onto an encrypted USB that is password-protected. The interview notes and USB will be locked in a secure file cabinet in Professor Cheryl Teelucksingh's office which is located at Ryerson University. The interview notes will be shredded, and data on the encrypted USB will be destroyed (deleted) after the completion of my major research paper, August 31, 2013. Your employer will not have access to the data or the information that you provide. To protect confidentiality, your real name will not be used in the written copy of the major research paper. Employers and organizations, not only employees, will not be identifiable in any study reports or publications.

Remuneration/Compensation: There will be no remuneration given for your participation in this interview.

Contact for information about the study: If you have any questions about this study or would like further information, you can contact Shelleanne Hardial by email shardial@ryerson.ca. You can also contact the faculty supervisor, Cheryl Teelucksingh, Ph.D., Ryerson University by phone (416) 579 5000 ext. 6213 or by email teeluck@ryerson.ca.

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects: If you have any concerns regarding your rights as a human subject and participant in this study, you may contact the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board for Information.

Toni Fletcher, MA
Research Ethics Co-Ordinator
Office of Research Services
Ryerson University
(416)979-5000 ext. 7112
toni.fletcher@ryerson.ca
<http://www.ryerson.ca/research>

Consent: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you can decline to respond to any question or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy to your employment. Please also note that your choice to participate will not influence your future relations with Ryerson University.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records and that you consent to participate in this study.

Name of Participant (please print)

Participant Signature Date

Email address phone number

Signature of Investigator Date

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